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# Reading and Understanding Text in a New Language

KS2 MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Ages 10-14 ⌚ 3 min read

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## Start with What You Already Know

When you open a text in a language you're learning, the first thing to do is look for **familiar words**. These might be **cognates** — words that look like English because they come from the same language roots. For example, in French, 'restaurant' looks the same and means the same thing. In Spanish, 'universidad' is clearly 'university'. Spotting these words gives you confidence and helps you understand the main idea without knowing every single word.

You don't need to understand **100% of the text** to get the meaning. Most people only need to understand about **70-80%** to follow what's happening.

## Use Context and Pictures as Clues

Look at the **context** — the words and sentences around an unknown word. If you read 'El gato está en la casa', you might not know 'gato', but if there's a picture of a cat, or the sentence talks about something sitting in a house, you can guess it means cat.

Think of it like being a detective. You collect clues from pictures, punctuation, and nearby words to solve the mystery of what each unknown word means.

## Break Text Into Chunks

Don't try to read everything at once. Split the text into small **chunks** — maybe one paragraph or even one sentence at a time. Read slowly, and ask yourself: 'What is this sentence about?' rather than 'What does every word mean?'

Try reading **aloud** too. Hearing the words helps your brain understand them better, especially if your teacher has taught you how to pronounce them.

## Use Tools Wisely

A **dictionary** is helpful, but don't look up every word — you'll lose the main story. Instead, use it for **key words** that seem important to understanding the main idea.

Many language learners highlight or underline unknown words first, then look up only the most important ones after reading.

Think of a dictionary like a helping hand — useful when you're really stuck, but you can manage without it for most of the journey.

## Read the Same Text Twice

The first time, just try to get the **general idea**. The second time, you'll understand much more because your brain has already started to recognize the words and patterns. This is called **repetition**, and it's one of the best ways to improve.