

Testing reading skills

Tests of vocabulary often provide a good guide to reading abilities. It is usually necessary for students to demonstrate not only a knowledge of the meaning of a particular word but also an awareness of the other words with which it is generally used. However, in addition to their usefulness in proficiency tests, vocabulary tests are also useful in progress tests as they lend themselves to follow-up work in class. It is important at the outset to decide which words teacher expects the students to recognize and which words teacher expects them to use. Remember, that most people can recognize far more words than they can use. Here are some types of exercises teacher can use for testing students' reading skills:

I Reading tests: multiple-choice items

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1) Re-writing part of the paragraph | 3) Writing option of equal length |
| 2) Avoiding matching words | 4) Mixing item types |

II Reading tests: true/false items

III Reading tests: completion

- 1) Reading tests with blanks
- 2) Tests followed by summaries with blanks

At a more advanced level, students may be required to read a text in order to take notes. However, it is project work that usually makes most use of multi-mode reading tests. In a project which requires students to make decisions with regard to alternative forms of energy, for example, discussions and report writing will be based on a considerable amount of initial reading. Such a variety of tasks will enable you to assess your students' performances not only in reading but also in speaking and writing. Although not given as formal tests, such activities in a project will usually enable accurate and reliable assessments to be made. Always attempt to give realistic tasks for students to perform in such tests. Avoid traditional kinds of tests in which students are instructed simply to read a text and talk about.