

Reviews: Teachers' notes and tips – upper intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Ask students to tell each other about the last time they went to a restaurant. Where did they go, what did they eat, and why did they choose that particular place?

Tip: always try to personalize the topic

It's easy to link eating out and restaurants to students' lives and they'll enjoy the reading more if they can relate to the topic.

- b While students are talking to each other, listen out for any comments about why they went – did anyone go because of a recommendation from a friend, or because of a good review they read?
- c Choose a couple of students who went to a place on recommendation – were they disappointed?
- d Then give each pair of students a copy of the worksheet. They need to read the first part together, which has different questions about reviews, and tell each other their answers.

Tip: give students an opportunity to have a point of view

Asking students what they think about something can often result in 'don't know' responses. This quiz gets students thinking about what they would do in certain situations which can then help them to formulate an opinion.

- e This is a speaking activity so make sure no one is writing, and that they are sharing their ideas.
- f There's no need for any feedback but do ask a few students open class what their answers were to the last question as it helps to create interest in the text.
- g Finally students, still in pairs, decide what they think their answer is to part two. Listen and monitor again and, especially if you can hear different opinions, ask a few students what they think. (The restaurant reviewer has the first opinion).

2 First reading tasks

- a Give each student a copy of the text. Ask them to read it quickly and decide which opinion the writer has about reviewers.
- b Students compare their answers with each other.
- c Feedback: she also has the first opinion (and the three examples at the beginning are examples of how someone would have benefited from honest reviews).

Tip: remind students of the importance of reading quickly

Overall meaning is more important than understanding individual words or phrases. Remind students that they will always have an opportunity of reading the texts again more slowly.

3 Second reading tasks

- a There are a number of opinions expressed in the text. Ask students to read it again and to underline the comments they agree with (or situations they have also experienced themselves), and wiggly underline (or use different coloured pens) those they disagree with.
- b Students then compare their answers – do they agree/disagree about the same comments? Have they not left a tip because they were unhappy with the service? Or do they never leave a tip anyway?
- c Put the students with another pair so that there are now four people sharing their ideas and comments.

Tip: use realia to keep the interest going

It would be nice to have some newspaper reviews of local restaurants – they don't have to be in English. These can be referred to now, and then perhaps looked at again after the reading – are they positive? Useful? Honest?

Tip: encourage real life reactions to a text

It's normal when reading these kind of articles to tell another person if they agree or not with what was said. Give some sentence starters: *This reminds me of when... / I'm not sure I agree with...* Don't let students be passive readers!

4 Post-reading tasks – vocabulary

- a There are 10 phrasal verbs in the text – can the students find them all?
- b Feedback: *turn out, be fed up, to splash out, to not be around, to find out, to be put out, to do (the place) up, to be put off, to close down, to settle on*
- c Students in pairs then work out the meaning of each verb without using a dictionary – there should be enough context for the them to do this.

Tip: encourage students to work out the meaning of phrasal verbs from context

It's always easier for students to understand the meaning of phrasal verbs when they are seen in context rather than being highlighted beforehand in a pre-teach activity.

5 Post-reading tasks – speaking, writing and reading

- a Tell the students that they are the owners of the restaurant and have just read the review in the newspaper. They are very shocked and upset. Working in pairs or small groups they need to come up with a five point plan to stop them from losing customers. Let them brainstorm ideas first and then choose their top 5 ideas.
- b The ideas are then written on an A4 paper with bullet points.
- c These are then put up around the room. All the students read the ideas and choose the pair/group they think will be most successful.

Tip: relate the topic to the real world

You might like to try this website: <http://www.london-eating.co.uk/> which has lots of reviews written by the public rather than professional food critics. Although they are all about London restaurants, food from all around the world is included. Perhaps look yourself first and choose a restaurant with some interesting reviews that the students can look at – how many marks out of twenty would they give it? Also opportunities for some vocabulary work too.