

# Functional Skills English: Creating a reading skills lesson

Chris Briggs, Sector Manager  
Post-16 English and maths



August 2019

# Training Overview

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# **Introduction**

Reading Skills lessons are always a minefield. Encouraging learners to develop skills they feel they already have (“I can read, why are we doing this”) or that they do not want to develop “(reading is long...)”.

This session follows a top down, bottom up approach to reading skills, engaging with the text as a whole and then with specific points.

So, let’s have a look at what can be done to ensure your lessons are successful.

**Choosing a text**

First thing you need to do is choose a text to read.

When choosing a text you need to consider the following factors:

- The learners you are teaching and their level
- What are they interested in, what else are they studying in college
- The subject matter of the text (is it appropriate?)
- The language level of the text (is it appropriate?)
- What skills you wish to develop

# **Pre Reading Activity**

Everybody needs a purpose for reading something. The vast majority of people do not read just for the sake of it, especially when there are so many other things competing for our time and interest. Now this purpose could be because we need information or it could be for pleasure.

In the classroom, it is, therefore, important to give learners a reason for reading and to generate their interest before they read. Otherwise you will experience the handout push, where the learners' initial reaction to being given something to read is to push it away.



Creating this interest can be done with a lead-in activity such as:

- Brainstorm the topic; then read the text to find out if the collated points were included.
- Generate a story from key words in the text; then read to see find similarities.
- Headline hangman followed by predictions on story content; then read to see find similarities.

If fact, anything will do as long as it give the learners a purpose to read the text.

Once you have done this activity, encourage the learners to read the text for **ONE** minute to see if anything they talked about is included. This one minute is key as it is roughly the time we give to a piece of reading outside the classroom to see if we are interested it.



**Main Reading  
Activity**

After the initial reading activity, you can then give the learners a second reading activity in order for them to extract information from the text.

This could be in the form of:

- Pre-prepared questions
- The pros and cons of the subject
- Highlight examples of fact and opinion



**Language Focus  
Activity**

The final reading activity should have a lexical focus. This could be to highlight a number of things:

- Unknown vocabulary
- Idiomatic language
- Structural features of the text
- Language features used for a particular purpose (e.g. to persuade)
- Punctuation

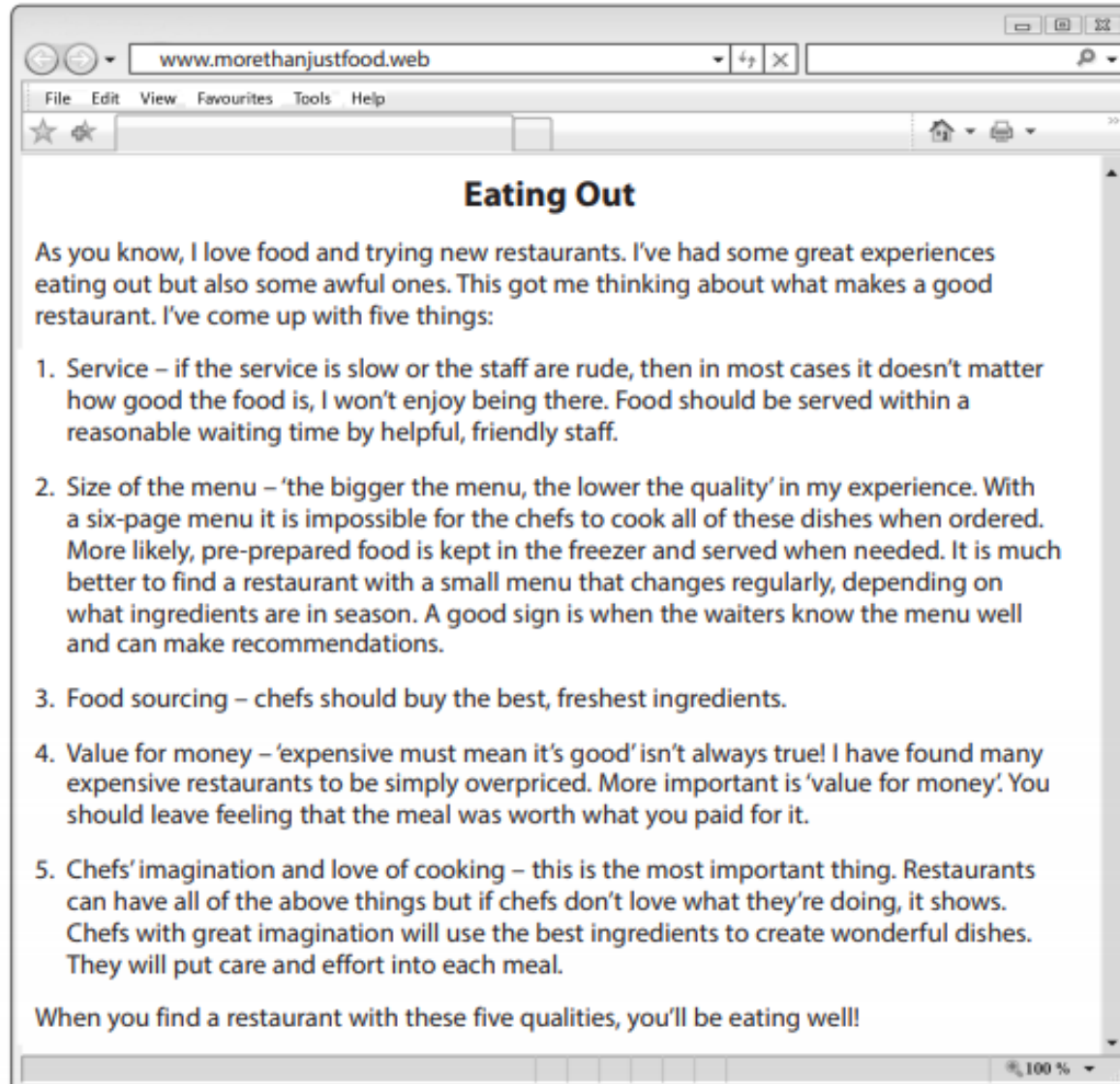
**Final Output**

Reading is an input activity and it logically follows that there should be an output activity too. Now this could be in a number of formats:

- Group discussion (ensure you set outcomes for this)
- A writing activity where the learners write in response to what they have read
- A planning activity where the learners plan in detail a written response (this is good way for the learners to prepare for writing exams)

# **Example 1**





## Pre Reading Activity

- Learners in pairs write a list of what makes a good restaurant. Collate answers on the board.
- Learners then read the text for one minute to see how many of their ideas are in the text.

## Main Reading Activity

- Learners reread the text and answer the questions (see next slides).

## Language Focus Activity

- Learners highlight the language and structural features used by the writer.
- Learners highlight how punctuation is used to help understanding.

## Output

- Learners use the text and their own experience to create an article on how to spot a bad restaurant.

What is the **main** purpose of Text B?

- A** To explain what makes a really good restaurant.
- B** To show the writer dislikes eating in restaurants.
- C** To discuss the high quality of food in restaurants.
- D** To describe what to look for in a restaurant menu.

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**(Total for Question 8 = 1 mark)**

According to Text B, which **two** of the following statements are correct?

- A** Expensive restaurants are the best.
- B** Waiters should be friendly and helpful.
- C** Waiting a long time for food is a good sign.
- D** A large menu means high quality.
- E** Good food often has fresh ingredients.
- F** Chefs do not need a lot of training.

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**(Total for Question 9 = 2 marks)**

Using Text B, identify **two** things that make a good chef.

You do **not** need to write in sentences.

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**(Total for Question 10 = 2 marks)**

Your friend works as a chef in a restaurant.

Using Text B, identify **two** things he should consider when planning his menu.

You do **not** need to write in sentences.

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**(Total for Question 11 = 2 marks)**

Using Text B, give **one** reason why the writer does not like a large menu.

You do **not** need to write in sentences.

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**(Total for Question 12 = 1 mark)**

Your neighbour is applying for a job as a waiter in a restaurant.

Using Text B, give **two** ways staff in a restaurant should behave towards customers.

You do **not** need to write in sentences.

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**(Total for Question 13 = 2 marks)**

## **Example 2**

## What does a smiley face mean to you?

Today, communication is often rapid and perhaps nothing indicates this better than the emoticon and the emoji. These pictures form a language that is universally understood. You don't need to know the other person's language or even how to read.



In 1982, Scott Fahlman hit three keys on his keyboard :-)) and the emoticon was born – a sideways happy face. Soon these emoticons made out of punctuation marks turned into emojis, or actual pictures that represent emotions – bright yellow smiley faces for happiness, crying faces for sadness and hearts for love. There are also some quirky emojis that are not about emotion, such as a slice of pizza or a football.

A recent report found that 92% of the online population use emojis frequently. If their popularity continues to grow, and if more classic books are translated into emojis, as the novel *Moby Dick* has been, what does that mean for the future of our language and literature?

Many people become enraged at the sight of an emoji. "I am deeply offended by them," Maria McErlane, a British actor and presenter, told *The New York Times*. "I find it lazy. Are your words not enough?"

An emoji can be a more comfortable way to express ourselves or can help when words fail us and we can't easily share our feelings. 84% of women and 75% of men use emojis regularly. These frequent users believe emojis convey their feelings more accurately than words, for example a red face for anger or clapping hands to say well done.

Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. Far from destroying language, emojis show how people can now communicate complex feelings efficiently across cultures and borders – perfect for our modern, fast-paced world.

Source: Adapted from: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joan-gage/emoticons-and-emojis-destroying-our-language\\_b\\_7950460.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joan-gage/emoticons-and-emojis-destroying-our-language_b_7950460.html)

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## Pre Reading Activity

- Class survey on emoji use (e.g. do you use emojis?, when do you use emojis?. Collate answers on the board.
- Learners then read the text for one minute to see how much of their survey is in the text.

## Main Reading Activity

- Learners reread the text and answer the questions (see next slides).

## Language Focus Activity

- Learners highlight the language used by the writer.
- Learners highlight unknown words, then using the context and their peer try to work out what they mean.

## Output

- Learners use the text and their own experience to create a guide on using emojis effectively



The writer of Text A believes that:

- A** emojis are helpful for improving literacy
- B** emojis were first used in classic books
- C** emojis make communication more efficient
- D** emojis can be helpful when ordering pizza

**(Total for Question 1 = 1 mark)**

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In Text A, what do the following phrases suggest about the writer's view of language?

'universally understood':

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(1)

'fast-paced world':

.....

.....

(1)

**(Total for Question 2 = 2 marks)**

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What is the **main** purpose of Text A?

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**(Total for Question 3 = 1 mark)**

**There's so much  
more to learn**

ALWAYS LEARNING