

EXPANDING READING SKILLS

•intermediate

**Linda Markstein
Louise Hirasawa**

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INTRODUCTION

Expanding Reading Skills: Intermediate is designed for adults who want to strengthen their reading skills for academic, personal, or career purposes. These materials have been tested successfully with both native and non-native speakers of English.

Expanding Reading Skills: Intermediate is part of a reading series by the same authors. It is comparable in difficulty with *Developing Reading Skills: Intermediate*, and it can be used as (a) a replacement or (b) a follow-up for that book. With the possibility of sequence in mind, the authors have taken care to avoid duplication of exercise items in the two texts.

Expanding Reading Skills: Intermediate and *Developing Reading Skills: Intermediate* can also be followed by the advanced texts by the same authors, *Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced* and *Developing Reading Skills: Advanced*.

All the texts in this reading series emphasize reading practice and the development of reading speed. The readings come from current nonfiction magazine and newspaper writing, and they cover a wide subject range in order to expose the reader to the content demands of different types of reading material.

We have tried to select the readings with great care so that we would have to make as few changes as possible from the original texts. Where adaptations (simplifying structures and vocabulary and glossing) were needed, we have relied on the advice of the experts: ESL students and ESL classroom teachers. Their suggestions in extensive field testing have helped us develop materials that are challenging and yet accessible to intermediate-level students.

The readings are arranged in order of difficulty according to field testing. The exercises deliberately build upon vocabulary and structures introduced in earlier chapters, so we recommend that the chapters be presented in the given order if possible.

Suggestions for Introducing the Reading

The more time spent introducing the reading, the better the results. Intermediate-level students in particular benefit from careful reading preparation because it helps them to be more receptive to the content. There are many ways of working into the reading depending upon the goals of the lesson and the needs of the students. In general, we suggest activities of two basic types:

Type A—Content Predictions

1) *Illustrations and Title Clues:* Using only illustrative material (photograph, map, graph) and the title, have the students discuss (a) what they think the subject is; (b) what the picture tells them about the subject; (c) how they feel about the subject, taking care to examine in detail their past experience or knowledge of the subject.

2) *Discussion Topics:* Near the end of every chapter, there are several discussion-composition topics relating to the reading. It can be interesting and useful to give these topics to the students *before* they read the article now and then. This helps to activate their awareness of the subject and gives them a focus for their reading.

3) *Content Expectations:* Ask the students what they expect the article to say before they read it. (Note: It is useful to write these statements on the chalkboard so that they can be re-examined later.)

4) *Point of View:* Ask the students how they think the writer feels about the subject. What view do they expect that he or she will present? Why?

A note of caution: It is quite natural for people to feel hesitant about hazarding these guesses at first. Care has to be taken to establish an environment of freedom where there is no penalty for being "wrong."

Type B—Word Connotation and Tone

In order to develop an awareness of word connotation and word tone, it can be both useful and challenging to focus on activities of another type. These activities we usually introduce with a word-phrase association. We choose a very general, comprehensive word or phrase related to the reading, write it on the chalkboard, and then ask the students to freely associate any words that come to mind until there are perhaps 30 to 40 words and phrases on the board. Some of the activities available at this point are:

1) *Categorizing:* Have the students make up a few general categories into which these words can be classified.

2) *Word Selection:* Have the students (a) decide which words have negative connotations and which ones positive; (b) choose three words they would like to delete; (c) choose the three words they think are most closely related to the subject. Ask them to explain the reasons for their choices.

Because these activities often generate lively discussion and disagreement, it can be useful to have the students work together in small groups.

There are many more ways to extend these introductory activities to suit the needs of a specific class. Above all, we urge you to vary your approach from time to time to heighten student interest and involvement.

Using the Reading Text to Reinforce Other Language Development Activities

In many English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language programs, reading is taught in combination with other language-development activities. Consequently, teachers often ask us how our texts can be used to reinforce grammar, sentence structure, and composition activities. We believe that intellectual content is an essential component of real language activities no matter what they may be, and our readers provide content that can be effectively used for a variety of purposes.

Let us suppose that the grammar focus in a lesson is the past tense. Most of the readings in this book can be discussed using past tense:

- *What were some of the reasons the author gave for the expanding deserts?*
- *What were some of the myths about the American family?*
- *What were some of the differences the author mentioned between Mexican and American comic books?*

In the discussion-composition topics near the end of each chapter, we have tried to phrase the topics in such a way as to naturally elicit different verb tenses. These topics may give you ideas for how to focus discussions in order to give practice in specific grammar elements.

If the aim of the lesson is to give practice in pronunciation and intonation, sentences from the reading (or perhaps the comprehension check) can be used. This can lend meaning to the practice.

The readings can be used very easily to teach sentence patterns—and to prove that the various sentence patterns of English are actually used! All the readings provide repeated examples of the sentence patterns.

We have always believed that reading should be taught together with composition and that the best results come from developing these skills together: good readers are good writers are good readers. . . . We have tried to provide interesting, fully developed composition topics in order to guide students in their compositions. These composition topics have proved particularly effective when the students have been given ample opportunity to discuss them before they begin writing.

Reading-Skills Development—Suggested Procedures

The reading class should be one in which students will develop useful reading skills. As in the development of any other skill, guided practice over an extended period of time is essential. In the beginning, many students will

have difficulty in finishing the articles in the time you suggest, and they will need encouragement and reassurance from you. (Note: in this text—unlike *Developing Reading Skills: Advanced* and *Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced*—we have not recommended specific reading times. We have given reading speeds (words per minute) after every reading. You can choose the most appropriate time limit for your class. We found too much variation between classes to feel confident about recommending times.)

The students must learn to stop reading word by word and, instead, read to grasp the general ideas of the article. This can be achieved by careful and consistent use of the rapid reading and comprehension exercises. The transition from specific words to general ideas takes time, and the students need a great deal of encouragement to make this adjustment. They should try to guess the probable meanings of unfamiliar words from their contexts rather than look these words up in the dictionary. (We recommend that dictionaries not be used at all in the classroom.)

The Comprehension Check reflects the major ideas of the article in order to help the students learn to focus on important information. When they read the article a second time, they will be aware, through the Check statements, of what information is important, and they should be encouraged to read with these statements in mind. The Check statements appear in the same order as the presentation of relevant information in the article to aid in recall of that information and to develop a sense of the article's organization.

Expanding Reading Skills: Intermediate has been designed for self-instruction as well as for class instruction (a separate answer key is available). When the text is used for self-instruction, the student will achieve the best results by following the recommended reading procedures.

The rapid reading must be carefully controlled to be effective. We recommend the following steps and suggest that the entire first lesson be done carefully in class to make sure everyone understands the procedure.

- 1) The students should write the numbers 1 through 10 on both sides of a piece of paper, marking one side "Test 1" and the other side "Test 2."
- 2) The teacher then announces the amount of time for the first reading of the article. (Note: the time should be limited enough to provide challenge.) Students begin reading.
- 3) While the students are reading, they should be told at intervals how many minutes they have left and which paragraph they should be starting; for example, "Four minutes, paragraph seven." If a timer clock is used, they can pace themselves.
- 4) When the teacher announces "Time is up!" the students *must* stop reading whether or not they have finished the article. (In the beginning, many students may *not* finish the article on the first reading.)

- 5) Students should turn to the Comprehension Check at the end of the chapter, read the statements, and answer true (T) or false (F) on their papers under Test 1. The students should base their answers *only* on information contained in the article.
- 6) When they have completed the Comprehension Check, students should turn their papers over so that Test 1 answers cannot be seen.
- 7) The teacher should ask the students to reread the article, *starting from the beginning* and skimming quickly over previously read portions.
- 8) The teacher should announce the time for the second reading. The second reading time should be shorter than the first to encourage scanning for specific information.
- 9) Repeat Step 3.
- 10) Repeat Step 5, marking answers under Test 2. Students should not look at their first answers (Test 1) or at the article. (Answers on Test 2 may differ from those on Test 1.)
- 11) When the reading is particularly long or difficult, a third reading may be necessary. If so, the same procedures should be repeated. Students can fold their test papers to make a fresh surface for Test 3 answers.
- 12) After the last Comprehension Check, students can work together in small groups in checking their answers. Answers should be documented by reference to specific page and paragraph numbers in the article. The emphasis should be on *supporting* the answers. The teacher should encourage well-reasoned interpretations even if they disagree with the given answers.

The Comprehension Check should NEVER be used as a graded quiz. It is the student's personal record of progress and comprehension.

In order to teach another useful reading skill—initial surveying before a second, careful reading—we recommend that Steps 2 and 8 occasionally be reversed. When this is done, the reasons for change in procedure should first be explained to the students to avoid confusion and frustration.

In the beginning, students may show little improvement from Test 1 to Test 2 and, in some cases, scores may even drop. It is particularly important to remind students that it takes time and practice to develop reading skills—just as it does to develop any other skill. They should be encouraged to read the article again outside class for additional practice. With practice over a period of time, scores and comprehension should improve noticeably.

When the article is discussed in class, attention should generally be directed to sentence and paragraph content rather than to individual words. If a key word is unfamiliar, the students should be encouraged to guess the meaning from the context, and they should also be encouraged to see that words can have different meanings in different contexts.

Depending upon the students' needs and ability, there are several ways to review the article orally:

x *Introduction*

- 1) The teacher can ask questions about the content.
- 2) Students can ask each other questions about the content of specific paragraphs.
- 3) Individual students can explain the meaning of a paragraph in their own words.
- 4) Students can summarize the article orally as a class exercise.
- 5) Students can bring related articles to class and give reports on them.

Reading-Skills Development—Exercises

The exercises in *Expanding Reading Skills: Intermediate* concentrate on three areas of reading skills development: 1) vocabulary development; 2) structural analysis; 3) relational and inferential analysis.

Both the *Analysis of Ideas* (Exercise A) and *Interpretation of Words and Phrases* (Exercise B) develop the student's ability to understand the inner meaning and to discover what is written "between the lines." In these exercises, many types of questions commonly used in schools in English-speaking countries have been included.

Analysis of Ideas and Relationships: This exercise will help the student develop the ability to distinguish between main and supporting ideas, to detect implications, interpret facts, and reach conclusions about the major points in the article. In this way, the student can develop skill in active, critical reading.

Interpretation of Words and Phrases: Important (and difficult) sentences, idioms, and concepts are singled out for analysis of meaning. This will lead to better understanding of the article.

Reading Reconstruction: This exercise provides the opportunity to practice some of the newly learned vocabulary in a short, clearly constructed paragraph. After reading the paragraph several times, the student can then try to restate the content of the paragraph (either orally or in writing). Another variation on this exercise is to read the paragraph to the students several times and then ask the students to reconstruct the content based upon their aural comprehension of the paragraph. We have used personal narrative as well as expository models in these paragraphs.

Antonyms: Vocabulary is extended through a study of word contrasts in a meaningful context.

Synonyms: Vocabulary is extended through a study of word similarities in a meaningful context.

Word Forms: Vocabulary is developed through a study of word families.

Vocabulary Application and Supplementary Vocabulary both provide the student with opportunities to practice newly learned vocabulary in a meaningful context.

Determiners and *Prepositions* concentrate on particular areas of language difficulty while using content from the article.

Sentence Scramble draws attention to the importance of word order in English. Words are presented in random order, and students are asked to make a meaningful sentence out of these words.

Cloze: In order to build an awareness of syntactic and semantic cues in language and, specifically, in print, the reader is asked to fill in blanks in a passage with *any* appropriate word. For the purpose of this exercise, it is not necessary or important for the student to supply the exact word found in the text. Any appropriate filler satisfying the semantic and syntactic constraints should be accepted.

Punctuation: To highlight common punctuation patterns (and options), students are asked to restore capital letters, commas, and periods to a paragraph.

Review Examinations

A short review examination appears after every four chapters.



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1

TRIBALISM IS IMPORTANT IN AFRICA

[In Africa, everyone considers it important to be loyal to his own tribal group. This can be good for each person, but it can cause problems too. This article discusses some of the advantages and disadvantages of tribalism.]

1 A university student in Nairobi, Kenya, was stopped for a traffic violation the other day. The policeman took out his ticket book and asked, "What tribe are you?" In Lusaka, Zambia, a young man applying for a job was told to see the manager. He leaned over the receptionist's desk and asked, "What tribe is he?" When the receptionist told him that the manager was a Mashona, the applicant replied, "Then I'll never get the job."

2 This phenomenon is called tribalism. There are more than 2,000 tribes in black Africa. Each has its own language, customs, names, and physical characteristics that make its members almost immediately recognizable to a person from another tribe. To the Westerner, tribalism is one of the most difficult of African customs to understand. It makes many people think of savagery, warfare, or old-fashioned customs.

3 However, to most Africans, tribalism simply means very strong loyalty to one's ethnic group. It is a force that can be both good and bad. By definition tribalism means sharing among members of the extended family. It makes sure that a person is taken care of by his own group. To give a job to a fellow tribesman is not wrong; it is an obligation. Similarly, for a politician or military leader, it is considered good common sense to choose his closest advisers from

people of his own tribe. This ensures security, continuity, authority. Tribal loyalty may mean a quick promotion—from sergeant to captain, from clerk to manager—within a very short time.

4 Modern African politicians publicly speak out against tribal divisions. Yet it remains perhaps the most powerful force in day-to-day African life. As evidence of tribalism, in 1977 in Kenya, President Jomo Kenyatta's Kikuyu tribe controlled business and politics. Eight of the 21 cabinet posts, including the most important four, were filled by Kikuyus. In Uganda in the same year, the President's small Kakwa tribe filled almost all the highest government and military positions. In Angola, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, the fighting in the past ten years can be partly explained by disagreements among tribes.

5 One country that has largely avoided tribal problems is Tanzania. Some observers say this is partly because Tanzania has so many tribes (about 120) that none has been able to become a major force.

TURN TO COMPREHENSION CHECK AT END OF CHAPTER

READING TIMES:

1st reading _____ minutes

2nd reading _____ minutes

READING SPEED:

5 minutes = 76 wpm

4 minutes = 95 wpm

3 minutes = 127 wpm

2 minutes = 191 wpm

A. Analysis of Ideas and Relationships: Circle the letter next to the best answer.

1. In paragraph 1, why did the student reply "Then I'll never get the job?"
 - a. Because he was a Mashona.
 - ☒ b. Because he was not a Mashona.
 - c. Because he couldn't do the job.
2. The two situations in paragraph 1 are examples of:
 - a. typical young men in Africa.
 - b. unusual problems.
 - ☒ c. the importance of tribalism.
3. In paragraph 2, "Each has its own customs," it refers to:
 - a. black Africa.
 - ☒ b. tribe.
 - c. members.
4. In paragraph 2, "It makes people think of old-fashioned customs," it refers to:
 - ☒ a. tribalism.
 - b. Westerner.
 - c. difficult.
5. According to paragraph 3, what is the definition of tribalism?
 - a. Giving a job to a fellow tribesman.
 - b. A force that can be both good and bad.
 - ☒ c. Sharing among members of the extended family.
6. In paragraph 3, one example of how a tribe takes care of its own people is:
 - ☒ a. "tribal loyalty may mean a quick promotion."
 - b. "very strong loyalty to one's ethnic group."
 - c. "a force that can be both good and bad."
7. Find two more examples in paragraph 3 of how a person is taken care of by his own tribe:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
8. In paragraph 4, "the most important four" refers to:
 - ☒ a. cabinet posts.
 - b. businesses.
 - c. Kikuyus.

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9. In paragraph 4, how many examples are there “as evidence of tribalism”? What are they?
- Three.
 - Two.
 - One.
10. In paragraph 5, (about 120) is in parentheses to show:
- that it is unimportant.
 - how many tribes there are.
 - that it is a large number.
- B. Interpretation of Words and Phrases: Circle the letter next to the best answer.**
1. A student was stopped for a traffic violation.
- stopping traffic
 - breaking a traffic law
 - walking into the traffic
2. The policeman took out his ticket book.
- put away
 - tore up
 - brought out
3. Tribalism means loyalty to the ethnic group.
- Africans
 - political group that is in control
 - people of one race or origin
4. Tribalism means sharing among members of the extended family. An extended family includes:
- parents, children, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents.
 - parents and children only.
 - sisters and brothers only.
5. It makes sure that a person is taken care of.
- guarantees
 - forces
 - hopes