Reading for specific information

What is reading for specific information?

Reading for specific information involves understanding what information, or what kind of information, you're looking for, locating it and then reading the relevant part carefully to get a full and detailed understanding. Sometimes, reading for specific information also involves reading to see if information is contained in a text.

Why is reading for specific information important?

In real life, we often only read parts of texts (the parts that provide the information we're interested in). For example, if you want to know what's on TV tonight, you won't look at the programmes listed in the TV listings for earlier in the day. In reading tasks in English exams, time pressure forces candidates to find information quickly so doing this helps in both real-life and exam situations.

How do we read for specific information?

After identifying the information you need, it's helpful to determine which part of the text it is in. Headings can help with this, as can reading for gist. The main reading skill employed is scanning. This involves moving very quickly over the text, ignoring unknown vocabulary and focusing solely on key words, phrases and ideas. Scanning should enable you to find the specific information. Then read that part more carefully to get a full understanding.

Table Completion Tips

- Read all of the instructions cautiously. Even a small mistake can cost you marks. Be vigilant about the needed words to fill the gaps.
- Comprehend the table's layout to know the content and the subject.
- Quickly go through the questions and passages to get the idea of the kind of information you would have to fill in gaps.
- Navigate through the paragraphs and write down keywords and ideas next to every paragraph to find the information.
- Go to the questions and choose the best keywords. Then, try to find them in the passage.
- Keep in mind that you will also get some paraphrased sentences and synonyms. You must check the word limit while answering these.