


INTERMEDIATE READING PRACTICES



Revised Edition



Building
Reading
&
Vocabulary
Skills

Keith S. Folse

MICHIGAN

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Vocabulary Skills

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Ann Arbor
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS

*To Emily de Montluzin, my first foreign language teacher,
who opened my eyes to what learning as well as
teaching a language are all about.*

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ISBN 0-472-08206-X

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 92-63210

Published in the United States of America by

The University of Michigan Press

Manufactured in the United States of America

1996 1995 1994

4 3 2

First edition illustrations by Carlos Lacayo

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Acknowledgments

Several people were instrumental in the completion of this book. I would like to thank Rosemary Woullard and Jude Lupinetti for their ideas concerning the initial drafts of the early lessons. Likewise, I am grateful to Mark Sandifer for reading parts of the manuscript and offering his comments and suggestions. I would also like to extend a special thanks to a former teaching colleague, Ruth Todd-Chattin, for her valuable insights and ideas concerning reading in the ESL classroom. Special thanks go to Jan Smith for suggestions concerning material chosen for the extended reading fluency exercises.

Grateful acknowledgment is also made to Childrens Press for permission to adapt reading selections appearing on pages 45, 47, 67, 120, 145, 166, 186, 195, and 244 of this volume from *Young People's Encyclopedia* © 1972, 1973 by Childrens Press Division of Regensteiner Publishing Enterprises, Inc.; to Raintree Publishers for material adapted from the *Raintree Illustrated Science Encyclopedia*, volumes 1, 5, 7, and 12; to *Childcraft: The How and Why Library*, for material adapted from volume 7 "How We Get Things," © 1971 Field Enterprises Educational Corporation; for material adapted with modifications from *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1980 Edition, © by Grolier Incorporated, reprinted by permission; to Random House for material adapted from *The Look-It-Up Book of Presidents*, by Wyatt Blassingame, © 1968, 1984 by Random House; for material adapted from *My Side of the Mountain*, by Jean Craighead George, copyright © 1959 by Jean Craighead George, renewed 1987 by Jean Craighead George, used by permission of Dutton Children's Books, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.; and for material from "The Day I Met My Mother," by Faith L. Mahaney. In *Reader's Digest*, October, 1981, condensed from the Escondido Times-Advocate, May, 1981, copyright 1981 by Times-Advocate, Inc., reprinted with permission of the *Times Advocate*.

To the Teacher

This book contains exercises that provide practice in basic reading skills for intermediate students of English as a Second Language (ESL). It is intended for an intensive course of approximately eight to ten weeks in which at least one hour per day is devoted to reading improvement.

This text has three main goals:

1. to teach important reading skills to intermediate students
2. to help those students develop and use these skills through gradual, sequential practices (ranging from single sentences to real, longer reading selections)
3. to encourage students to build up their general vocabulary

The reading skills emphasized in this text include finding the main idea, reading accurately, drawing conclusions and inferences, reading rapidly, using an English-English dictionary, making predictions about a given text, reading for specific information, and reading for enjoyment.

This text consists of ten lessons. Each lesson follows a similar format of twenty exercises. At the end of every lesson, there is an extended fluency reading practice. The text also has crossword puzzles to help students review and learn new vocabulary in a fun way.

Contents of a Lesson

Word Parts	four to six affixes, their meanings, and sample sentences
Exercises 1, 2, 3	
Context Clues	different kinds of general contexts
Exercises 4, 5, 6	
Dictionary Usage	basic skills in using a monolingual dictionary
Exercise 7	
Sentence Study	answering specific information or drawing conclusions from a single sentence
Exercises 8, 9	
Main Idea	the main idea of a paragraph
Exercise 10	
Scanning	scanning for specific information
Exercise 11	
Faster Reading	improving reading rate
Exercises 12, 14, 16, 18	word practices
Exercises 13, 15, 17, 19	timed reading practices
Vocabulary Review	multiple-choice questions for rapid review
Exercise 20	
Extended Reading Fluency	longer reading selections (various styles and topics)

This text was written especially for intermediate-level students. Obviously the vocabulary employed has been controlled to match the students' English ability. In addition, the grammatical structures used in the exercises and selections have been controlled to coordinate them with those most likely being studied in any intermediate ESL grammar class.

Thus, the exercises in this text provide not only indispensable practice of reading skills but also further reinforcement of the grammatical structures being emphasized at this level.

Since the reading level and grammatical structures in each lesson gradually increase in difficulty, the lessons should be presented in numerical order whenever possible. This is especially true for the timed reading exercises, which gradually increase in length as well as difficulty.

The progress charts found after lesson 10 are for the timed word and timed reading exercises. Students should be encouraged to record their progress, as this will help them see their improvement. The instructions for completing these charts can be found on page 249.

There is an Answer Key for most of the exercises in this text (those omitted are exercises 4, 12, 14, 16, and 18). These answers are provided so that students may check to see if their answers are correct. It is supposed that students will use the Answer Key after they have actually done the exercises. It is further hoped that students will use the Answer Key to detect their mistakes and then return to the exercise to discover the source of their error. The Answer Key also makes it possible for students engaged in independent study to use this workbook. (Some teachers do not wish their students to have the Answer Key. Since the key is only a few pages long, it is quite easy to remove the pages with the aid of a ruler, staple the pages together, and keep them until the end of the term. In fact, this can be done by the students themselves on the first day of class.)

Following the Answer Key are several pages on which students may write down new vocabulary words as they are encountered. There is enough space so that the students may write not only the word but also a definition and example. Students should be encouraged to use this part of the text, as they will certainly find many new vocabulary items within the text. Vocabulary enrichment is a vital skill for students at this level.

Using the Exercises in This Book

Word Parts

The first three exercises of each lesson provide practice in basic word parts. The word parts included in this text are those that are most important for students at the intermediate level yet are still within their linguistic grasp. The list that begins each lesson has been designed so that new words introduced in later lessons require students to recall previously learned word parts. The word parts in lessons 3, 4, and 5 are included at that point in the text so as to correspond with the dictionary skills of those same lessons, i.e., practice in word forms of different parts of speech.

Each lesson contains four or five new word parts. There is a brief definition and a contextualized example for each. The context consists of two sentences. The first sentence sets up the second, which features a term that contains the word part. The following example is from lesson 1.

-er a person or thing that does a certain action

Mr. Smith teaches English.
He is an English *teacher*.

Exercise 1. In this exercise, students must use the knowledge that they have gained in the presentation to form new words from the parts.

Exercise 2. Students must form a new word using the correct word part according to the context. This exercise is slightly more difficult than exercise 1 because it requires students to select a word part based on the context of the sentence.

Exercise 3. Students are asked to write simple definitions without dictionaries for terms that contain some of the word parts studied in the lesson. Students will practice rapid recognition of word parts and their meanings. It is important that students *not* use their dictionaries since the idea here is to help students to overcome their dependence on their dictionaries.

Context Clues

Exercise 4–6 provide practice in using context clues. This ability is an invaluable asset to the student of English as a second language.

Exercise 4. Often skills are best learned when they are needed to solve a problem. In this exercise, students practice using context clues to solve the meaning of a key word. Students must read a sentence and then complete it with any word that is logical based on the context provided. Several answers may be possible; teachers should go over this exercise in class to check students' answers. When they have completed this exercise, students may turn to the end of the lesson to find possible answers as well as explanations of the sentences. Each lesson focuses on a different kind of context clue.

Exercise 5. Students will be able to see the importance of context clues when they do this exercise. Each problem consists of a sentence that has been lengthened twice; thus, a problem consists of three sentences. There is an italicized word in each sentence, and there are three definitions given for the word. The students must read the word in the three different contexts and decide if the suggested meaning is possible in the given context. The students must circle the letter of the word to indicate whether the suggested meaning is appropriate. By the time the students reach the third sentence of each problem, the context should be specific enough so that only one meaning is appropriate. The teacher should ask students to indicate the key words in the context that allow them to guess the meaning of the italicized word.

Exercise 6. This exercise consists of ten problems, each of which has an italicized term. After each problem, there are three possible meanings given. Students will read the problem and then use their knowledge of context clues to determine which of the three given meanings is correct.

Dictionary Usage

Being able to use a monolingual dictionary is a necessary skill for all ESL students. Most of the students at this level have had very little or no experience with English-English dictionaries. Because of their rather limited knowledge of English, the students at this level are usually dependent to one degree or another on their bilingual dictionaries.

The dictionary skills practiced in exercise 7 of this text are those most helpful to ESL students. No attempt has been made to teach every aspect of dictionary use; that is not the purpose of this book. The skills have been arranged in a logical order for ESL students and to correspond with skills being practiced in the other exercises within a given lesson.

For example, the dictionary skills in lessons 3, 4, and 5, parts of speech, correspond to the word parts exercises in those same lessons.

Sentence Study

Understanding a given sentence is often the key to understanding an entire paragraph. For this reason, sentence study (exercises 8 and 9) is an important reading skill to master, especially at the intermediate level.

Exercise 8. In this exercise, students read a sentence and then demonstrate how well they have grasped the details by answering a question about the sentence. The format is multiple choice (A, B, C, or D).

Exercise 9. In this exercise, students indicate how well they can understand a given sentence and form a conclusion about it. Students read a statement and four conclusions. They must indicate which of the conclusions is correct based on the information contained in the original sentence.

Finding the Main Idea

In exercise 10, students must read a short paragraph rapidly, trying to discover the author's main idea. This exercise also uses a multiple-choice format.

Scanning

In exercise 11, students will practice scanning for specific information. Before each paragraph, there are two multiple-choice questions that test the students' understanding of details. This exercise helps develop reading comprehension while encouraging improvement of reading rate.

Improving Reading Speed

After general reading comprehension, perhaps the most serious problem encountered by ESL students is reading speed or reading rate. This might be true for many reasons. It could be due to the students' lack of vocabulary knowledge at this level. Practice with context clues (exercises 4–6) will help to overcome this. This problem might also be due to a limited knowledge of grammatical structures. In order to read well, ESL students need a solid grasp of basic English syntax, i.e., a good grammar base. On the other hand, this reading rate deficiency might also be due to the fact that the students' native language is not read from left to right as English is, or it may be due in part to the fact that the students' alphabet uses letters or characters that are very different from those in the English alphabet. The timed word selection exercises (12, 14, 16, and 18) will work on these two problems. Finally, the timed reading exercises (13, 15, 17, and 19) allow students an opportunity to test all their reading skills, including reading rate, since each of these last exercises is timed.

Timed Word Selection Exercises

In exercises 12, 14, 16, and 18, students must read a word and then find that same word in a group of five words that look similar. For example, the students must circle the word *say* in the following example.

say | sea says stay say sag

The goals of these exercises are to train students' eye movements in a left-to-right pattern and to provide practice in recognition of similarly shaped letters and letter combinations.

To improve reading speed, these exercises should be timed, thus encouraging students to work as rapidly as possible. It is recommended that teachers give students *thirty seconds* to complete the twenty-five problems in these exercises. Students should then correct their answers. Since it is difficult for students to catch their own errors in this kind of "proof-reading" exercise, it is recommended that students exchange books and check each other's work to ensure accurate correcting. For each incorrect answer, students lose one correct answer. This penalty will encourage students to work carefully as well as rapidly. Afterward, students should record the number of correct answers on the progress chart at the end of the text.

Timed Reading Exercises

Each of exercises 13, 15, 17, and 19 consists of a short reading selection (usually two to four paragraphs) followed by five multiple-choice questions. Students have *four** minutes to read the selection *and* answer the questions. Students may look back in the selection for answers if necessary. However, the teacher should point out that this is a time-consuming process, and after not finishing this exercise once or twice, students will realize the importance of reading the selection carefully the first time. There is no penalty for incorrect answers, thus the score is the number of correct answers. Students should record their scores on the chart at the back of the text. Though this is primarily designed as a test of an individual's silent reading ability, oral reading skills should be practiced by having students read parts of the selection aloud after time has been called and all answers have been checked.

The questions have three possible answers (A, B, or C). Because choice C is sometimes "both A and B," students are encouraged to read all the answers very carefully before making their final choice. These timed reading exercises require students to use the skills that they have been practicing in the other exercises, e.g., understanding details, forming conclusions, and using context clues. Whenever possible, each of the five questions emphasizes a different reading skill. Teachers should use the following chart in counseling students concerning their reading improvement:

Question 1. Main idea of a paragraph (See exercise 10.)

Question 2. Context clues (See exercises 4, 5, and 6.)

*Four minutes is merely a suggested time limit. It is a time restriction that has worked well with intermediate ESL students who have used this text. The actual time limit used can be increased or decreased to fit the average or above-average student in a given class. It should be noted that the timed readings gradually increase in individual sentence length, overall length, lexical difficulty, and syntactical difficulty. Therefore, it is highly recommended that instructors select one timed reading rate to be used throughout the entire text. Since it is supposed that students' reading skills will improve as the timed reading exercises become more difficult, students should have little difficulty working within the given time restrictions of these exercises.

- Question 3. Conclusions (See exercise 9.)
- Question 4. Information (Details) (See exercises 8 and 11.)
- Question 5. Information (Details) (See exercises 8 and 11.)

Before attempting to do a timed reading exercise, it is highly recommended that teachers do some type of prereading activity in order to increase student interest in the reading selection as well as develop the students' anticipation skills. The acquisition and subsequent development of good anticipation skills is a key factor in reading proficiency. The value of such skills, especially to ESL students at this level, cannot be underestimated.

For example, if the reading is about a country, the teacher should write the name of the country on the board and ask the students if they know its location, people, language, weather, etc. The instructor should also ask the students to come up with a list of vocabulary words (or concepts) that they expect to find in the selection. For example, in a reading about a nation, many students will come up with the concept of *border*, but very few will actually know this term at this level. In addition, they will probably not know the word *lie* (meaning "to occupy a place") at this point either. Teachers may elect to tell their students these words outright or help them to learn to anticipate such words through this previewing activity and then let them guess the meaning through context by themselves.

A Note about the Timed Word Selection and Timed Reading Exercises

In general, the exercises in each lesson should be done in the same order in which they have already been sequenced. However, instructors may wish to digress somewhat when doing the timed word selection exercises (12, 14, 16, and 18) and the timed reading exercises (13, 15, 17, and 19). If teachers follow the existing numerical order (i.e., 12, 13, 14, 15, etc.), they will do these two types of exercises alternately. However, an equally valuable method (and somewhat easier according to some teachers) involves having students do *all* of the timed word selection exercises first and then do *all* of the timed reading exercises (i.e., 12, 14, 16, and 18; then 13, 15, 17, and 19). The preference lies with the individual instructor, the students, and the teaching situation. Regardless of the sequence ultimately chosen as more appropriate, teachers should make every effort to see that students do not look ahead at any timed exercises as this will of course adversely alter their reading rate results.

Vocabulary Recall

Rapid word recognition and the acquisition of a good, solid vocabulary are fundamental to learning how to read effectively. Exercise 20 tests vocabulary recall. Teachers may choose to have students do this in class, as homework, or as a test. This exercise reviews material that has been presented within the given lesson. It has a multiple-choice format.

Extended Reading Fluency

At the end of each lesson, there is a reading selection in which students can apply the reading skills that are being developed. These reading selections vary in type of reading (recipes, short stories, biographies, advice letters, current affairs) and level of difficulty. While most of the exercises focus on specific reading skills, the main purpose of this

exercise is practical application in extended reading selections. In addition, the activities (both pre- and post-) are designed for reading fluency (as opposed to reading for accuracy).

Crossword Puzzles

There are five crossword puzzles in this text. These puzzles are located after the even-numbered lessons. While solving crossword puzzles can be fun, it is also an excellent student-centered learning and review activity. In addition, sometimes the puzzle clues direct students to refer to a certain reading selection in the text, thus practicing both scanning and rapid reading for a specific purpose.

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Lesson 1

Word Parts

There are many words in the English language. You will never know the meaning of every word in English. When you read, you will often find many words that you do not know. You will not have enough time to stop reading and try to find every new word in a dictionary.

Sometimes you can understand a new word because you know some of the parts of the new word. For example, if a word ends in the letters *-er*, that word might be the name for a person or thing that does a certain action. For example, a *writer* is a person who writes, and a *driver* is a person who drives. Sometimes it is not enough to know the parts of a new word to understand it, but it will help you many times.

-er a person or thing that does a certain action

Mr. Smith teaches English.
He is an English *teacher*.

-ly in the manner of; this word tells how

Sandra is a quick swimmer.
She swims very *quickly*.

re- do again

Paul has to count the money again.
He has to *recount* the money.

in- not; negative

im- (in- becomes im- before the letters *b*, *m*, and *p*;

il- il- before the letter *l*; and

ir- ir- before the letter *r*)

His answer was not complete.
It was *incomplete*.

It is not probable that we will have an easy test.
It is *improbable* that we will have an easy test.

The use of drugs is not legal.
The use of drugs is *illegal*.

The verb *be* is not regular.
It is *irregular*.

Exercise 1. Word Parts: Forming New Words

Write the new words. Use the new word parts that you learned.

1. _____ a person who teaches
2. _____ in a rapid manner
3. _____ write again
4. _____ in a slow manner
5. _____ a person who sings
6. _____ in a careful way
7. _____ not correct
8. _____ the thing that sharpens pencils
9. _____ read again
10. _____ in a correct manner
11. _____ not literate
12. _____ a person who plays (a sport)
13. _____ not proper
14. _____ make again
15. _____ not active

Exercise 2. Word Parts: Completing Sentences with New Words

Read the sentence very carefully. Complete the sentence by writing a word on the line. Use the word parts that you learned.

1. Mr. Smith writes short stories for a living. He always wanted to be a _____ .
2. I wrote the letter with a pencil. Now I have to _____ it with a pen.
3. John is not polite. He is very _____ .
4. Joe didn't do the homework correctly. The teacher asked him to _____ it.
5. I would like to erase this word. May I use your _____ for a minute?
6. I need to open this can of beans. Where is the can _____ ?

7. Mark is not a responsible person. He is a very _____ young man.
8. The doctor examined the sick woman yesterday. She plans to _____ her tomorrow.
9. When you drive in bad weather, you must be careful. It is always necessary to drive _____.
10. Paul is in college, but he is not a mature person. He is very _____ for his age.

Exercise 3. Word Parts: Writing Definitions

Use the word parts that you learned to write definitions for these words. Use your own words. Do *not* use a dictionary.

1. singer _____
2. slowly _____
3. replay _____
4. insufficient _____
5. resell _____

Context Clues

When you are reading English, you will sometimes find a word that you do not know. If you do not know a word, what should you do? You might stop reading in order to look up every new word in your dictionary, but that will take a lot of your time.

One quick, excellent method of finding the meaning of a new word is by using the context. The context means the other words around your new word.

For example, do you know the word *knob*? Read this sentence and then write the meaning.

Please turn the *knob* on the left until you find an FM station that plays good music.

knob _____

The important words in this example are *turn*, *on the left*, *FM*, and *music*. Now you should know that a *knob* is the part of the radio that you turn to find a station. In general, a knob is anything similar that you can turn. The part of the door that you put your hand on in order to open the door is the door knob.

Here is another example. What does *pupil* mean? Read this sentence and then write your definition.

It is very easy to learn quickly in this school because there are only twelve *pupils* in each class.

pupil _____

The important words are *school*, *only twelve*, and *class*. Now you should know that *pupil* is another word for student.

Sometimes the context can change the meaning of a word. For example, what does the word *watch* mean?

watch _____

Now, read these two sentences and write the meaning of *watch* in each.

They *watch* television every day. _____

I was late because I forgot to wear my *watch*. _____

Another example of context changing the meaning of a word can be seen with the word *letter*. What does the word *letter* mean?

letter _____

Read these two sentences and write the meaning of *letters* in each.

The English alphabet has twenty-six *letters*. _____

I often write *letters* to my friends. _____

When you read English, you will certainly find new words. You should try to use word parts and the context when you can. Of course, sometimes it will be necessary to look up a word in your dictionary, but only if you cannot guess the meaning from the word parts or the context.

Exercise 4. Context Clues: Opposites

Each of the sentences in this exercise contains a blank. Read each sentence quickly and then write a word that completes the sentence. There may be no single correct answer, but possible answers appear on page 26.

1. George is not single. He is _____ .
2. Your answer is not correct. It is _____ .
3. This box is not small. It is very _____ .
4. John is very tall, but his brother is _____ .
5. ($24a^2 + 6ab + 8b^2 = ?$) is complicated, but ($2 + 2 = ?$) is _____ .