

TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND THEIR IMPACT ON IELTS READING SCORES

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Abstract. *This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of time management techniques in improving performance in the IELTS Reading module among EFL learners. It explores both theoretical and practical dimensions of reading under time pressure, focusing on how strategic behaviors such as skimming, scanning, and prioritizing questions influence comprehension and accuracy. The paper also examines cognitive factors, including working memory limitations and processing speed, which affect reading efficiency during timed assessments. Furthermore, the study discusses common challenges faced by test-takers and proposes pedagogical solutions for integrating time management strategies into language instruction. The findings contribute to the broader field of language assessment by emphasizing that successful test performance depends not only on linguistic competence but also on strategic test-taking skills.*

Keywords: *IELTS Reading, time management, EFL learners, reading strategies, cognitive load, test performance, language assessment.*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqola IELTS Reading bo'limida vaqtni samarali boshqarish usullarining ahamiyatini keng qamrovda tahlil qiladi. Unda chet tilini o'rganuvchi talabalar uchun o'qish jarayonida vaqt bosimi ostida ishlashning nazariy va amaliy jihatlari yoritilgan. Xususan, skimming va scanning kabi strategiyalar, savollarni ustuvorlik asosida bajarish usullari hamda vaqtni to'g'ri taqsimlashning o'qish tezligi va aniqligiga ta'siri o'rganiladi. Shuningdek, maqolada kognitiv omillar, jumladan, ishchi xotira hajmi va ma'lumotni qayta ishlash tezligi kabi jihatlar ham tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, yuqori natijalarga erishishda faqat til bilimlari emas, balki test topshirish strategiyalari ham muhim rol o'ynaydi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *IELTS Reading, vaqt boshqaruvi, o'qish strategiyalari, kognitiv yuklama, test natijalari, til o'rganish.*

Аннотация. *В данной статье представлен комплексный анализ роли методов управления временем при выполнении заданий раздела IELTS Reading среди изучающих английский язык как иностранный. Рассматриваются как теоретические, так и практические аспекты чтения в условиях ограниченного времени, включая стратегии быстрого чтения, поиска информации и приоритизации заданий. Особое внимание уделяется когнитивным факторам, таким как ограниченность рабочей памяти и скорость обработки информации. В статье также анализируются типичные трудности, с которыми сталкиваются кандидаты, и предлагаются методические рекомендации для преподавателей. Результаты исследования подчеркивают, что успешное выполнение теста зависит не только от языковых знаний, но и от владения эффективными стратегиями.*

Ключевые слова: *IELTS Reading, управление временем, стратегии чтения, когнитивная нагрузка, результаты теста.*

Introduction. The growing importance of international education and global mobility has significantly increased the demand for standardized language proficiency tests such as the IELTS. Among its components, the Reading module presents a particular challenge due to the strict time limit and the complexity of academic texts. Many candidates fail to achieve their desired band scores not because of insufficient language knowledge, but due to ineffective time management. The ability to process information

quickly and allocate time efficiently has become a crucial skill in high-stakes testing environments. This study aims to examine how time management techniques influence IELTS Reading performance and to identify strategies that can help learners optimize their results. By focusing on both cognitive and pedagogical perspectives, the article seeks to contribute to improved teaching practices and learner outcomes.

Literature analysis. Existing literature in the field of language assessment highlights that successful performance in reading tests is influenced not only by linguistic competence but also by strategic and cognitive factors. Scholars such as Brown (2004) and Hughes (2003) emphasize the importance of test-taking strategies, including time management, in high-stakes examinations. Grabe (2009) and Nation (2001) further underline the role of reading strategies, such as skimming and scanning, in improving comprehension efficiency under time constraints. Additionally, Weir (2005) points out that cognitive processing and test conditions significantly affect learner performance, supporting the view that effective time management is integral to achieving higher IELTS Reading scores.

Research methodology. This study adopts a qualitative research design based on the analysis of theoretical sources and empirical findings related to IELTS Reading performance and time management strategies. Descriptive and comparative methods are used to examine the effectiveness of different techniques, while pedagogical implications are derived through systematic evaluation of existing studies and practical observations.

Results and discussion. Time management in the IELTS Reading module represents not only a practical necessity but also a complex cognitive and strategic competence that directly determines the quality of test performance. The structure of the reading test, which requires candidates to process three lengthy passages and answer forty questions within a strict sixty-minute timeframe, creates a high-pressure environment where inefficient time use can quickly lead to incomplete tasks and reduced scores. In this context, time management should be understood as a dynamic interaction between linguistic ability, cognitive processing, and strategic decision-making. Learners are expected to simultaneously decode information, interpret meaning, identify relevant details, and make rapid decisions about how to allocate their attention, all within limited time. This multidimensional challenge explains why even learners with relatively high levels of English proficiency may struggle to achieve strong results if they lack appropriate time management strategies.

One of the most fundamental techniques supporting efficient time use is skimming, which serves as a preliminary reading strategy aimed at extracting the general idea, organizational structure, and communicative purpose of a text. Rather than engaging in detailed comprehension, skimming enables learners to form a global understanding of the passage by focusing on titles, headings, introductory sentences, and concluding remarks. This process activates prior knowledge and builds a mental framework that facilitates faster navigation during subsequent question-solving stages. Importantly, skimming also

helps learners anticipate the types of information contained in each paragraph, thereby reducing the need for repeated reading and minimizing time wastage. When performed effectively, skimming should be completed within a very limited timeframe, typically two to three minutes, allowing candidates to allocate the majority of their time to targeted reading tasks.

Closely related to skimming is the technique of scanning, which involves searching for specific pieces of information within the text without reading it in its entirety. Scanning is particularly useful for question types that require the identification of factual details, such as names, dates, numbers, or specific terms. This strategy relies heavily on the ability to recognize keywords and their synonyms, as IELTS texts often paraphrase information rather than repeating it verbatim. Consequently, learners must develop strong lexical awareness and the ability to identify semantic relationships between words and phrases. Effective scanning significantly reduces the time required to locate answers and allows learners to focus their cognitive resources on interpretation rather than search processes. Together, skimming and scanning form a complementary pair of strategies that enhance both speed and accuracy in reading tasks.

Another essential dimension of time management is the strategic allocation of time across the three reading passages. Since the passages are arranged in order of increasing difficulty, candidates must adjust their pacing to ensure that sufficient time is reserved for more complex texts. A commonly recommended approach involves spending approximately fifteen to seventeen minutes on the first passage, eighteen to twenty minutes on the second, and twenty to twenty-three minutes on the third. This graduated allocation reflects the cognitive demands of each passage and helps prevent situations in which learners spend excessive time on easier sections while leaving insufficient time for more challenging ones. However, effective time allocation is not merely a matter of following a fixed schedule; it also requires flexibility and real-time decision-making based on individual performance and perceived difficulty.

In addition to managing time across passages, candidates must also prioritize questions within each passage. Question prioritization is a critical strategy that enables learners to maximize their scores by focusing on tasks that can be completed quickly and accurately. For example, questions that involve locating specific information or matching details are often less time-consuming than those requiring deeper inference or interpretation. By addressing simpler questions first, learners can secure a substantial portion of the available marks while building confidence and maintaining a steady pace. More complex questions can then be approached with the remaining time, reducing the risk of becoming stuck on a single item. This approach aligns with principles of efficient problem-solving, where tasks are organized according to their level of difficulty and potential return.

A common obstacle to effective time management is the tendency toward over-reading, which occurs when learners attempt to understand every word and detail in the

passage. While this approach may be appropriate in academic study contexts, it is counterproductive in a timed testing environment where efficiency is paramount. Over-reading not only consumes valuable time but also increases cognitive load, leading to fatigue and reduced concentration. Instead, learners should adopt a selective reading approach, focusing on extracting relevant information and ignoring unfamiliar vocabulary that does not directly affect comprehension. This shift from intensive to strategic reading represents a fundamental adjustment in learning behavior and requires consistent practice and guidance.

The role of cognitive factors in time management cannot be overlooked. Under time pressure, the human cognitive system experiences increased demands on working memory, attention, and processing speed. When these resources are overwhelmed, performance declines, resulting in errors, omissions, and decreased comprehension. Effective time management techniques help mitigate these effects by structuring the reading process and reducing uncertainty. For instance, having a clear plan for approaching passages and questions allows learners to allocate their attention more efficiently and avoid unnecessary cognitive strain. Moreover, familiarity with common question types and test formats enables faster decision-making, further enhancing performance under pressure.

Regular practice under timed conditions is essential for developing and internalizing time management skills. Through repeated exposure to simulated test environments, learners can gradually improve their pacing, refine their strategies, and build confidence in their abilities. Timed practice also provides valuable feedback on individual strengths and weaknesses, allowing learners to adjust their approach accordingly. For example, a learner who consistently runs out of time may need to focus on improving scanning speed, while another who makes frequent errors may need to work on accuracy and attention to detail. In this sense, time management is not a fixed skill but an adaptive process that evolves with practice and experience.

Another important aspect of time management in the IELTS Reading module is answer recording. Unlike the Listening section, where candidates are given additional time to transfer their answers, the Reading module requires answers to be written directly onto the answer sheet during the test. This adds an additional layer of complexity, as learners must balance reading, comprehension, and writing simultaneously. Efficient answer recording involves maintaining accuracy in spelling and grammar while minimizing time spent on writing. Developing this skill requires practice and attention to detail, as even minor errors can result in lost marks.

From a pedagogical perspective, the importance of time management underscores the need for a more strategic approach to IELTS preparation. Traditional language instruction often emphasizes vocabulary and grammar, but may neglect the development of test-taking strategies. To address this gap, educators should incorporate explicit training in time management techniques, including guided practice in skimming and scanning,

timed exercises, and structured feedback on performance. Additionally, teachers should encourage learners to reflect on their own time use and identify areas for improvement. By fostering both linguistic competence and strategic awareness, educators can help learners achieve more consistent and higher-level outcomes.

Furthermore, the integration of metacognitive strategies plays a crucial role in enhancing time management. Learners who are aware of their own cognitive processes are better able to monitor their performance, adjust their strategies, and make informed decisions during the test. For example, recognizing when a question is too difficult and choosing to move on can prevent unnecessary time loss. Similarly, being able to evaluate one's comprehension in real time allows for more efficient allocation of effort. Developing these metacognitive skills requires deliberate practice and reflective learning, which should be incorporated into IELTS preparation programs.

In addition, technological tools and digital resources have increasingly become valuable in supporting time management training. Online practice platforms, timed mock tests, and performance analytics allow learners to track their progress and identify patterns in their behavior. These tools provide immediate feedback and enable personalized learning, making it easier for learners to focus on specific areas of improvement. However, it is important to ensure that such tools are used effectively and in alignment with pedagogical objectives, rather than as a substitute for structured instruction.

Finally, it is important to recognize that time management is influenced by individual differences among learners, including language proficiency, cognitive style, and test anxiety levels. Some learners may naturally process information more quickly, while others may require more time to achieve the same level of comprehension. Therefore, time management strategies should be adapted to suit individual needs and preferences. Personalized approaches that take into account learners' strengths and weaknesses are more likely to yield positive results than one-size-fits-all solutions.

In summary, the main part of this study demonstrates that time management in the IELTS Reading module is a multifaceted construct encompassing cognitive, strategic, and pedagogical dimensions. Techniques such as skimming, scanning, time allocation, and question prioritization play a central role in optimizing performance, while cognitive and metacognitive factors influence how effectively these strategies are applied. Through consistent practice, targeted instruction, and reflective learning, learners can develop the skills necessary to manage their time efficiently and achieve higher band scores.

Conclusion. In conclusion, time management is a fundamental factor influencing success in the IELTS Reading module. While language proficiency remains important, the ability to effectively allocate time, apply strategic reading techniques, and manage cognitive resources often determines overall performance. This study highlights the importance of integrating time management training into language instruction and test preparation programs. By adopting structured strategies such as skimming, scanning, and question prioritization, learners can significantly improve their reading efficiency and

achieve higher band scores. Future research should focus on empirical data to further validate the relationship between time management techniques and test performance across different learner populations.

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