

IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH THROUGH EXTENSIVE READING

WHAT IS "EXTENSIVE READING"?

Simply put, extensive reading means reading widely on a constant basis to:

- develop your general reading skills;
- become fluent in reading;
- notice language patterns; and
- expand your vocabulary.

Extensive reading is *not* about studying and analyzing the language of a short, and often difficult, article. It does *not* emphasize comprehension of a certain focused language structure.

Instead, extensive reading requires you to read materials that are *at your level of understanding*. It emphasizes *general comprehension* (e.g. understanding a story as a whole instead of certain sentences). It emphasizes the *fun and enjoyment* of reading in a second language.

HOW CAN "EXTENSIVE READING" IMPROVE MY ENGLISH?

Studies have proved that extensive reading really helps students improve their English.

By reading widely and constantly, you are exposed to a lot of language. When you are in constant contact with the language, you will start noticing and learning the patterns in the language. This will improve your grammar skills.

Also, you can learn how words and expressions are being used in different contexts. By encountering words in different contexts, you will be able to remember and use the words more easily. This will expand your vocabulary.

Because the materials for extensive reading are easy, they provide excellent chances for the development of fluent eye movements (fluent reading), leading to faster reading and better reading skills.

As you are reading at your own ability level, you will be able to enjoy reading more. You will become a more confident and motivated reader. Confidence and motivation are two important factors in successful language learning.

WHAT SHOULD I READ?

There are "graded readers" by major publishers that are excellent materials for extensive reading. (See *Appendix* below for sites of publishers that sell graded readers.)

Graded readers are "small books" which are novels, non-fictions, biographies, etc. simplified especially for English learners. They are graded into different levels (e.g. Level 1 -6, Level 1 being the lowest level).

As there are many different genres of graded readers to choose from, you can most definitely find some books that interest you.

HOW DO I KNOW WHICH "LEVEL" I AM AT?

Different publishers graded their graded readers somewhat differently. However, all graded readers indicate the number of headwords for each level. Use the following rough guideline to determine your level:

Number of Headwords	Level (may differ depending on the publisher)	TOEIC Score
300	Level 1	Starters
600	Level 2	150+
700-1200	Level 3	250+
1300-1700	Level 4	300-450
1800-2300	Level 5	500-650
3000	Level 6	730 and up

For example, if your TOEIC score is 600, then probably you can read graded readers which contain 1800-2300 headwords.

Another way to find out your level is by experimenting. Go to a bookstore that sells graded readers. Browse through several levels of graded readers. Read through a page - if you are struggling to understand the meaning and if there are more than 4-5 words that you don't know in a page, then probably that level is too difficult for you. In other words, you should choose a level that you feel comfortable with. Don't force yourself to read books that are too difficult for you.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I READ?

As often as you possibly can! The more you read, the faster your English skills will improve. Try to read every day.

ARE THERE ANY FREE ONLINE EXTENSIVE READING MATERIALS?

If you prefer to read news articles, here are some sites where you can find online simplified news articles:

CNN Interactive Learning Resources

<http://www.literacynet.org/cnsf/archives.html>

Japan Times Shukan ST

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/shukan-st/>

Mainichi Weekly

<http://www.mainichi.co.jp/edu/weekly/>

South China Morning Post ESL Corner

<http://vlc.polyu.edu.hk/scmp/default.htm>

Happy reading!!!

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APPENDIX

Sites of Publishers Selling Graded Readers:

Oxford University Press:

http://www.oup-readers.jp/students/index_jp.html

Longman Penguin Readers:

<http://www.penguinreaders.com/pr/index.html>

MacMillan Guided Readers:

<http://www.macmillaneducation.com/catalogue/readers/macguidereader/guidedrindex.htm>

Cambridge University Press:

<http://uk.cambridge.org/elt/readers/>