

UNIT 3 : THE NEWS AND MEDIA

READING

Exercise 1: Read the information. Then read the sentences below. What is the writer doing in each sentence? Choose the best options.

In the IELTS Reading test, you might need to find the part of the Reading passage where the writer is doing something (for example, giving a reason, challenging an idea or comparing something).

1. Many people wonder if it is worth spending a huge amount of money on space exploration. This is a sensible question, although we should also consider the benefits that space research has given us in terms of the technological advancements that have been made. [challenging an idea/ comparing things/ giving a reason]

2. NASA's annual budget is approximately \$17.5 billion. This sounds like a huge amount of money – and it is – until you realise that Americans spend nearly twice that amount on pizza each year. [challenging an idea/ comparing things/ giving a reason]

3. Some historians believe that the USSR and the USA were in a 'race' to develop rocket systems, weapons and satellite technology. This is why conquering space, putting humans in orbit and on the moon, became an important goal in the latter half of the 20th century. [challenging an idea/ comparing things/ giving a reason]

Exercise 2 : Skim read the paragraphs. Match the summaries with the paragraphs. There is one extra summary that you do not need

Remember that in the IELTS Reading test, you should spend a few minutes skim reading the passage in order to get a general idea of what each paragraph is about.

Space tourism

A Space exploration is important. Apart from the fact that it inspires whole new generations of young scientists, it helps us understand our environment and has given us a perspective on the world in which we live. Mostly, space travel has been restricted to military or scientific exploration, but this is now changing. Now there is a growing space tourism industry, which enables people to pay money to achieve their dreams of leaving the Earth.

B Space tourism is not yet a realistic possibility for most people, although there have been commercial flights into space for a few lucky people over the past few decades. In fact, the very first space tourist, Dennis Tito, travelled to the International Space Station as long ago as 2001. Since then, six other fee-paying astronauts have made the trip into space. The explanation for why it was possible for these visitors to have the privilege to leave the Earth, of course, is that they paid enormous sums of money. For his seven days and 22 hours in space, Dennis Tito is reported to have paid \$20 million.

C At present, there are several business ventures planning to launch commercial flights to the edge of space, and specially designed vehicles to enable this are being created. Although these do not plan to take tourists away from the Earth's atmosphere, they do offer the chance to travel on board a suborbital flight reaching altitudes of up to 160 kilometres and moving at over 1.4 kilometres per second. This would offer customers the experience of seeing a dark sky filled with stars, as well as a stunning view of the planet Earth below. Tickets would cost in the region of \$200,000 per trip, which

would be a bargain compared to the fee Dennis Tito had to pay. However, the trips would be a lot shorter, offering only a few minutes of weightlessness before returning back to the ground, instead of seven days in outer space.

D So, it is possible that space tourism could one day become achievable and affordable for many people. However, although a journey into space (or the edge of it) would be a rewarding, once-in-a-lifetime experience for the lucky few, space travel could have widespread drawbacks for the rest of us. According to a study carried out by NASA, a large number of suborbital launches would inevitably release a significant amount of carbon dioxide into the higher levels of the Earth's atmosphere. This alone could cause large-scale disruption to the planet's climate, increasing temperatures globally and disrupting the ozone layer.

Current developments in the space tourism industry

The benefits and opportunities of space travel

The harmful consequences of space tourism

The number of people who have paid to travel to space

The poor value that trips into space offer compared to their cost

1 Paragraph A

2 Paragraph B

3 Paragraph C

4 Paragraph D

Exercise 3 : Read the information, then read the paragraphs again. Which paragraph contains the following information? Choose the correct answers.

- 1 a comparison between two different amounts of time

- ☐ A
☐ B
☐ C
☐ D

Read the questions carefully and decide which paragraph probably contains the information. Then read that paragraph carefully to check if the information is there.

- 2 a challenge to the idea that space tourism is worthwhile

- ☐ A
☐ B
☐ C
☐ D

- 3 a reason why certain people could achieve something

- ☐ A
☐ B
☐ C
☐ D

Exercise 4 : Read the information. Then look at questions 1–3 and choose the sentence from each paragraph that contains the answer.

The information you need to find is located in one key sentence in each paragraph. Notice that the words in the questions are often very similar in meaning to the ones in the paragraphs.

1 a reason why certain people could achieve something

Paragraph B

- ☐ Space tourism is not yet a realistic possibility for most people, although there have been commercial flights into space for a few lucky people over the past few decades.
- ☐ In fact, the very first space tourist, Dennis Tito, travelled to the International Space Station as long ago as 2001.
- ☐ Since then, six other fee-paying astronauts have made the trip into space.
- ☐ The explanation for why it was possible for these visitors to have the privilege to leave the Earth, of course, is that they paid enormous sums of money.
- ☐ For his seven days and 22 hours in space, Dennis Tito is reported to have paid \$20 million.

2 a comparison between two different amounts of time

Paragraph C

- ☐ At present, there are several business ventures planning to launch commercial flights to the edge of space, and specially designed vehicles to enable this are being created.
- ☐ Although these do not plan to take tourists away from the Earth's atmosphere, they do offer the chance to travel on board a suborbital flight reaching altitudes of up to 160 kilometres and moving at over 1.4 kilometres per second.
- ☐ This would offer customers the experience of seeing a dark sky filled with stars, as well as a stunning view of the planet Earth below.
- ☐ Tickets would cost in the region of \$200,000 per trip, which would be a bargain compared to the fee Dennis Tito had to pay.
- ☐ However, the trips would be a lot shorter, offering only a few minutes of weightlessness before returning back to the ground, instead of seven days in outer space.

3 a challenge to the idea that space tourism is worthwhile

Paragraph D

- ☐ So, it is possible that space tourism could one day become achievable and affordable for many people.
- ☐ However, although a journey into space (or the edge of it) would be a rewarding, once-in-a-lifetime experience for the lucky few, space travel could have widespread drawbacks for the rest of us.
- ☐ According to a study carried out by NASA, a large number of suborbital launches would inevitably release a significant amount of carbon dioxide into the higher levels of the Earth's atmosphere.
- ☐ This alone could cause large-scale disruption to the planet's climate, increasing temperatures globally and disrupting the ozone layer.

Exercise 5: Read the information. Then read the questions and the sentences from the paragraphs that contain the answers again. Select the words or phrases in each paragraph that match the words and phrases in bold in the questions.

1 a reason why certain people could achieve something

Paragraph B

The explanation for why it was possible for these visitors to have the privilege to leave the Earth, of course, was that they paid enormous sums of money.

2 a comparison between two different amounts of time

Paragraph C

However, the trips would be a lot shorter, offering only a few minutes of weightlessness before returning back to the ground, instead of seven days in outer space.

3 a challenge to the idea that space tourism is worthwhile

Paragraph D

However, although a journey into space (or the edge of it) would be a rewarding, once-in-a-lifetime experience for the lucky few, space travel could have widespread drawbacks for the rest of us.

Exercise 6: Here are some more things a writer may do. Match the descriptions with the functions.

justify something	●	●	write about a few things which are typical of something
give details	●	●	say why something is right or why something should exist
mention or make reference to something	●	●	write about something, but not in a detailed way
give examples	●	●	provide precise, factual information

Exercise 7: In this type of IELTS Reading matching information task, it is possible that you will find the answer to more than one question in the same paragraph. Read the passage again. Then decide which paragraph contains the information in questions 1–4. Choose the correct answers.

1 gives a justification of why space travel is useful

- ☐ A
☐ B
☐ C
☐ D

2 mentions the main types of space travel that have existed until now

- ☐ A
☐ B
☐ C
☐ D

3 gives examples of people who have paid to travel into space

- ☐ A
☐ B
☐ C
☐ D

4 gives details of flights which reach the edge of space

- ☐ A
☐ B
☐ C
☐ D

Exercise 8: Read the information. Then do the IELTS Reading task. The text has seven paragraphs (A–G). Which paragraph contains the following information? Choose the correct paragraph.

Try this exam task, but note that in the real IELTS Reading test there would not be as many questions in a matching information task such as this.

- Read the passage and think about the purpose or function of each paragraph (explaining, comparing, giving details, etc.).
- Look at the questions and identify the type of information you need to look for (a reason, a comparison, etc.).
- Try to match the type of information with the functions of the paragraphs.
- When you think you have identified the right paragraph, read it carefully to check that it contains all the correct information.
- Remember that the words in the question may be expressed differently in the Reading passage.
- Remember that just because you see a word from the question, it does not necessarily mean that you have found the correct paragraph.

What does it take to become an astronaut?

A What could be more thrilling than travelling through space and seeing the Earth from miles above? Becoming an astronaut used to be a typical ambition for children, but one they were unlikely ever to fulfil – it was even harder to achieve than becoming a rock star or Hollywood actor. However, since it was launched, the International Space Station (ISS) has been home to well over 200 people from 18 different countries. Although some critics complain that investing in the ISS is a poor use of billions of dollars, they should not forget that research in the unique conditions of the ISS has resulted in some incredible discoveries in medical treatments, weather science and satellite technology, which we now use on Earth. More teams are scheduled to be sent up in the future and are certain to make even more valuable contributions to humanity.

B So what are the requirements for someone wanting to work on the ISS? First, the applicant must be a citizen of the nation whose space programme they are applying for, or be willing to become one. Age is also important, mid-20s to mid-40s being the preferred range. Natural intelligence is vital, and so is achievement in such fields as engineering, biological and physical sciences, and mathematics. Candidates are nearly always from a military background, often because they already have piloting skills, but in some countries, civilians can also apply. For example, in the USA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) considers people from a wide range of backgrounds.

C Obviously, applicants are unlikely to have previous space-travel experience when they attend an interview, but recruiters also look for qualities such as adaptability and determination. Even after an applicant has got through the first stage of the interview process, there are still other tests they have to pass. For example, if it is discovered that the quality of an applicant's eyesight is poor then, unfortunately, it's time to go home. There is a tough physical examination as well. Astronauts need to prove they are in good shape because if they are eventually chosen to go on a mission, they will have to survive long months in microgravity, something which can cause uncomfortable swelling in the arms and legs, and can affect the cardiovascular system.

D Eventually, out of all the applicants that apply, a small group is chosen to attend a two-year period of study. During this time, they will learn a whole range of new things, such as a new language (they will have to communicate with other nationalities on the ISS). They will also have media awareness lessons and special preparation in a simulated zero-gravity

environment. Once they have completed these sessions, the potential astronauts may have to wait years before being chosen to go up to the ISS. In other words, they need to be willing and able to depart at any time.

E If an astronaut is lucky enough to be sent to the ISS, he or she will have plenty to keep them busy. Mostly they will be involved in scientific research, experimentation and maintaining equipment. But just as in any home, the ISS must be kept clean. In fact, wiping and vacuuming up dirt and debris is even more important in space, as the tiny particles could cause huge problems if they got inside some of the computers or other equipment. Astronauts on board the ISS certainly report that they miss their children, their families and their friends on Earth, but few ever complain about boredom. Of course, technology makes it a lot easier to stay in touch nowadays.

F While the daily routine for an astronaut on the ISS may be little different from any other kind of job, there are many new challenges each astronaut faces when they take their first trip into space. One of these is getting used to the fact that there is no more 'night' and 'day' – at least, not in the way the astronauts have previously experienced them. In fact, astronauts on the ISS will see a sunrise, or sunset, every 45 minutes. Travelling at 17,500 miles an hour means they orbit the Earth 16 times in a normal 'day'. As a result, it means they won't know when they are supposed to sleep any more. This is one of the reasons why they need to follow the schedule that is organised for them. The schedule also tells them when they need to visit the gymnasium – which is at least once a day. If they do not exercise regularly, they will soon lose all the muscle in their legs.

G Another challenge concerns when, what and how the astronauts eat. The schedule, of course, tells them when it's time to heat up a packaged meal, some of which are now prepared especially to suit the tastes of the different nationalities amongst the crew. However, for a long time astronauts have reported that normal food loses its flavour in the ISS, and they find it harder to taste anything. Scientists think this has something to do with the fact that fluid moves to the upper body in microgravity, especially the head. This causes the tissues of the face to swell slightly and makes the nose feel blocked. This is why ISS crews often prefer really spicy food and strong flavours. If the food still isn't spicy enough, they can add salt and pepper, but these have to be squeezed out of tubes in liquid form!

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 details of the way that the ISS moves around the planet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 a reason why applicants are rejected early on in the recruitment process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 an account of how a particular human sense can be affected during time spent on the ISS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 a challenge to the idea that the funding of the ISS is wasteful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 a justification for the fitness tests that potential astronauts have to pass	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 a mention of both specialised and routine work that is carried out on the ISS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 examples of the necessary academic requirements for applicants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 an explanation of why astronauts need to stick to a strict timetable in space	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 a comparison between different kinds of occupation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 a reference to the kind of skills acquired during an astronaut training programme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Exercise 9: Match the words and phrases from the Reading passage in the box with the words and phrases in bold used in the questions

- 1 details of the way that the ISS **moves around the planet**
- 2 a reason why applicants are **rejected** early on in the recruitment process
- 3 an account of how **a particular human sense** can be affected during time spent on the ISS
- 4 a challenge to the idea that the funding of the ISS is **wasteful**
- 5 a justification for the tests of **fitness** that potential astronauts have to pass
- 6 a mention of both specialised and **routine work** that is carried out on the ISS
- 7 examples of the necessary **academic requirements** for applicants
- 8 an explanation of why astronauts need to stick to a strict **timetable** in space
- 9 a comparison between **different kinds of occupation**
- 10 a reference to the kind of skills acquired during an astronaut **training programme**

achievement in such fields as ...

schedule

time to go home

orbit the Earth

rock star or Hollywood actor

period of study

wiping and vacuuming up dirt

taste

in good shape

a poor use of billions of dollars

1 moves around the planet

2 rejected

3 a particular human sense

4 wasteful

5 fitness

6 routine work

7 academic requirements

8 timetable

9 different kinds of occupation

10 training programme