

Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills

By Aseel Kanakri

Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills by John Langan is one the best books used nowadays in ESL reading classes. It is designed to teach English learners academic reading skills needed for success in college. This book is appropriate for upper-intermediate and advanced reading classes in intensive English language programs. The approach of the book, in which each chapter focuses on one skill and provides students with many exercises and reading passages to help them master that skill, makes it very accessible and easy to use. It also integrates reading and writing exercises. For example, there are whole chapters that teach students the difference between topics, main ideas, central points, major supporting details, and minor supporting details. Knowledge of these elements and their usage is essential for students to write essays in the writing classes. Another aspect that makes this book a great choice for reading teachers is its focus on extensive reading. It has over 650 pages that consist of hundreds of passages for reading both in and outside the classroom. Many of the topics of the readings in the book are general-knowledge-based; therefore, the students usually have some background knowledge of what they read and can make meaningful connections to the new material from their prior knowledge.

The skills taught in this book, including main ideas, sentence relationships, implied central points and making inferences, are badly needed by upper-intermediate and advanced ESL learners especially those planning to take academic classes afterwards. The book makes learning these skills fun by using a wide variety of current and interesting topics like human relationships and behavior, college athletes, college education, modern science and technology (Langan, 2014).

One more reason for using this textbook is the myriad of activities and exercises. Most of these activities are multiple-choice questions, which make doing them in class fast and easy. Due to the huge and extensive amount of exercises in the book, the teacher would not need to supplement the text with any outside material. The activities are good for in-class practice and for homework too. Each chapter has six review tests and six mastery tests. Teachers can choose to have the students answer the review tests in class and the

mastery tests at home. For testing, the book itself is supplemented with a test bank that has a big variety of tests and additional exercises. The author also lists the textbook's website, www.townsendpress.com, as a place where teachers and students can find additional resources like online presentations, extra tests, and PowerPoints.

The book also has many extensive reading passages which help students develop critical thinking skills and not only language skills. The teacher is not required to cover everything in the book because it is huge, so she can simply cherry-pick exercises and passages. It also has combined skills tests at the end which the teacher can use for extra out-of-class practice. The topics in this textbook are interesting and current and could stimulate some real discussion in an advanced ESL classroom. Overall, I have found this book to be of a great benefit to my advanced ESL reading class. My students enjoyed many of the readings in the book and regularly had very interesting discussions. They never had any trouble or difficulty working on the exercises which were mostly straightforward and self-explanatory, especially the fill in the blanks and the multiple choice questions. I am sure that *Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills* would be a very good textbook for any upper-intermediate or advanced ESL reading class. ☺

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Reference

Langan, J. (2014). *Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills* (6th Ed.). West Berlin, NJ: Townsend Press.

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