

Common pitfalls for readers

Learners will adopt different strategies as they relate the questions to a text. Repeated, targeted cross-reference may be a big demand on learners who are struggling from the beginning. Some of their strategies may be limited or inappropriate to the task in hand, with the result that they may not be able to construct a mental 'map' of the original in their head. Learners may:

- read the whole text passively with little regard to purpose
- make inappropriate use of headings and/or illustrations and/or other markers which indicate the structure and organisation of the text
- read the source text through and then answer the questions without referring back to the text
- start to answer individual questions before they have read the whole passage and gained an overview of its structure, missing contextual or narrative information relevant to the question they are considering
- adopt a 'hunt the answer' approach in which they look for a specific point or phrase signposted by the question without due regard to the sentence or paragraph context
- lack IT skills and have difficulty in using tabs, menus or links
- misunderstand the sort of answer required by a particular type of question (eg confusion of 'how' and 'why')
- bring their own prior knowledge to a text in relation to word meanings and question interpretation and, as a result, not use the passage to answer the question
- rely excessively on their own existing knowledge of a topic or an issue and ignore or distort important aspects of the content of the text
- find that a particular topic arouses strong emotions which act as a block to their understanding.