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Tips on reading

How to make the most of your reading:

The more you read the better you get at reading. Read as much as you can in the foreign language as it will develop your knowledge of what's going on in that country and broaden your vocabulary.

Keeping up with current affairs via British newspapers and magazines will give you useful background knowledge which will help you understand articles in the foreign language.

Think about what you want from the text you are going to read so that you know how to approach it. Are you looking for:

- Specific facts and figures?
- New developments in a specific issue?
- A general idea of an issue you don't know anything about?
- A suitable article for an oral presentation?
- Some material for writing an essay?

Use the cues given by the presentation of an article: picture, title, subheadings, bold and capital letters, first and last paragraphs, first sentences of paragraphs. This will allow you to get the key information from the text.

Use these to make hypotheses about the content of the text. Remember that having a purpose for reading makes it easier.

To get more detailed information, ask yourself the following questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.

Instead of focusing on words you don't know, look for the words you know already. Be aware of the similarities between words in English and the foreign language and use these to your advantage.

Preparing for your exam:

Use the context to help you create meaning. You don't always have to know a word to be able to understand it in context.

It will help you to know the difference between words that look very much like each other.

Another useful skill is to be able to distinguish between words that have different meanings according to their gender.

Knowing the most frequent "false friends" will help you avoid some common pitfalls when reading in the foreign language.

During the exam:

First, make sure you understand what you have to do by paying close attention to the instructions.

Be sure to know which language to use in answering.

Read the questions before reading, to give you an idea of what the text is about and to focus your reading.

Pay attention to the number of points allocated per question: it is often an indication of the amount of information you have to give.

Don't rush into answering the questions; make notes for each question as you go along, but wait until you have read the whole text before formulating your answers.

Make time to re-read your answers carefully before the end of the test, especially if they are in the foreign language.

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