Reading skills: Tips for teachers

- Ensure reading is a regular and focused part of lessons throughout the course.

- Use published materials that relate to the exam (e.g. textbooks, specimen papers, past papers), but also accessible material from other sources (e.g. internet based) to familiarise learners with the target language.

- Model approaches to questions and answers when practising reading – rather than just telling them to read and answer the questions, talk them through the question, how it could be approached, how they can prepare themselves for what they are likely to read about. Displaying the question on the board or using a visualiser and making your own notes helps provide a clear, visual demonstration of this.

- Ensure learners are familiar with a range of words that may be distractors – common ones include negative forms (but not exclusively) such as, but, however, whereas, without, except, only, hardly (ever), as long as, rather, only if, especially, largely.

- Practise synonyms can be done through modelling reading style activities or practice tasks where learners match vocabulary-based synonyms. You could also have lesson starters/tasks where you give learners a topic/title and they have to list / spider-diagram all vocabulary associated with it (e.g. environment – learners may write types of energy forms, environmental problems, measures of environmental protection, key verbs, nouns and adjectives sorted into categories of positive and negative meaning) – this also helps consolidate and build vocabulary knowledge.

- Develop learner confidence with reading – for example, provide a glossary of some of the key unknown terms. Break tasks down so that they are not attempting too much at once in the practice stage.

- Encourage note taking. Learners could try to reconstruct the whole text (if it is short) using the notes they have taken down. This could either be done immediately after reading or at a later point in the lesson (or both) to test recall.

- Explain why answers are right or wrong when going through them – by highlighting why some options are incorrect, this may help to address common misconceptions.

- Make building word families a regular part of lessons – creating lists of related nouns, adjectives and verbs to build up knowledge of vocabulary, e.g. to drive, drove, driver, drivable, etc.

- Remind learners of the usefulness of cognates, but also look at 'false friends' (words in the target language that look like English but mean something different.

- Working by elimination is a useful skill for reading, e.g. in multiple-choice style questions, learners could tick or cross options as they read before deciding on a final answer.

- Repeat exposure – use the same reading extract in subsequent lessons but change the task type. This is helpful in increasing linguistic confidence and familiarity of vocabulary.

- As far as possible, make sure practice tasks mirror the **types** of questions that are in the exam to build familiarity with question types.