

Written Comprehension

Now we are only going to look at Written Comprehension; we will consider Listening (Aural) Comprehension in Lesson Eighteen. After studying the approach and techniques for answering questions in given passages and sentences, with Activities to follow, you will have three longer passages which you will study, these to be followed by questions testing your knowledge and understanding of the Passages.

Approach

The approach has at first to be slow, unfortunately; everyone wants to get to their goal as soon as possible, but to go too fast in the early stages is a mistake, and in the end will actually cost a lot of time and confusion. So in spite of your undoubted keenness to get on and make visible progress, please be patient, and see how these hints will help you get a deeper and more satisfying understanding of our great English language.

a) How to start

The first way to tackle any passage for Comprehension is to read it through - and the questions - about three times.

- i) The first time is to get a general impression and can be fairly rapid, especially if it is a longish piece. This reading will tell you roughly what the piece is about, its purpose, and anything particular about it; i.e. has it any special jargon (technical words). You can use this reading to make a note in rough of what words and phrases puzzle you, so you can copy them out later.

It is important to read the questions as well, because during your second reading, you will know what to look out for when answering the questions. There are often times when they can help you understand better the whole passage.

- ii) The second time will be slower: here you can use your dictionary to check any unknown words, and if there are sentences or phrases that puzzle you, do write them down so you can work out later what they mean.

It is during this second reading you can compare the questions with the passage. In fact it is a good idea to spend a lot of time on the questions, as it is they that will tell you what it is in the passage you have to look out for to answer them.

During the second reading, find where **you can the answers** to the questions

and write them down in rough, and afterwards you can check in your dictionary and reference books the words, phrases, and sentences you copied earlier with a view to finding their meaning, especially if they relate to any of the questions.

- iii) The third reading is for you to fill in any gaps left during the second. By looking carefully at the questions, you can often fill in these gaps, and don't forget you don't need to look equally carefully at the whole passage; you can concentrate mainly on the parts of it that the questions deal with.

During this reading, you can continue to answer the questions as you come to the parts of the passage dealing with them, not necessarily in the order the questions are presented. Sometimes the order can be quite different

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