



## How to Read and Understand Advanced English Texts (B2–C1)

### 1. Identify the Main Clause First

In long English sentences, **the main clause usually carries the most important message**. Try to strip away the extra details (subordinate clauses, relative clauses, parenthetical phrases) and locate the core subject + verb + object.

**Example:**

Although the experiment, which was conducted by a team of researchers at MIT, revealed unexpected results, **it confirmed the original hypothesis**.

Focus first on: **"It confirmed the original hypothesis."**

This is the **main clause**, and everything else adds context or background.

**Tip:** Try reading the sentence *without* the extra clauses first. Then go back and fill in the details.

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### 2. Track Pronoun References Carefully

Pronouns (he, she, it, they, which, this, that) must be **mentally linked back** to the correct noun (antecedent). If you're not sure what a pronoun refers to, go back a few lines.

**Example:**

The new policies, announced earlier this month, aim to reduce carbon emissions. **They** have already sparked debate among environmental groups.

What does "they" refer to? → **The new policies**

**Tip:** If the pronoun is unclear, underline it and find the closest matching noun that fits in context.

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### 3. Understand Relative Clauses and What They Describe

Words like **who, which, that, whose, where, when** introduce **relative clauses**. These add information, but can also **split up or delay** the main clause.

**Example:**

The committee, **which had met three times already**, failed to reach an agreement.

 **Main idea:** The committee failed to reach an agreement.

 **Extra info:** **which had met three times already**

 **Tip:** Mentally isolate the relative clause to avoid getting lost. What is it describing?

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### 4. Break the Sentence into Chunks

Long sentences can often be broken into **smaller, logical sections**. Add a mental pause or even use a pencil to divide the sentence.

**Example:**

Faced with growing public pressure, and despite strong opposition from the board, the CEO decided to step down after just six months in office.

- ◆ **Chunk 1:** Faced with growing public pressure
- ◆ **Chunk 2:** and despite strong opposition from the board
- ◆ **Chunk 3 (main clause):** the CEO decided to step down
- ◆ **Chunk 4:** after just six months in office

 **Tip:** Pause at commas, conjunctions (and, but, although), or relative pronouns to process each part.

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### 5. Recognize Signal Words and Linking Devices

Words like **however, although, therefore, while, in contrast, despite, because** tell you how the sentence parts are related—**contrast, cause, result**, etc.

**Example:**

**Although** the task seemed simple, **it turned out to be extremely time-consuming.**

 **Tip:** Highlight or underline linking words. Ask: what function does this word serve?

## 6. Look for the "Topic" of the Paragraph

Before diving into sentence details, ask:

→ *What is this paragraph about overall?*

Skim the **first sentence** of the paragraph for the main idea (topic sentence), and then let that guide your interpretation of the rest.

**Example:**

"Urban planning has evolved significantly in the 21st century. While traditional models prioritized efficiency, new approaches aim to center human experience and environmental sustainability."

 Paragraph topic: **Urban planning has changed** — keep this in mind while reading the rest.

## 7. Use a Vocabulary Notebook for Abstract or Academic Words

Advanced texts often use **abstract vocabulary** (e.g., *implement, generate, justify, facilitate*). When you come across a difficult word, try guessing its meaning from context and then look it up.

 **Tip:** Build a personal word list. Learn common academic verb-noun pairs like:

- make a decision
- pose a challenge
- reach a conclusion
- carry out a study

## 8. Reread Strategically

If a sentence is very hard to follow, **re-read it once for structure** (What's the main clause?), and **once for meaning** (What is the author trying to say?).

Even native speakers often reread dense or academic texts!

## 9. Think in English

Avoid translating everything into Finnish. Try instead to **understand directly in English**, especially for structure and flow. Translation can sometimes confuse things due to word order differences.

## 10. Practice Makes Progress

Reading gets easier the more you do it. Challenge yourself with different text types:

- Essays
- News articles
- Editorials
- Fiction
- Academic texts

## Final Encouragement

Reading advanced texts is like weightlifting for your brain. It's okay if it feels heavy at first—but with consistent practice and a few smart strategies, you'll get stronger.