

IELTS Reading (Academic): Strategies & Skills

This lesson introduces the Academic Reading test format, teaches time management and skimming/scanning strategies, covers the most common question types with a deep dive into True/False/Not Given, and gives students timed practice with a reading passage and question set.

Target Band:	5.0-7.0	Duration:	60 minutes
Test Module:	Academic	Format:	Instructor-led with slides

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- * Understand the Academic Reading test format and passage types
- * Apply skimming and scanning strategies to find answers faster
- * Manage their time across three passages of increasing difficulty
- * Recognise the most common question types and how to approach each

Materials

- * Slide deck (IELTS_Reading_Academic_Strategies_and_Skills.pptx)
- * Short academic reading passage (400-500 words) with 5 T/F/NG questions (teacher-prepared or from practice materials)
- * Timer (for timed reading practice)
- * Whiteboard / shared screen

Lesson Procedure

Phase 1: Warm-Up & Test Overview

Time: 0:00-0:10 | **Duration:** 10 min | **Slides:** 1-3

- * Display title slide. Ask: *"What's the biggest challenge with reading in English? Time? Vocabulary? Both?"*
- * Show Slide 2 (Learning Objectives). Frame: *"Today we focus on strategies that help you find answers faster, not on reading every word."*
- * Show Slide 3 (Test at a Glance). Walk through the three passages: factual, discursive, complex. Emphasise the difficulty progression.
- * Highlight key facts: 60 minutes, 3 passages, 40 questions, no extra transfer time (unlike Listening).
- * Ask: *"What's different from the Listening test?"* (Answer: you can go back and re-read; no transfer time.)
- > *The 'no transfer time' point is critical. Unlike Listening, answers must be written directly on the answer sheet as students go.*
- > *Students who have taken General Training should understand that Academic passages are longer and more complex, drawn from journals and textbooks.*

Phase 2: Strategy 1: Manage Your Time

Time: 0:10-0:18 | **Duration:** 8 min | **Slides:** 4

- * Show Slide 4. Walk through the recommended time split: ~15 min for Passage 1, ~20 for Passage 2, ~25 for Passage 3.
- * Explain the logic: *"Passage 1 is easiest -- finish it quickly to save time for harder passages. Don't spend 25 minutes on Passage 1 and rush through Passage 3."*
- * Teach the 2-minute rule: *"If you're stuck on one question for more than 2 minutes, mark it and move on. Come back if you have time."*
- * **Quick exercise (3 minutes):** Give students a simple maths problem: if you have 40 questions in 60 minutes, how many seconds per question on average? (90 seconds.) Ask: *"Does that feel like a lot of time?"*
- * Key message: *"Time management is a strategy, not just a skill. Plan your time before you start reading."*
- > *Many students spend too long on Passage 1 because it feels manageable. Coach them to move quickly through the easier passages.*
- > *The 90-seconds-per-question calculation often shocks students and motivates them to practise under timed conditions.*

Phase 3: Strategy 2: Skim & Scan

Time: 0:18-0:28 | **Duration:** 10 min | **Slides:** 5

- * Show Slide 5 (two-column: Skimming vs. Scanning). Walk through each strategy.
- * **Skimming demo (3 minutes):** Project a short paragraph on the board. Give students 30 seconds to skim it. Then ask: *"What is this paragraph about?"* They should be able to answer in one sentence.
- * **Scanning demo (3 minutes):** Ask a specific question about the same paragraph (e.g., a name, date, or number). Give students 15 seconds to find it. Discuss how they located it.
- * Key distinction: *"Skim first to understand the passage. Scan second to find specific answers. Never start by reading line by line."*
- * Ask: *"Which strategy is more useful for matching headings? Which for sentence completion?"* (Skimming for headings, scanning for completion.)
- > Use a paragraph on a topic students are likely unfamiliar with -- this makes the skimming exercise more realistic.
- > Scanning practice should use concrete targets: names, numbers, capitalised words. These are the easiest to scan for.

Phase 4: Common Question Types

Time: 0:28-0:35 | **Duration:** 7 min | **Slides:** 6

- * Show Slide 6. Walk through the five question types and their tips.
- * For each type, give a one-sentence strategy: T/F/NG (only use the text), Matching Headings (skim each paragraph), Sentence Completion (check the word limit), Multiple Choice (read all options), Summary Completion (follows passage order).
- * Ask: *"Which question type do you find hardest?"* Take a quick show of hands. Most will say T/F/NG.
- * Bridge: *"T/F/NG is so commonly difficult that we're going to spend extra time on it."*
- > Keep this overview brief. The goal is awareness of variety, not mastery of each type in this one lesson.

Phase 5: T/F/NG Deep Dive

Time: 0:35-0:42 | **Duration:** 7 min | **Slides:** 7

- * Show Slide 7. Walk through the three definitions with examples.
- * Emphasise the key mistake: *"NOT GIVEN doesn't mean 'probably false.' It means the text doesn't mention this at all. If you have to guess or use your own knowledge, it's probably NOT GIVEN."*
- * **Quick drill (3 minutes):** Read 3 statements aloud and ask students to classify each as T/F/NG based on a sentence you provide. Discuss disagreements.
- * Key rule: *"Only use information in the text. Your outside knowledge can lead you to the wrong answer."*
- > The most common T/F/NG error is confusing FALSE with NOT GIVEN. Drill this distinction repeatedly.
- > FALSE = the text says the opposite. NOT GIVEN = the text says nothing about it.

Phase 6: Before & After

Time: 0:42-0:45 | **Duration:** 3 min | **Slides:** 8

- * Show Slide 8. Read the BEFORE scenario: student uses their own knowledge and answers TRUE.
- * Read the AFTER scenario: student checks only the text and correctly answers FALSE.
- * Key message: *"The AFTER student didn't know more English. They just followed the strategy: only use the text."*
- > Quick visual reinforcement. Don't linger -- the practice activity is next.

Phase 7: Practice Activity: Timed Reading

Time: 0:45-0:57 | **Duration:** 12 min | **Slides:** 9

- * Show Slide 9. Read the instructions: skim (2 min), answer questions (8 min), compare (2 min).
- * **Step 1 -- Skim (2 minutes):** Students read the passage quickly. After 2 minutes, ask: *"What is this passage about? Write one sentence."*
- * **Step 2 -- Answer (8 minutes):** Students answer the 5 T/F/NG questions individually. Remind them to use only the text.
- * **Step 3 -- Compare (2 minutes):** Students compare answers with a partner. They must justify each answer by pointing to the specific sentence in the text.
- * Class debrief: Go through the correct answers. For any disagreements, read the relevant sentence aloud and discuss.
- > Prepare a short academic passage (400-500 words) on a science or social science topic with 5 T/F/NG questions. Include at least one NOT GIVEN to test whether students distinguish it from FALSE.
- > Circulate during the answering phase. Watch for students who answer too quickly without returning to the text.

Phase 8: Wrap-Up & Key Takeaways

Time: 0:57-1:00 | **Duration:** 3 min | **Slides:** 10

- * Show Slide 10. Read each takeaway and reinforce.
- * *"How do we split our time?" -> 15/20/25. "What do we do first with a passage?" -> Skim. "What's the #1 rule for T/F/NG?" -> Only use the text.*
- * Close: *"The Reading test rewards strategy as much as English ability. Practise under timed conditions every time."*
- > Keep tight. The timed practice is the real capstone.

Differentiation Notes

For students targeting Band 6.5-7.0: Add a second question type to the practice activity (e.g., 3 matching-headings questions alongside the T/F/NG set). Challenge them to complete both sets within the 8-minute time limit. During the debrief, ask them to explain their reasoning for each answer using evidence from the text.

For students at Band 5.0-5.5: Pre-teach 5-8 key vocabulary items from the reading passage before students begin. Allow an additional 2 minutes for the answering phase. During the skim phase, work through the first paragraph together as a class before students continue independently. Provide a T/F/NG decision flowchart: "Does the text mention this? If no -> NOT GIVEN. If yes, does the text agree? If yes -> TRUE. If no -> FALSE."

Assessment

Formative assessment throughout. Evaluate against:

- * **Time awareness:** Can the student explain how to split 60 minutes across three passages and apply the 2-minute rule?
- * **Skimming skill:** Can the student identify the main idea of a passage within 2-3 minutes without reading every word?
- * **Scanning skill:** Can the student locate specific information (names, dates, numbers) quickly by using keywords from the question?
- * **T/F/NG accuracy:** Can the student distinguish between FALSE (text contradicts) and NOT GIVEN (text doesn't mention) consistently?