

Reading

Strategy

Remember that the questions in a multiple-choice task always refer to the text. Do not be tempted to choose an answer because it seems right according to your knowledge and experience. There will be specific information in the text that indicates the right answer, even when this contradicts your own ideas.

1 Read the text and choose the correct answers (A, B, C, or D).

The rise of Airbnb

In 2007, design graduates, Joe Gebbie and Brian Chesky, were struggling to pay the rent for their San Francisco apartment. When they heard that there was a conference coming to town and there were no hotel rooms available, they came up with the idea of putting their living room floor up for rent. The next day, they created the website airbedandbreakfast.com where they advertised three airbeds in their home at \$80 each a night, breakfast included. Only six days later, they had three guests sleeping on their floor. They knew immediately that this was the start of something big.

Being budding entrepreneurs, the pair decided to take their idea further. They enlisted Gebbie's former flatmate, Nathan Blecharczyk, a computer science graduate, to develop their website. Their idea was to target conferences and festivals across the USA, getting local people to list their rooms and travellers to book them. The new website was completed just in time for the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, at which Barack Obama was due to speak in front of 80,000 people. Within a week, they had 800 listings, an achievement which dealt in part with the shortage of hotel rooms, but did not solve their financial problems, as the site was not making any money.

The team decided that they would have to handle payment for the bookings if they were to make their venture financially viable. They began to charge three per cent to the host and between six and twelve per cent to the traveller, depending on the price of the booking. Meanwhile, investors had started showing interest in the company. By April 2009, Gebbie, Chesky and Blecharczyk were making enough money to cover their living expenses. When larger investments began to arrive, they moved the company out of their flat into a new state-of-the-art office and hired more staff.

Airbnb hit one million bookings in January 2011, and since then it has gone from strength to strength. It hasn't been plain sailing, however. When one host complained on her blog later that year that her house had been trashed by an Airbnb renter, the story was reported internationally in the press. The company responded by announcing that in future hosts would be insured and there would be a 24/7 manned helpline to deal with any complaints. A month later, another victim of vandalism was compensated immediately and has gone on to rent out his apartment through the website again. Thanks to quick thinking like this, the company now has over 1.5 million listings in 34,000 cities in 190 countries, and is rumoured to be worth around \$20 billion.

- Gebbie and Chesky decided to rent out floor space because
 - they wanted to attract people to a conference in their area.
 - they needed money to redecorate the living room.
 - there weren't any hotels near their local conference centre.
 - there was a temporary need for accommodation in the city.
- The new website designed by Nathan Blecharczyk enabled Gebbie and Chesky to
 - accommodate most of the guests at a Denver convention.
 - make a huge profit as soon as it was launched.
 - rent out properties nationally.
 - put travellers in touch with hosts abroad.
- When booking a room with Airbnb,
 - it is only the guest who pays.
 - both the guest and the host have to pay.
 - the guest pays a fixed percentage of the price.
 - the guest and the host share the cost equally.
- Until April 2009, Gebbie and Chesky were running the business from
 - a brand new building.
 - a friend's house.
 - their own home.
 - a flat on Wall Street.
- In paragraph four, the writer mentions the two acts of vandalism
 - to illustrate the speed with which the company reacts to problems.
 - to highlight how irresponsible some of the travellers are.
 - to emphasise the different treatment that some hosts receive.
 - to show how quick the media are to criticise the company.

Listening

Strategy

In a multiple-matching task, the words used in the recordings will usually not match the words used in the questions. Before you listen, think about the words and phrases a speaker might use to express the ideas in the options in a different way.

- Read the Strategy and find phrases in the questions in exercise 3 that could be paraphrased with the phrases below.
 - ask for help _____
 - wasn't getting on with _____
 - head home earlier than planned _____
 - didn't bother taking _____
 - gave up using _____