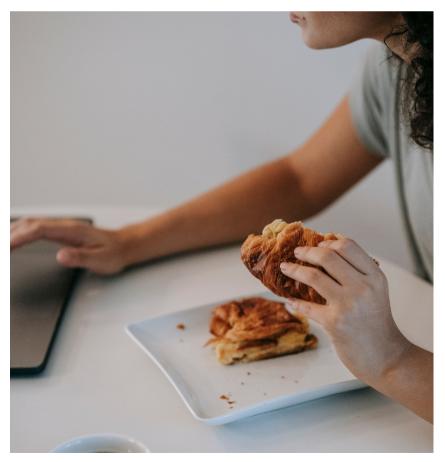Reading for
specific information

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.

True/False Tips

- Don't skim over true/false questions. Carefully read every word of the question, keeping in mind that the tiniest detail can affect the answer.
- Pay attention to negative words and prefixes (such as un, non, etc.) that impact the meaning of a statement.
- Watch for double negatives, such as "not unlikely." If an event is "not unlikely," that means it is in fact a likely occurrence.
- Watch for qualifying modifiers (words like sometimes, usually, probably, might, etc.) tenc to be used in true statements.
- Watch for extreme modifiers (words like always, never, absolutely, only, no one, the best, the worst, etc.) that may make a statement false that seems at first glance to be true.
- Remember that questions that are only partially true are in fact false.