

To the Instructor

Native speakers of English and those learning English as a second or foreign language are often surprised to learn that there are reading “skills”; that is, that reading is more than literacy and a large vocabulary. However, practicing and using a variety of reading skills will help a student read faster, have better comprehension, and retain and apply the information more effectively. Although there are many skills-based texts available, *Building Academic Reading Skills* offers pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading development activities in all units and for each reading within a unit. For example, students will practice **skimming** and **scanning** for almost all twelve readings in the book.

Building Academic Reading Skills teaches academic reading skills, those most useful for college and university students. It assumes that students will be coping with significant amounts of reading, different types of texts, academic vocabulary, and difficult subject matter.

Each unit features one high-interest topic treated by two different academic disciplines (for a total of 12) and two different types of texts, or genres. For example, Unit 3 focuses on bats (the animal), first with an online article from the field of biology, and then with a passage from an art textbook. Each unit contains one textbook reading and one from another genre since students are increasingly reading newspaper, magazine, journal, and online articles in addition to their textbooks. The readings, while adapted to be accessible to intermediate to high-intermediate students, are not easy. However, through the systematic application of the reading skills, students will be able to understand them and apply the information they learn. Students will gain the satisfaction of having engaged with and mastered challenging texts.

In each unit, students will

- discuss general questions about the topic to prepare for both readings.
- learn and practice vocabulary and reading skills relevant to the first reading. Some skills—such as predicting, skimming, and scanning—are practiced in every unit.
- read the reading first without using a dictionary. In some units they will identify words to look up later. This helps students discriminate between necessary and unnecessary vocabulary in reading, which builds fluency.
- answer questions about the reading’s main ideas. This helps students recognize that they can understand the important ideas of a reading even if they don’t know the meaning of every word in the passage.
- answer questions about the reading’s details. This helps students

improve their reading comprehension.

- look up or infer through guided exercises the meaning of additional vocabulary.
- read the reading a second time.
- apply the reading skill taught in the lesson.
- apply the information to broader areas through exercises or group discussions.
- repeat the process with the second reading in the unit and extend the learning with final discussion questions that allow students, where appropriate, to integrate the information from the two different fields of study.

Students learn vocabulary relevant to each reading and the broader topic, but more importantly, they learn strategies for coping with the amount of vocabulary they can expect to encounter in academic texts. Often, they practice choosing a limited number of words to check in a dictionary and then, after they have looked up the words, analyze whether they made good choices. (The number of words students look up varies depending on other vocabulary skills taught in the lesson.) In addition, students learn to use context clues, such as contrast and punctuation marks, to figure out what words mean without having to look them up. Additionally, students answer questions about the main idea of the passage before working with specific vocabulary; in this way, students become more confident about their ability to understand a passage even when they don't know the meaning of every word.

The readings are progressively more difficult, and skills learned in earlier units are recycled in subsequent units. Therefore, while it is not required to do every unit or to do them in order, it is strongly encouraged because students like to see that they are making progress and that they are able to handle increasingly difficult readings over time.

The same approach is continued at a higher level, with new reading skills and different topics, in *Building Academic Reading Skills, Book 2*.