



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.

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.

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?

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.

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
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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.**