Конец формы

**23 Ways to Use a Text in Your ESL Classes**

[**https://eltplanning.com/2020/08/24/23-ways-to-use-a-text-in-your-esl-classes/**](https://eltplanning.com/2020/08/24/23-ways-to-use-a-text-in-your-esl-classes/)

Reading. One of the big four, along with elephants, lions and rhinos. Or is it listening, speaking and writing? Who knows. Either way, my question for you is: when was the last time your students were actively learning a new skill through reading, instead of just answering comprehension questions? There is so much that English language students can learn through a text, and we have a whole bag of ideas for you to use in your next class. Through these methods, you’ll learn how to squeeze a text for all its worth. As you’ll see, these tips don’t just help students become better readers. They’ll also help students develop better critical thinking skills, better vocabulary skills and better writing skills.

**1. Make a prediction**. This is a great skill for learners to use. Super simple – give students the title of a text and see if they can make some guesses about what the text will be about. You can also develop this as you go along. If you’re reading a story, make more predictions after reading each paragraph or chapter. How do they think the story will end? Students will learn how to pre-empt information and adjust their predictions as they go along.

**2. Recognise text type or genre**. One thing I like to do before a reading exercise is ask students what kind of text we seem to be looking at, and what kind of information therefore might be included. For example, they might identify that we’re going to read a personal email, and therefore it might include information about what this person and their family have been doing recently, some questions and maybe an invitation. This process enables students to improve their speed reading and prediction skills. What was that about speed reading?

**3. Speed read**. Adult students will often feel like they have to understand Every. Single. Word. In. The. Text. before they can breathe out. Speed reading can help students get to grips with a text in a matter of seconds. This works particularly well with essays and news articles. Ask students to read only the first and last sentence of each paragraph. They’ll see that the first sentence of a paragraph is often the ‘topic sentence’, which summaries the main point of the paragraph. Not only does this help them prepare for exam situations where they have to understand the outline of a text fast, it also helps them learn how to structure their own writing.

**4. Skimming/scanning**. Bit of a two-in-one, this! Skimming and scanning both involve reading for speed rather than full comprehension, but there are important differences. With skimming, students are looking for overall meaning, while scanning is looking for a specific piece of information. For example, if you quickly read the blurb at the back of the book to find out if it’s a genre you like, that’s skimming. You’re getting the general gist. If you read the back of the book to find out the price, that’s scanning – you’re looking for one specific thing.

**5. Identify purpose**. People have a reason to write. That reason is often connected to the genre of the text. Is the writer aiming to entertain, invite, inform, persuade, or something else? Asking students this question will help them think critically and make evaluations about a text. Also, it’s something they might well be asked in a TOEFL exam.

**6. Summarise the text**. This sounds simple, but making a good summary can be a complex task for a learner. Can they pull out the main ideas from the text? Do they know what the central ideas are, and what ideas are merely in a supporting role? Can they paraphrase? To make this even more challenging, set up the task so that learners reduce their summary from 50, to 25, to 12 and finally to only 6 words. (Just for fun, you could also challenge your students to summarise a film plot in just 6 words.)

**7. Create headings**. This is the reverse of ‘make predictions’. If the text doesn’t have paragraph headings, can students put them in? This also helps students to focus on the main information and purpose of each paragraph.

**8. SQ3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review.** This is a whole reading structure that helps students to get the most out of a text independently. It starts with skim reading through headings, graphs, etc. to get the general idea of the topics in the text. Next, students generate questions that help them understand what information might be included in each section. One example might be, ‘What is this paragraph about?’. Students then actively engage in answering those questions through reading, ‘retrieving’ or remembering what they’ve learnt, and review that new information in their own words. This method is a little old-fashioned, but works well with upper-level teens and adults who’ll need these skills at work or university. Or me. I probably need those skills. The idea is pretty much the same as PQRST: Preview, Question, Read, Summarise, Test.

**9. Recognise bias, opinion and fact.** This is one of my favourites. I genuinely think we, as educators, have a moral responsibility to give our students the critical thinking skills they need to navigate the deluge of online content they are sure to meet. The young people we teach need – *need* – to be able to tell the difference between a fact and an opinion. Sorry, I got a bit carried away there. Anyway. The great news is that you can use texts to help your students recognise bias. Talk about the source of the information. Teach how to fact-check through reputable sites. Look at the language used for claims, opinions, facts, reasoning and evidence. These resources will help you start the process with younger learners, because it’s never too early:

[Fact vs opinion activity on Twinkl](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/ca-t-123-fact-vs-opinion-activity)

[Guided reading task cards – fact and opinion](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t2-e-1464-guided-reading-skills-task-cards-fact-and-opinion)

**10. Change the genre.** Now students know what stylistic elements are typical of different kinds of text, they can start to play with changing them. This brings in so many different skills. Students can learn about tone of voice, paraphrasing, formal and informal vocabulary. Why not make an essay into a poster? A story into a newspaper report? A poem into a comic book? A Twitter post! A letter to an agony aunt! A map! A board game! (Yes – you can make a text into a board game.) There are loads of possibilities here that are sure to get your learners thinking creatively. The genre doesn’t have to be text-based either – students could make a video news report or play. Not sure where to start? Take a look at [this little-known story](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t2-e-3045-y6-recounts-newspaper-report-example-text) that has been made into a newspaper report.

**11. Build the text.** A simple exercise can help students learn about story progression or essay/letter-writing structure. Cut up the text into sections (doesn’t have to be along paragraph lines – you can cut through the middle of paragraphs) and see if your students are able to put it back together. This also works with poetry or songs – students learn how to recognise rhyming as well. Another benefit of this can be learning about the use of linking devices and how they can be used to signpost a text. For example, students might see ‘however’ at the start of a sentence and remember that this point probably contradicts the one before.

**12. Check-underline-question.** This is a great way to build on predictions and pre-existing knowledge. Ask students to check (that’s ‘tick’ to you British English speakers) facts that they already knew before reading, underline any new information, and come up with three questions that they’d like to ask about the topic after reading. The beauty of that last part? It leads perfectly into some more productive skills, such as project-based learning or discussion.

**13. Recognise hedging.** No, I’m not talking about your neighbours’ topiary (and if that does apply to you, check you out with your fancy neighbourhood – I’m coming round for tea!). I’m talking about phrases such as ‘tend to be’, ‘might’, ‘is likely to be’ and ‘is presumed’ – the kind of language that separates a writer from any kind of legal responsibility for their words with a 12-foot pole. It goes hand in hand with recognising opinion and bias and can be used by students to gain extra points in their international exam writing. It can help students really examine what is an assumption, what is evidence-based, and what is a stretch of the imagination. Find examples in a text yourself and then set students up for a competition to hunt down more hedging in pairs or small groups. Don’t let one student find all the examples, though. That would be hedge-hogging. (Sorry.)

**14. Text mining.** There are sure to be some diamonds in that rough rock of a text. Help students to organise the vocabulary in the text by topic, or part of speech. Try making a spider diagram of associated vocabulary with themes in the middle and subsections of verbs, nouns and adjectives. Students can use this resource to organise and store new vocabulary by topic and parts of speech.

[An editable topic-based vocabulary bank from Twinkl](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/editable-topic-based-vocabulary-bank-t-mfl-284)

**15. Translate, and translate again.** This activity has always worked really well for me – although all of my learners had the same language. Take specific phrases from the text (or why not a poem?) and see if students can translate them into their first language. Then, have another group translate it back into English. Take a look at what stayed the same and what changed – what was difficult to convey and how was the meaning altered? Which leads seamlessly onto…

**16. Identify stylistic elements.** How does the writer make their text interesting, exciting or persuasive? Having an awareness of these elements is the first step towards being able to produce them yourself. Take the time to really do some close analysis of the text. ‘Why has the writer used this word here?’ ‘What emotion is the writer trying to convey?’ ‘What’s normally associated with this set of vocabulary?’ If you’re looking at (or listening to) a persuasive text, make it [an opportunity to play bingo](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t3-p-56-political-speeches-persuasive-techniques-bingo). This can be done with a text from an educational source, an authentic text, or something that the students have produced themselves.

**17. Continue the text.** This is a great way to develop creative writing skills and understanding of structure within a text. Take the first half of a text and give students the challenge to continue writing. Make sure to give students plenty of time to share their work. Post the responses around the room and see what students think of each other’s work. Show them the original ending and see which student-written texts were the most similar or different. See if students are able to continue stylistic elements as well as character or plot.

**18. Focus on the figurative.** There are many ways in which a writer can build a picture in our heads. They use metaphors, similes, idioms and more. Spend some time looking at what figurative language the writer has included. How does it contribute to the meaning of the text?

**19. Infer meaning from context.** In the real world, you can’t be holding your student’s hand, explaining vocabulary to them every time they need help. And you certainly won’t be there helping them out in international exams. Students have to learn to be independent readers and learn the inference skills they need to work out the meaning of a word from its context. This doesn’t mean that you can’t help by asking them the right questions, though. Once they’ve identified a new word, ask questions to help them along, such as ‘Do you think this is a noun, adjective or verb?’ or ‘Is this a positive or a negative thing?’ or ‘What word could you expect to go here?’.

**20. Read like a writer.** Make notes on a writer’s word choices and text organisation. Identify certain examples of metaphor, simile and figurative language. After each paragraph, add comments or questions for the writer to help you process the info and engage with the text.

**21. Text Mapping.** This can really help students build structure into their own writing. If you’re looking at a story, why not map the text on a story mountain ([see an example from Twinkl here](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-l-6156-story-mountain-activity-sheet-1)). If you’re looking at an essay, why not see if the main points can be distilled into a flow chart?

**22. Debate** I’m a massive, massive fan of debates in class. And if you’re not, I’m happy to debate you about it. They help students learn how to think critically, plan arguments and also respond with off-the-cuff answers. A text can be a great way to launch a debate. Perhaps one student could take the perspective of the author and another student could take an opposing view. You can even break this down into several speed debates – 5 minutes long or less. Try this one – it’s free:

[Debate pack – should fake news be considered a crime?](https://www.twinkl.co.th/resource/t3-dd-365-should-writing-fake-news-be-considered-a-crime-debate-pack)

**23. Bring in the drama.** A big spoon of that, please. This is an extension of the ‘change the genre’ idea but truly taken to the next level. You don’t have to stick closely to the text at all – try creating a new twist to the plot line or bringing in new characters. This is great for building confidence in speaking in front of the class, and for practising pronunciation contractions. Bring in some crafts as well using masks and costumes – [a bit like this](https://www.twinkl.co.th/resource/t-t-5925-the-snowman-story-sack-resource-pack).

HUGE congratulations on getting to the end of this massive blog, nay book. As a takeaway party favour, here are some **questions to include in your next reading class**:

* What do you think might happen in this story?
* What do you think might happen next?
* How do you think the characters are feeling at this point?
* What is the purpose of the text?
* How many words can you find connected to the theme of (…)?
* How many adjectives/idioms/metaphors can you find?
* How many elements of persuasive speech can you find?
* Why did the writer choose the word (…) instead of (…)?
* What did you already know before reading?
* What did you learn while you were reading?
* What questions do you have for the writer after reading?
* How does this word choice contribute to the purpose of the text?
* Can you find three facts and three opinions in this text?
* Is this sentence a fact, an opinion, a suggestion?
* How can we fact-check this?
* How reliable do you think this text is?
* Can you find a synonym for (…) in paragraph (…)?
* Can you find an antonym for (…) in paragraph (…)?
* Do you think this word is a noun, adjective or verb?
* Do you think this word has positive or negative connotations?
* Can you summarise the text in 25/12/6 words?