

# **DEVELOPING READING SKILLS**

**•intermediate**

**Linda Markstein  
Louise Hirasawa**

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# INTRODUCTION

*Developing 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.

*Developing Reading Skills: Intermediate* is a predecessor to *Developing Reading Skills: Advanced* and *Expanding Reading Skills: Advanced*. This text also emphasizes guided reading practice and the development of reading speed. The readings come from current non-fiction, 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 text. We have occasionally simplified structures and vocabulary in the earlier readings. In later readings, we have used margin glosses to help the reader out. The readings are arranged in order of difficulty, and the exercises deliberately build upon vocabulary and structures introduced in earlier chapters. 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) *Illustration 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*: (a) Have the students decide which words have negative connotations and which ones positive; (b) have the students choose three words they would like to delete; (c) have the students 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 tips the author gave for doing business in the Arab world?*
- *What were some of the problems in cities of the past?*
- *What was the best year in your life?*

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 of 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.

*Developing 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 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 all 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:

- 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 *Developing 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 students 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). A variation of this exercise is to read the paragraph to the students several times and then task 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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## MOTHERHOOD IN A CHANGING WORLD: WOMEN IN GHANA

[Most women in Ghana have always combined an active role in the economy—mainly as farmers and traders—with an active role as wives and mothers of large families. Traditionally, children helped their mothers at home and at work, but now children go to school and can't help as much. How do working mothers in Ghana cope with their responsibilities in the home and on the job now? This article discusses the changes that are taking place in Ghana today.]

1 Most women in Ghana—the educated and illiterate, the urban and rural, the young and old—work to earn an income in addition to maintaining their roles as housewives and mothers. Their reputation for economic independence, self-reliance, and hard work is well known and well deserved.

2 Most of Ghana's working women are farmers and traders. Only one woman in five, or even fewer, can be classified as simply housewives. Even these women often earn money by sewing or by baking and cooking things to sell. They also maintain vegetable gardens and chicken farms. Indeed, the woman who depends entirely upon her husband for her support is looked upon with disfavor.

3 Nine out of ten women fifteen years of age and over are married. Women say they would like to have six or more children, and in fact an average of seven children is born to every woman. In short, the normal life pattern for most Ghanaian women is to combine an active role in the economy with an active role as wife and mother of a large family.

4 How do these working mothers cope with their multiple responsibilities in the home and on the job? Traditionally the tasks of motherhood have been shared. Mothers and sisters, grandmothers and nieces all helped to raise the children and to carry out daily tasks, including housework, trading, and farming activities. As the family grew, older brothers and sisters also helped to care for the younger ones and helped in the home.

5 Today with more children going to school, with more people moving away from their traditional homes where support from their family would be provided, how can the mother cope with her many responsibilities? Not only must she continue her income-producing activities, but she must take on such heavy, time-consuming housework as carrying water and firewood, grinding and pounding, along with her frequent burden of pregnancy, nursing, baby and child care.

6 Some new ideas are being tried. One of these is family planning to help reduce family size. Another helpful solution is the day care center, but this is available mainly in urban areas, and usually the fees are too high for the poor. Ghanaians realize that more day care centers are needed. Ghana today is looking for new ways to meet the needs of women and their families so women can continue to play their multiple roles in the home and in the economy.

**TURN TO COMPREHENSION CHECK AT END OF CHAPTER**

**READING TIMES:**

1st reading \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

2nd reading \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

**READING SPEED:**

5 minutes = 77 wpm

4 minutes = 96 wpm

3 minutes = 126 wpm

2 minutes = 192 wpm

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

1. The main idea of paragraph 1 is that:
  - a. women in Ghana are lazy.
  - ☒ b. women in Ghana work and maintain families.
  - c. most women in Ghana are young.
2. In paragraph 1, the words inside the dashes (—) describe:
  - a. a few of the women in Ghana.
  - b. the non-working women.
  - c. most of the women in Ghana.
3. The main idea of paragraph 2 is that:
  - a. one woman in five is a housewife.
  - b. some women don't want to earn money.
  - c. even the non-working women try to earn money.
4. According to the last sentence in paragraph 2, what do people in Ghana prefer?
  - a. A woman who does not work at all.
  - b. A woman who works.
  - c. A woman who doesn't marry.
5. Read paragraph 3; then match the number with the questions.

a. How many women are married?	1. 9 out of 10
b. How many children do women want?	2. 15
c. By what age are most women married?	3. 6 or 7
6. Paragraph 4 gives examples of:
  - a. ideas for the future.
  - b. the traditional way of life for mothers.
  - c. the current situation.
7. In paragraph 5 "her frequent burden of pregnancy..." how does the author feel about pregnancy, nursing, and child care?
  - a. She thinks these are easy tasks.
  - b. She thinks these are easier than housework.
  - c. She thinks these are hard tasks.

How do you know?
8. Paragraph 5 gives examples of:
  - a. ideas for the future.
  - b. the traditional way of life for mothers.
  - c. the current situation.

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9. Paragraph 6 gives examples of:
- a. ideas for the future.
  - b. the traditional way of life.
  - c. the current situation.
10. The author of this article probably agrees that:
- a. women should continue both their roles.
  - b. women should not work.
  - c. women should stay home with their children.

**B. Interpretation of Words and Phrases: Circle the letter next to the best answer.**

1. "Their reputation is well deserved" means:
- ☒ a. there are good reasons why they are respected.
  - b. many people do not respect them.
  - c. four out of five women work.
2. Their **self-reliance** is well known.
- a. confidence in themselves
  - b. dependence on other people
  - c. role as mothers
3. In paragraph 2, "Even these women. . .," **these** refers to:
- a. the women classified as housewives.
  - b. the traders.
  - c. most of Chana's working women.
4. **Indeed**, they are looked upon with disfavor.
- a. often
  - b. only
  - c. in fact
5. **In fact**, women have an average of seven children.
- a. the truth is
  - b. no one really knows
  - c. perhaps

6. In short, the normal pattern is to work and be a mother too.
  - a. to summarize
  - b. certainly
  - c. at last
7. In paragraph 4, "help care for the younger ones," ones refers to:
  - a. activities.
  - b. mothers.
  - c. brothers and sisters.
8. Housework is a time-consuming burden.
  - a. **time-consuming:**      1. takes a lot of time      2. takes very little time  
   3. is not important
  - b. **burden:**      1. heavy work      2. easy job      3. pregnancy
9. Ghana is looking for ways to meet the needs of women and their families.
  - a. say hello to
  - b. provide what is needed for
  - c. give money to
10. Match the following antonyms (opposite words):
  - a. self-reliant      1. rural
  - b. urban      2. separate
  - c. combine      3. dependent
  - d. reduce      4. increase