

Reading skills

IGCSE English

Reading for specific information

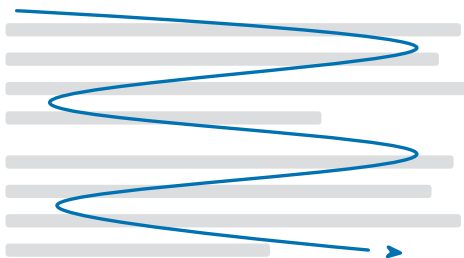
An airport departure board contains many facts, but you usually need only one flight. Choose a reading method for your purpose, then check the detail carefully. This lesson prepares Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language 0510 reading skills, not First Language English 0500.

For the 2024–2026 syllabus, Paper 1 has four reading exercises: short answers, multiple matching, brief notes and multiple-choice questions. The 2027–2029 syllabus retains these reading task types. The summary-writing exam task was removed from 2024; summarising below is a useful study skill, not a current extra exam exercise. These mini practices are shorter than a full exam task.

■ Skim first, then scan

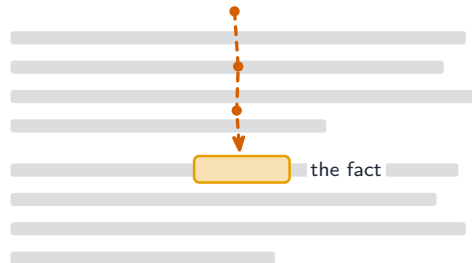
Skim for the **gist** : use the title, opening, topic sentences and the shape of each **paragraph** to identify the main topic. You do not need to read every word or follow a fixed eye path. **Scan** to locate a particular detail, such as a time or a phrase with the same meaning as the question. After locating it, read the surrounding sentence closely; nearby details may refer to something else.

Skim - read fast for the gist



overview, not every word:
"what is this text about?"

Scan - jump to one fact



eyes hop down the page and
check the surrounding sentence

Get an overview, locate a possible answer, then read its context carefully



The photo illustrates a search purpose; use the fictional table below for the practice answers

Original scanning practice – fictional board.

Flight	Destination	Time	Gate
AB201	Hanoi	09:15	6
AB218	Hanoi	10:05	9
AB305	Seoul	09:40	4

Which gate serves AB218? **9**. Finding “Hanoi” alone would leave two possible rows. Match the flight identifier, then read the gate in the same row. The earliest flight in this table is AB201 at 09:15; this does not claim anything about flights outside the table.

■ Match the question to the text

Predict the *type* of information required, not an unsupported answer. “When should students meet?” asks for a meeting time, which may differ from departure. “Why?” needs a reason. Use the question’s limits: who, where, when, how many and which event?

Original short-answer practice.

The science club will visit the Greenwater Museum on Friday 14 May. Meet at the school gate at 8:20; the coach leaves at 8:30. Admission costs £6, but members pay £4. Return is planned for 16:00. Bring a notebook, a pencil and a packed lunch. The outdoor boat tour has been cancelled because the river is flooded. The indoor workshop will still take place. Book with Ms Chen by Tuesday 11 May.

Find the meeting time, the admission price for a club member, the reason the boat tour is cancelled, and the three things students should bring.

Worked check. Meeting: **8:20**, not the 8:30 departure. Member price: **£4**, not the standard £6. Reason: **the river is flooded**, not the fact that the tour is cancelled. Items: **a notebook; a pencil; a packed lunch**. Each answer is checked against the relevant event or category.

■ Write short, exact answers

In Exercise 1, use a word or short **phrase** that gives the required meaning. Copying a suitable phrase can help, but there is no universal rule that every changed word loses a mark. Do not copy a whole paragraph or add alternatives that make the meaning unclear. Keep necessary qualifiers such as “furthest” or “on flat roads”. Follow the actual number of details requested.

Verified exam connection – 0510/12, May/June 2025. Question 4 requires the superlative idea that the Painted Lady travels furthest, and the official scheme accepts appropriate alternative verbs. Question 3 distinguishes *adapt* from *adopt* because the latter changes meaning. Question 6 asks for three protective features drawn from different parts of the article. Its scheme credits three distinct supported details, not three restatements of the same idea. This also shows why a later question may require searching back through a text.

Connecting ideas across a text

■ Multiple matching

In **multiple matching**, match each question’s whole meaning to the relevant text or section. A **paraphrase** changes wording while keeping meaning. The same letter may answer more than one question; do not use each text just once unless the instructions require that.

Original mini texts – songwriters.

A Mei: I write best alone. In a group I lose track of my ideas. A walk often gives me a melody; I add the words afterwards.

B Omar: Other people improve my ideas, so I prefer writing with friends. I start with words and create a tune later. Every Sunday I set aside an hour to write.

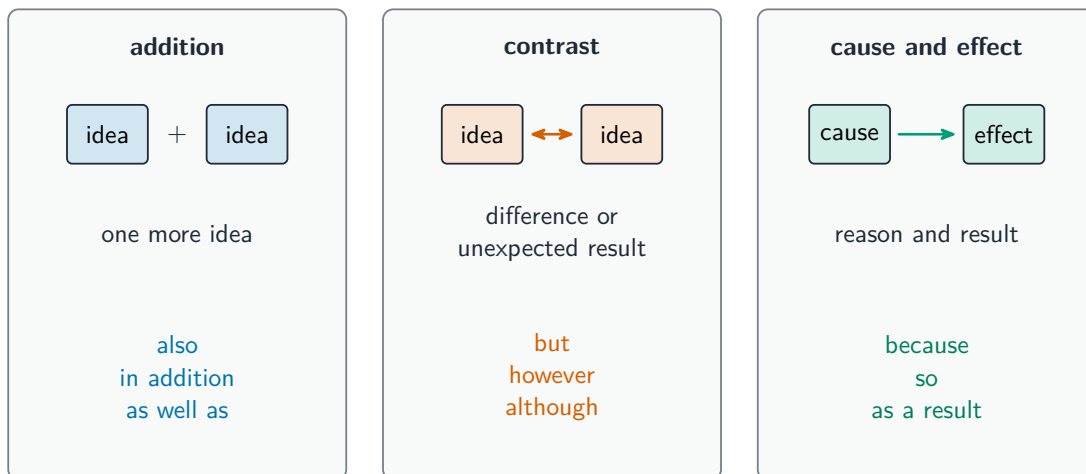
C Rosa: I begin with words, then add music on my own. Once a song is finished, I prefer to keep its original form rather than make new versions.

Who (1) creates better work with others, (2) has a regular writing routine, (3) avoids changing completed songs, and (4) develops the music before the words?

Worked check. **1 B:** friends improve Omar’s ideas. **2 B:** every Sunday is a routine. **3 C:** Rosa keeps the original form. **4 A:** Mei starts with a melody. Mei mentions a group, but says it harms her concentration; matching a word alone would give the wrong answer. The repeated B is intentional. In the actual 2025 Q7, the official sequence also reuses letters across nine items.

■ Signal words

Signal words can help reveal a connection: **addition** adds information; **contrast** shows a difference or an unexpected result; **cause and effect** connects a reason and consequence. Time words show sequence. They are clues, not automatic answer locations. Ideas can be connected without an obvious signal word.



Identify the two ideas as well as the connecting word

Original connection task. “The club bought more cameras because membership grew. However, beginners still had to share them.” Membership growth is the stated reason for buying cameras. “However” contrasts the purchase with continued sharing; it does not prove that the writer is angry. “After the workshop, we reviewed the photos” gives a time sequence, not proof that the workshop caused the review.

Making notes and summaries

■ Note-making

Note-making selects details for a specified heading and purpose. Write brief notes that retain the essential meaning. An example can be necessary if it is the detail requested; do not automatically discard all examples. Several phrases describing one benefit may still be only one point.

Original notes practice.

The school repair club meets on Wednesdays. Students learn practical repair skills and save money by fixing their own belongings. The club also helps keep usable items out of the rubbish. A blue toolbox is kept by the door. Places are limited because only two teachers can supervise. Students must bring damaged items from home; the school does not provide them.

Under **Benefits**, make three notes. Under **Limits**, make two notes.

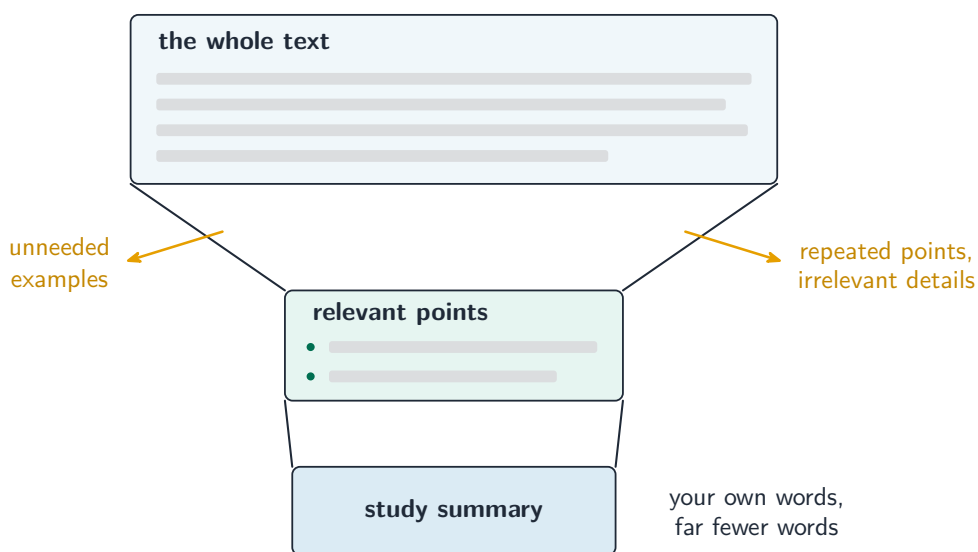
Worked check. Benefits: **learn repair skills; save money; reduce waste.** Limits:

limited places; must bring own damaged items. Wednesday is a meeting detail; the blue toolbox is equipment information. Neither fits these headings. “Cheaper repairs” repeats saving money rather than creating a fourth benefit.

Verified exam connection – 2025 Exercise 3. The recumbent-bike task asks for four advantages and three disadvantages. The scheme accepts short relevant phrases. It keeps the “flat roads” condition for rapid travel and distinguishes that from difficulty uphill. A detail that describes a bike is not automatically an advantage or disadvantage.

■ Summary skills

A **summary** gives the main relevant ideas in fewer words. Select for a purpose, combine related points, and avoid unnecessary **repetition**. Use your own words where appropriate while preserving the original meaning and qualifications. Repetition in a source does not by itself make a point required. This is study practice; the current 0510 reading paper does not have a summary-writing exercise.



For study summaries, relevance decides what stays; examples may matter if the purpose requires them

Original study summary. For the repair-club text, the purpose is “explain the benefits”. A model is: **The repair club teaches useful skills, helps students save money and reduces waste.** It omits the timetable, equipment and participation limits because the stated purpose asks only for benefits. A summary about joining the club would need a different selection.



Close reading supports interpretation; a photograph does not reveal a writer's intended meaning

Inference is a supported conclusion beyond what is directly stated. A writer **implies** a meaning through details and relationships. Use evidence, but do not invent a reason, motive or event. The writer's **attitude** is their view or feeling; **word choice** and the surrounding explanation can support it.

Original inference task. “Lin claimed she had finished the report. When her partner asked to see it, she closed her laptop and changed the subject.” This suggests doubt about whether the report is finished. It does not prove a broken laptop, a lie or a desk covered in unfinished work. “Claimed” alone is not a universal signal of dishonesty; the following behaviour supports the cautious inference here.

For a **multiple-choice** question, compare every option with the relevant evidence. An option may use words from the text but change who acted, the time, the degree of certainty or the writer's attitude. Choose the best supported option, not the strongest sounding one. Follow the printed response instruction: the June 2025 reading Exercise 4 uses a tick in the chosen box; multiple matching uses letters.

Original attitude task. “I enjoyed the first workshop. The second was useful too, although I wish we had had more time to practise.” Best description: **positive with one reservation**. “Completely dissatisfied” ignores the praise; “pleased with every aspect” ignores the time criticism. Contrast does not erase the positive part.

Use **context** to infer an unfamiliar word. In “The room was cramped: twenty people had to squeeze around one small table”, *cramped* means **too small or crowded**. The explanatory detail supports it. Without enough context, keep the meaning tentative; you do not need to understand every word to answer a question about a different detail.

Exam tips

Read the actual task instruction, identify the information type and locate evidence. Then check the whole relevant sentence, including negation, comparisons and conditions. Keep answers brief but meaningful; give the required number of distinct details. Short-answer questions may often follow the text, but matching and whole-text detail questions require returning to different sections. For choices, select one response in the required form and use evidence to decide. Attempt all questions, but an unsupported guess is not a reading strategy. Summary work in this lesson is a labelled study skill, not a current 0510 exam task.

Vocabulary card meanings

skim: To move quickly through a text for the general idea. gist: The main idea, leaving out smaller details. predict: To say what is likely to come next, before reading on. multiple matching: A task that pairs several questions with several texts. paraphrase: A restatement that keeps the idea and changes the words. signal words: Words such as however or therefore that show a relationship. addition: A move that brings in a further point. contrast: A move that sets a difference against what came before. cause and effect: A link from a reason to what followed. note-making: Writing brief points while reading or listening. summary: A short account that keeps the main points only. implies: Hints at something without stating it directly. word choice: Which words a writer picks, and the effect of that pick. multiple-choice: A question that offers a fixed list of options.