Reading: emails, notices and short stories

English A2

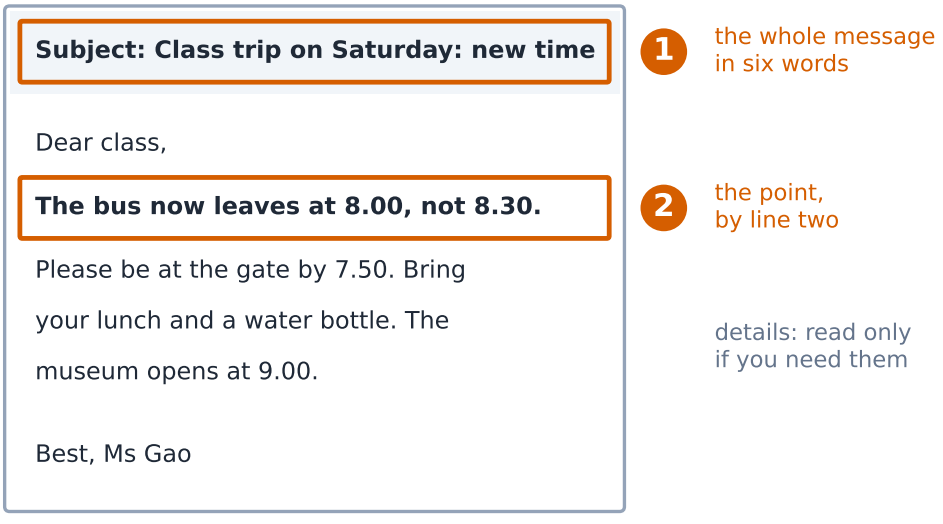
What this topic teaches

A2 reading meets you with three shapes: the **email** , the **notice** , and the short story. Each has its own skeleton, and each skeleton tells you where to look first.

- The email: subject line first. It is the map of the whole message.
- The notice: the bold heading and the date. Notices answer who-what-when-where in five lines.
- The story: three sentences are a story (someone, a problem, a change). Track the person, not the words.
- Memory hook: read the **skeleton** first, the flesh only if needed.

The email: the subject line is the map

Part of an email	Job	Example
Subject	the whole message in 6 words	Class trip on Saturday: new time
Dear...	names the reader	Dear class, / Hi Mei,
Body	the point by line two	The bus now leaves at 8.00.
Sign-off	who wrote it	Best, Ms Gao



Read the subject line, then the first line of the body

- Read the subject, then the first line of the body: 80 percent of emails end there.
- If the email asks a question, the last line usually carries it: *Please reply by Thursday.*

The notice: five lines, four answers

A notice is a public email: bold heading, date, and the four answers in any order.

- **Worked notice**: *LIBRARY CLOSED (heading) / Friday 20 May (when) / The library is closed all day for repairs (what). / Please use the study room in Block B (where instead). / We open again on Saturday (how long).*
- Scan for the capitals and the date; they are the notice's two hands.

The short story: track the person

A2 stories are small: one person, one problem, one change. Read with one finger on the person.

Story sentence	Its job
1. Ana lost her bus card.	the person and the problem
2. She walked home in the rain.	the trouble grows
3. Her neighbour drove past and gave her a lift.	the change

- Connector words (*but, so, because, then*) are the story's turning signals; slow down when you meet one.
- Unknown word? Ask: is it the person, the problem or the change? If not, it can wait.

Guessing from the shape

Use the skeleton to guess an unknown word's job before its meaning.

- *The museum is closed for* ***renovation****.* – closed FOR something: the something is the reason, so a fixing-word fits.
- Guessing the job narrows the meaning; the dictionary then confirms.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- Do not read every word at the same speed: the skeleton is fast, the flesh is slow.
- Dates in English run small-to-big or big-to-small: *20 May* or *May 20*; both are the same day.
- *reply by Thursday* means Thursday is the LAST day, not the day to start.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. The email map: which lines hold most of the message? – **The subject line and the first line of the body.**
2. The notice's two hands: name them. – **The capitals (the heading) and the date.**
3. In the three-sentence story, what is sentence 2's job? – **The trouble grows.**
4. *Reply by Thursday*: is Thursday the last day or the first? – **The last day.** Thursday or earlier is fine; Friday is too late.

■ Practice: read and answer

Text 1 (an email).

> **Subject:** Football practice moves to Sports Hall
> Hi team,
> Because of the rain, practice on Wednesday is in the Sports Hall, not on the field. It still starts at 4.30. Please bring indoor shoes – no football boots in the hall! Reply by Tuesday if you can't come.
> Coach Li

1. Where is Wednesday's practice? 6. What time does it start? 7. What must players bring? 8. Who must reply to the coach?

Text 2 (a notice).

> **SWIMMING POOL CLOSED**
> Monday 3 June – Wednesday 5 June
> We are cleaning the pool. The gym is open as usual. The pool opens again on Thursday at 7.00.

1. How many days is the pool closed? 10. Can people use the gym on Tuesday?

Text 3 (a story). *Tom wanted to make a cake for his mum's birthday. But when he opened the cupboard, there were no eggs, and the shops were closed. So he knocked on his neighbour's door, and she gave him six eggs and some chocolate too.*

1. What was Tom's problem? 12. What changed?

Answers. 5 **In the Sports Hall.** 6 **4.30** – *still* means the time has not changed. 7 **Indoor shoes.** 8 **Only players who can't come.** 9 **Three days** (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday). 10 **Yes** – *the gym is open as usual.* 11 **He had no eggs, and the shops were closed.** 12 **His neighbour gave him eggs** (and chocolate too).