How to Boost Your Reading Speed for the AEIS Exam in Singapore

Understanding the Reading Demands of the AEIS

The Admissions Exercise for International Students (AEIS) is a key gateway for students who want to join Singapore's mainstream schools. One of the biggest challenges candidates face is the reading component, which tests not just comprehension but also how quickly you can process text. English is often not the first language for AEIS takers, so developing strong reading fluency is essential. Improving your reading speed without sacrificing understanding can make a real difference on test day. This article walks through practical steps you can take to build that skill, from building foundational vocabulary to practising timed reading sessions.

Step 1: Build Core Vocabulary and Grammar First

You cannot read faster if you keep stopping to guess word meanings or puzzle over sentence structures. The first step is to strengthen your vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Start with the most common English words used in school texts, especially academic ones. Make flashcards of new words and review them daily. Focus on word families, such as "analyse", "analysis", and "analytical", so you can recognise related forms quickly.

Grammar is equally important. Learn how complex sentences are built with clauses, conjunctions, and connectors. When you understand how ideas link together, your eyes can move through text more smoothly. Work through grammar exercises that focus on sentence structure, such as identifying main and subordinate clauses. This foundation lets you spend less mental effort on decoding and more on meaning.

Step 2: Practise Chunking Instead of Reading Word by Word

Many slow readers look at each individual word. A faster method is to train your eyes to see groups of words at once, known as chunking. For example, instead of reading "The / quick / brown / fox / jumps", you read "The quick brown fox / jumps over the lazy dog". This reduces the number of eye movements and lets your brain process meaning faster.

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To practise, take a short paragraph and mark natural breaks with a pencil. Read each chunk as a unit. Start with two or three words per chunk, then gradually increase to five or six. Over time, your eyes will learn to take in more text at a glance. You can also use a finger or a pen to guide your eyes along the line, moving a little faster each time. This physical cue helps prevent regression, the habit of jumping back to re-read words.



Step 3: Use Timed Practice Sessions

Speed improves when you measure it. Set aside 15 to 20 minutes each day for timed reading. Choose a passage at or slightly below the level of AEIS materials. Note the time before you start, read at a comfortable pace, and write down how long it took. Then count the number of words you read and divide by the minutes. This gives you your words-per-minute (WPM) rate. Track this number over several weeks. The goal is not just to increase speed but to maintain comprehension above 70 percent.

After each timed session, write a short summary of what you read. Check it against the passage to see how well you understood. If your comprehension drops below that threshold, slow down a little. The right balance is a pace where you can answer questions about the main idea, details, and implied meanings. Over time, you will find your comfortable speed rising naturally.

Step 4: Preview the Text Before You Read

Jumping straight into a passage without orientation slows you down. A quick preview helps you build a mental map of the content. Spend 30 seconds scanning the title, headings, subheadings, and any bold or italicised words. Look at pictures, charts, or captions if they are present. Read the first sentence of each paragraph. This gives you a framework for where the text is going.

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When you then read the full passage, you will already know the topic and the structure. Your brain can focus on connecting details rather than figuring out the big picture. This technique is especially useful for the AEIS, where passages often contain informational text about science, history, or social studies. Previewing turns reading from a linear slog into a more efficient process of filling in a prepared outline.

Step 5: Work on Question Interpretation

The AEIS reading section does not just test whether you can read fast. It tests whether you can find the right information to answer questions. Many students spend extra time re-reading passages because they do not fully understand what a question is asking. Practice reading questions before you read the passage. Underline key words in each question, such as "main reason", "first step", or "author's purpose". Then, as you read, keep those questions in mind.

When you encounter a sentence that seems relevant, mark it mentally or with a light pencil note. This way, when you reach the question, you already know where to look. This targeted approach reduces the need to read the whole passage multiple times. It also improves your comprehension because you are reading with a purpose. Over time, your brain will learn to scan for specific information more efficiently, which naturally raises your effective reading speed.



For students preparing for the AEIS, a structured approach to reading practice can make the difference between struggling through the paper and moving through it with confidence. United Ceres College offers preparation programmes that include focused coaching on reading comprehension and speed, helping students build the skills they need for the exam. Their curriculum covers vocabulary development, grammar review, and timed reading exercises tailored to the AEIS format.

Step 6: Expand Your Reading Range

Reading speed improves when you read a variety of materials. Do not limit yourself to practice test papers. Read short news articles, simplified encyclopedia entries, and age-appropriate non-fiction books. Each type of text has its own rhythm and vocabulary. The more you read, the more patterns your brain recognises, and the faster it processes new text.

Choose topics that interest you. If you enjoy science, read about space or animals. If you like stories, read short narratives. The key is to read something every day. Even 10 minutes of

consistent reading builds neural pathways that make processing more automatic. Over weeks and months, this daily habit compounds into noticeable gains in both speed and comprehension. It also exposes you to the sentence structures and written expression styles that appear in the AEIS.

Step 7: Review and Reflect on Your Mistakes

Speed without accuracy is useless. After each practice session, go back to the questions you got wrong. Ask yourself: Did I misread the question? Did I miss a key detail in the passage? Did I run out of time and guess? Understanding the pattern of your mistakes helps you adjust your approach. For example, if you often miss questions about implied meaning, spend more time on inference exercises. If you lose points because you run out of time, work on your chunking and previewing techniques.

Keep a log of your timed sessions, including your WPM and comprehension score. Look for trends. When you see improvement, note what you did differently that week. When you plateau, try a new technique, such as reading with a timer set to a slightly faster pace. The process of deliberate practice, where you reflect and adjust, is more effective than simply doing more of the same.

Another useful technique is to read aloud at a moderate pace for a few minutes each day. This forces you to articulate every word and helps you notice when you are skipping or misreading. It also improves your ear for language, which supports reading comprehension. Over time, the benefits of reading aloud transfer to silent reading, making your internal voice clearer and your pace steadier.



Cert No.: EDU-3-3218
Validity: 18/07/2026 - 17/07/2027

Putting It All Together

Improving reading speed for the AEIS is a gradual process that combines vocabulary building, chunking practice, timed sessions, previewing, and careful review. There is no shortcut, but with consistent daily effort, you can raise your reading rate while keeping comprehension strong. The key is to practise with purpose: track your progress, target your weaknesses, and read widely. Every student's pace is different, so be patient with yourself and celebrate small gains.

If you are looking for structured support, **United Ceres College** provides AEIS preparation that includes reading practice and language fluency development. Their programmes are designed to help international students meet the demands of the exam. For more information, you can contact United Ceres College at 37 Middle Rd, #05-00, Singapore 188946, or call +65 8699 3609.