

## Reading and Listening Part 7 – Reading comprehension

**Overview:** This lesson helps students improve their reading speeds, through practice and discussion of reading strategies, to help them with part 7 of the reading section in the TOEIC Reading and Listening test.

**Part of Exam:** TOEIC Reading and Listening section II (Reading) Part 7 (Reading comprehension).

**Language/Skills practised:**

- Reading: skimming and scanning to increase reading speed and accuracy.
- Exam training: selecting which questions to concentrate on.

**Materials:** One copy of Part 7 of a TOEIC practice test (at least 10 texts with questions); one copy of Worksheet 1A and Worksheet 1B per student; a timer, e.g. a stopwatch.

**Time:** 50–70 minutes (not including variations and extensions)

**Preparation:**

Cut up part 7 of the TOEIC practice test you've sourced, separating each reading text from its questions but keeping the questions together. If there are paired texts with one set of questions, keep the two texts together. Shuffle all the pieces.

**Procedure:**

**Part 1: Warmer – shuffled text matching**

1. Either before or at the beginning of the class, spread the cut-up copies of the TOEIC reading practice test around a wide area.
2. Tell the students that you want them to work as a whole class to match the questions and the texts as quickly as possible. Explain that although the task seems very different to what they do in the exam, the skills of quickly finding information are exactly the same as what they will need to do in the test.
3. Let students start, and time them until they have successfully completed the task. If there are any wrong matches you can either just tell them how many they have put together incorrectly or tell them which ones need

re-doing. Don't give any tips on tactics unless they get really stuck.

4. Give feedback on whether students used the best strategies to complete the task in the fastest way. The tactics are:
  - start with the easiest ones first;
  - if you get stuck on one, leave it and come back to it later;
  - read the questions before the text;
  - look for easy to find information first, such as numbers and words with capital letters;
  - mentally underline the information you are looking for.
5. In order to let them try out these skills and give them encouragement that they are getting faster, you could shuffle up the texts and let them try again.

**Part 2: Speed reading competition**

1. Give out the copies of Worksheet 1A.
2. Divide the class into at least two teams of two or three students.
3. Explain, or let the students read, the rules of the game as written on Worksheet 1A. Tell students they only need to choose A, B or C for Question 1 first. Give out Worksheet 1B but make sure students keep this face-down for now.
4. Make sure every team has chosen which question they want to search for in Question 1 and then start the game by letting them turn over Worksheet 1B and start looking.
5. When the first team thinks they have written down the correct answer, make them turn over their sheets so they can't see them and start the timer. Make sure they don't shout out the answers! While they are waiting for the other teams, you can discuss with students what reading strategies they used.
6. When all the teams have finished, check their answers and award points according to the rules of Worksheet 1. Don't let students look at the text when you are discussing which answers are right or while they are waiting as you don't want them to read forward and so get an unfair advantage in later rounds of the game.
7. Repeat with the other questions, one at a time.

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Key:

- 1 A) Bangkok  
B) Port Vila  
C) Brunei
  2. A) 1992–1996  
B) U Thant  
C) Dag
  3. A) www.Z.com, www.X.com, www.Q.com  
B) A village in Wales
  4. A) Nissan  
B) Australia
  - 5 A) Germany  
B) Singer
  - 6 A) Wellington  
B) the Ottoway nation (Native Americans)
8. After the last question, you can discuss similar questions where you cannot easily find what you are looking for in the text due to the way the question is written, e.g. when numbers are written like figures or different words are used with the same meaning (synonyms) in the questions and texts.

up their points and give feedback on which questions they found difficult and why. It is likely that many of their problems that they could not solve by using the techniques you have practised in this lesson were concerned with finding synonyms and antonyms in the text, so this might be a good topic to continue with in the rest of the class, for homework or in the next class.

Teacher's notes

### Part 3: Reading practice preparation

1. Tell students you now want them to use the same skills on a real exam paper.
2. Spread out the copies from the warmer again, but this time with the questions and texts matched.
3. Teams can select any of the texts they like and try to answer the relevant questions as quickly as possible. When they have successfully completed all the questions from one text, they score one point for each question; they can then select another text and continue. Alternatively, they can give up on the one they are reading and change texts at any time.
4. Let the teams select texts and start. When teams think they have finished, check their answers and only tell them how many questions are right and how many are wrong. If there are mistakes, they can try again as many times as they like or give up and change texts.
5. Stop the game when one team finishes their text and there are no more texts for them to take, even if the other teams haven't finished the one they are on. Ask each team to add

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**Example question:**

How much was the initial estimate for the BPP712?

A: \$100,000

B: \$200,000

C: \$600,000

D: \$2,000,000

On the day of the test, the thing that can most help students do well in this part of the exam is simply using their time the best they can. Here are some tips for reading quickly and efficiently:

**Tip 1:** Students should always look at the questions before starting to read the text. This is especially important for lower-level students who can waste time reading things such as addresses of letters due to unfamiliarity with different text types.

**Tip 2:** Students will next need to work out if the questions are about the whole text or if the answers are likely to be found in just one or two sentences somewhere in the text. If all the questions are the second type, they will probably be able to answer all the questions without ever reading through the whole text.

**Tip 3:** Students need to prioritize, especially if they are short of time – which is often the case! This mainly involves doing the easier things first, e.g. avoiding long and difficult texts and questions where it is difficult to find the information, and then coming back to them later if they have time. On the other hand, they shouldn't waste too much time deciding which questions to do. Competitive activities, such as those on this lesson plan, are good practice for this.

**Tip 4:** Once students know which question they are going to answer, they will need to read the question carefully and pick out the important words. This means words that help them understand the question, but also things that will be easy to find in the text such as long words, words with capital letters and numbers. All of these will be easier and quicker to find if there are only one or two examples in the text. In the example above, three or four of the prices in A, B, C and D probably get a mention somewhere in the text, so it is probably better to look for the model number (BPP712). Using this tactic can even sometimes help answer a question that they don't understand!

**Tip 5:** If there are no obvious single words or numbers to look for in order to find out where the necessary information is, the students will need to narrow down their choices by finding which paragraph has the same topic as the question, e.g. which paragraph of the letter of complaint is saying what action is expected in response. Time in class spent on examining paragraph structures in common text types can be useful for this and for generally developing students' reading and writing skills.

**Tip 6:** If students can't find the information they are looking for, it is often a case of looking for a synonym or antonym of the word in the question. Or, occasionally, they'll need to look for a different grammatical form with the same meaning (*Is this your first time?* = *Have you done this before?*, etc). As in many other parts of the test, boosting their scores depends very much on building up their vocabulary knowledge, including lots of business vocabulary.

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For each number below, pick a question you'd like to answer (A, B or C).

Now, when your teacher tells you, find the answer to your first question in the text on Worksheet 1B. Be quick! Write down your answer. When you have finished, turn over your paper and tell your teacher. If you are the first person to finish, your teacher will start the timer.

The timer will stop when everyone has found the answer to their first question. If you have the right answer, you will score one point for each second on the timer. If you have the wrong answer, everyone else will receive those points.

1.     A)     What city is *Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Ayuthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit* the full name of?  
B)     What is the capital city of Vanuatu?  
C)     What country is Bandar Seri Begawan the capital of?
2.     A)     What years was Boutros Boutros-Ghali in charge of the United Nations?  
B)     Who was Secretary General of the United Nations from 1962 to 1971?  
C)     What was the first name of Mr Hammarskjöld?
3.     A)     What are the three shortest website addresses in the world?  
B)     What is the longest domain name in the world named after?
4.     A)     Which company makes a car named 'Z'?  
B)     What country does XXXX beer come from?
5.     A)     What country is the town Baden-Baden in?  
B)     What was Marky Mark's job?
6.     A)     Who lived in a house with the address *1, London*?  
B)     Who were paid \$3,333.33 by the American government?

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## Studying skills, and studying with no skill

The greatest study tip I can offer any of my students is to find something interesting and study that. For example, learning capital city names is about the most boring thing you can possibly do, but the fact that Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Ayuthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit is the full name of Bangkok should stick in the mind forever. It's certainly more interesting than learning the capital of Vanuatu (Port Vila). Bandar Seri Begawan (the capital city of Brunei) comes somewhere in the middle.

The same thing works with people's names. The United Nations is not very interesting, but it has had some very interestingly named people in charge, e.g. Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Egyptian, 1992–1996) and U Thant (Burmese, 1962–71). The first name of the Secretary General from 1953 to 1961 (Dag) is probably easier to remember than his family name (Hammarskjöld).

We can see here that four kinds of things stick in the memory. One is things that are very short, for example the three shortest website addresses in the world – www.Q.com, www.X.com and www.Z.com. These examples also illustrate another point – certain letters of the alphabet stand out and are easier to remember than others, especially those like X and Z that are not often used, have simple forms and look quite different from other letters. The Nissan Z series would probably not have been as successful as the Nissan O, and Castlemaine XXXX beer from Australia would not have made it as Castlemaine UUUU!

We can go back to website homepage names to illustrate the next point with www.llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwyll-llantysiliogogoch.com, a world record breaker named after a village in Wales. As well as its length, (which makes it easy to remember that it exists but very difficult to remember exactly what it is), the repeated letters LL and GO make the word very distinctive. Staying with geography, I don't know if there's a German resort called Baden, but I've never been able to forget the one called Baden-Baden ... And, although Mark Morrison had a better voice, Marky Mark will always be the name of a singer that sticks in my head.

All the things above are also true of numbers. The Ottoway nation of Native Americans are not very famous, but you will find it hard to forget that the federal government gave them a settlement of three thousand, three hundred and thirty three dollars and thirty three cents. And although Nelson got a statue of himself on a very tall column in London and Wellington did not, Nelson didn't get to live in house with the address Number One, London like Wellington did.