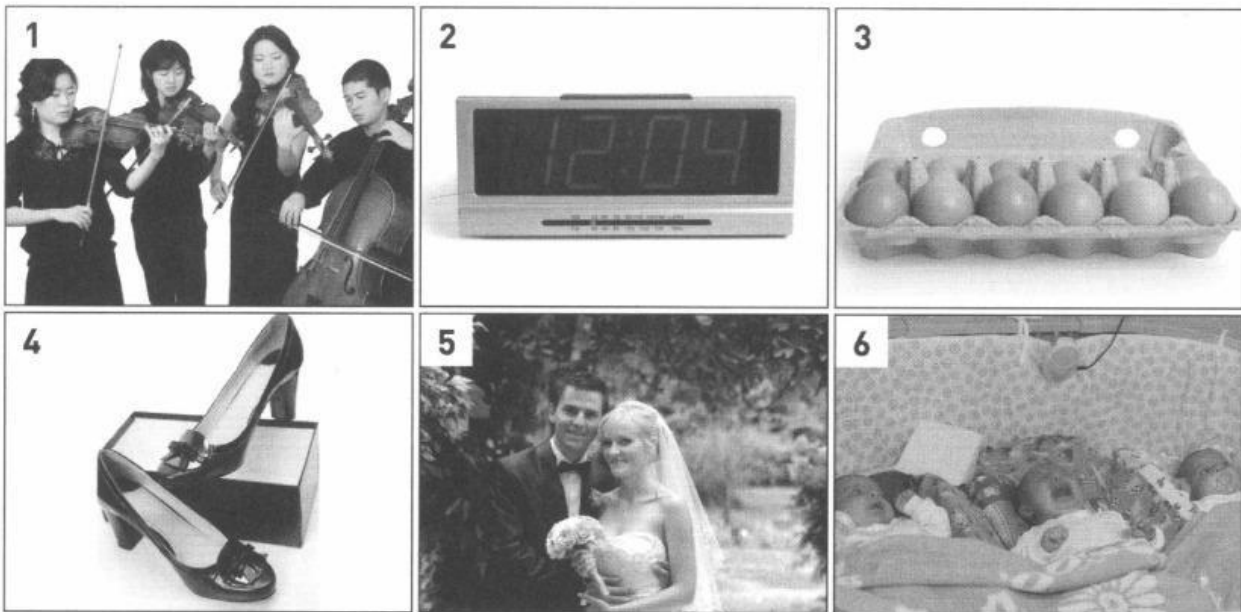


# 8 Twenty-somethings

**Exam focus:** Identifying information | Answering true/false/not given questions

**Aims:** Learning how to identify the right information | Improving reading speed

## Part 1: Vocabulary



- 1 The topic of this unit is 'twenty-somethings'. This refers to young people who are in their twenties, i.e. between twenty and thirty years old. The words a-f below also refer to numbers.

Match the pictures 1-6 above with the words a-f.

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| a a couple ____ | d a quartet ____  |
| b a dozen ____  | e triplets ____   |
| c a pair ____   | f twelve-ish ____ |

- 2 Work out the meaning of the words in *italics* in by studying their context in the sentences 1-4.

1 More twenty-somethings want to be homeowners than ever before, according to research done on behalf of the Council of *Mortgage Lenders* (CML).

- a a small sum of money
- b a type of property
- c a loan for a house

2 The CML has asked young people the same questions about home-ownership *aspirations* periodically since 1975.

- a belongings
- b desires
- c age groups

- 3 As term time starts, students are being warned by Shelter, the housing charity, to beware of *scams* involving privately-rented property.
- a tricks to get somebody's money
  - b types of student accommodation
  - c surveys about attitudes
- 4 Two million people in Great Britain know someone who has either lost money or had problems *retrieving* their deposit.
- a getting back
  - b asking for
  - c paying first

**Exam tip:** To better understand opinions expressed in texts, think about the writer's word choice. You need to know whether the words that are used have positive or negative connotations.

- 3 The words and phrases 1–15 are all ways of referring to old people. Do they usually have positive or negative connotations, or are they neutral? Write P (positive), N (negative), or NL (neutral).

- |                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 advanced in years ____       | 9 octogenarian ____      |
| 2 ancient ____                 | 10 over the hill ____    |
| 3 decrepit ____                | 11 past it ____          |
| 4 elderly ____                 | 12 past one's prime ____ |
| 5 getting on ____              | 13 senile ____           |
| 6 mature ____                  | 14 senior ____           |
| 7 not as young as one was ____ | 15 septuagenarian ____   |
| 8 not long for this world ____ |                          |

- 4 Match words from Exercise 3 above with their definitions a–f.

- a old and weak \_\_\_\_\_
- b confused and no longer able to remember things or look after yourself because of old age \_\_\_\_\_
- c a person who is between eighty and eighty-nine years old \_\_\_\_\_
- d approaching death \_\_\_\_\_
- e a person who is between seventy and seventy-nine years old \_\_\_\_\_
- f very old, or having existed for a long time \_\_\_\_\_

- 5 Write a paragraph about your family and/or your future, in which you use at least five of the words from Exercise 3.

## Part 2: Practice exercises

### **i** Exam information: True / False / Not Given

This type of question tests if you can identify whether information is correct or not.

You are given a factual statement and you have to check in a text if it is true. It is important not to use your own knowledge to answer the questions; the answer must come from the text.

- If the text confirms the statement, your answer should be 'TRUE'.
- If the text says the opposite is true, your answer should be 'FALSE'.
- If it is impossible to know from the text if the statement is true or not, your answer should be 'NOT GIVEN'.

The information in the text will be in the same order as the questions.

**Exam tip:** As the answers are in the same order as the text, do not waste time going back to the beginning of a text to find the answer to a question. Always keep reading on.

- 1 Read the text and when one of the topics on the right is mentioned, tick it. One topic is not mentioned at all, but do not re-read the text to find it. It is a good idea always to keep in mind the next two topics. If you find the second one, then the first one is probably not mentioned. Move on to the next topic. If you come to the end of the text and you find there is more than one topic that you have not found, then you can have another look at the text.

For British teenagers and twenty-somethings today, life is increasingly becoming unfair. The world into which they are entering is more testing and uncertain than the one their parents negotiated at the same age. Finding a stable career is harder, home ownership is a pipedream and while higher education may be more accessible, rising student debt – and national debt – is something they will be paying off for years.

It is a scenario that has been seized on by publishers. Ed Howker and Shiv Malik, both 29, have just finished a book completely dedicated to the subject. When they began their book, they assumed that their constricting circumstances were of their own making. 'At first, we were kind of upset with ourselves,' Malik said. 'We thought, it's our fault. We're lazy. We're not working hard enough. But we found ourselves getting increasingly angry, and realised we were justified in feeling that the whole country had forgotten about the young.'

He compared what the Norwegians did with their North Sea Oil revenue (investing it into a £300 billion trust for subsequent generations) to what we did (subsidised tax break binge for a few decades). They said it was not a surprise that so many reached 30 'but don't feel as though they have entered adulthood in any meaningful sense'.

### Topics

- debt
- marriage
- guilt
- accommodation
- participation in society

Renting is most common among 25 to 35-year-olds, but the instability of six-month contracts make forming relationships and cohabitation difficult. Malik said that he had moved flat ten times in ten years. He and his wife now live in a house with a friend. They have iPads and world travel (if they save enough), but home ownership or 'a decent job with decent pay' is more unlikely.

Howker admitted that some Baby Boomer parents helped their children financially but this was no use. 'Nothing is going to slow down social mobility more than ensuring young people end up living the lives their parents can afford for them. The last thing this country needs is some kind of battle of the generations. But we need to start thinking seriously about what kind of future we want. And if our generation is going to fix that, we need to be active in our communities and in politics.'

It's a solution that does not seem instant to a problem that does not seem fair. But then, as any parent will tell you, life is not fair.

**Exam tip:** Try to anticipate what the answer might look like before you search for it in the text. You may find it a lot quicker this way and good timing is essential in a test.

## 2 Paraphrase the expressions a–c in as many ways as you can.

**a** proportion      **b** unemployed      **c** the highest level

Now look for the answers to the questions 1–3 in the text below.

- 1 What *proportion* of people under 25 are unemployed at the moment? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 How many people between 16 and 25 are *unemployed*? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 What is *the highest level* of unemployment so far? \_\_\_\_\_

The increase in youth unemployment, as those with little or no job experience lose out to older workers in increasingly competitive appointment processes, has given rise to concern. More than one in six young people are out of work, raising fears of a 'lost generation' of potential workers.

Official data showed yesterday that in the three months to June, the number of those under 25 and out of work had soared by 50,000, or 6 per cent, to 928,000 as school- and college-leavers have been unable to find jobs. Some 722,000 of these are aged 18 to 24, while the remaining 206,000 are aged 16 to 17.

The jobless rate among the 18–24 age group, at about one in six, is closing in on the all-time high of 17.8 per cent set in March 1993, after the 1990s recession.

**Exam tip:** Improving your reading speed can also help you with your timing. Work on adapting your speed according to your reading purpose: you can read fast to get the main information, but when you are looking for detail, you may need to read more slowly.

**3** You will need a watch for this exercise.

The two texts below are of the same word length. They are both about the current trend of thirty-something marriages. In Text 1 the writer argues in favour of them, whereas in Text 2 the writer suggests that getting married younger could be better.

Start with Text 1. Make a note of your starting time. Read each paragraph as fast as you can, without stopping for unknown vocabulary, but make sure you try to understand what you read. You can check this each time by answering the (simple) question at the end of each paragraph, first of all without looking back at what you have just read. If you cannot answer this question, you were probably reading too fast and you will have to read the paragraph again to answer the question. If you can answer it correctly, move on to the next paragraph but try to read it a little faster than the one before. Make a note of your finishing time.

Now do the same for Text 2. Check if you managed to complete Text 2 in less time than Text 1.

**Text 1**

I married in both my twenties and my thirties. I was 28 the first time and my wife was 22. While we're talking about numbers, it's probably worth mentioning that our combined emotional age was about 17. We were both carrying baggage, not from previous relationships but from childhood and adolescence, which meant that we were both still working on our identities. We weren't unusual in this respect; 21st-century Westerners enjoy a protracted adolescence, during which it can be risky to make any 'commitments'.

How many times has the writer been married?

Anyway, we had been together for two years before we blundered into marriage. Our reasons were laudable enough – love, wanting to be together, that kind of thing. What we hadn't done was to talk seriously about what we wanted from life, in terms of kids, careers, where to live, what values to hold dear and so on, probably because we didn't have a clue. About three years into the marriage it became apparent that our views on these matters were diverging. The relationship began to unravel and I was divorced by the age of 33.

Did the author divorce because he and his wife had very different backgrounds?

After a three-year courtship I remarried last month, at 37. When Clara and I met, we both had well established careers, friends, values, wants and tastes. Far from making us inflexible, part of the fun has been exploring each other's substantial worlds. I met Clara's host of interesting friends; she met both of mine. I showed her how to eat oysters; she taught me that some flowers are edible. I was introduced to the wonders of Cornwall; Clara was surprised to find out about my love of musicals. We both had disposable income and our own flats, so our courtship was characterised by great meals out, holidays, lazy Sunday mornings ... it was sophisticated, hedonistic and fun.

True or false: the writer is saying that it is better to get married when both partners have already established their own identities.

Not in a way that left us unprepared for toil and practicality, though. We had our first child a year ago and our life is unrecognisable from that described above, but we love it – and each other – even more, because we were ready and we knew what we wanted. So, for me, unless you are a particularly precocious or self-aware twenty-something, the thirties are a better bet for marriage.

True or false: the writer suggests that his experience is clear evidence that getting married in your thirties is always better.

## Text 2

I got married when I was 26 and my husband 28. It was a whirlwind romance and although my friends and family said they were delighted, they were also clearly shocked at the speed of events. There were even bets at the office where we both worked as to whether we'd last until Christmas. That was eight years ago and – at the risk of sounding super-smug – I am pleased to report that not only are we still together but we are still happy. Although marriage is usually part of a predictable progression within a relationship, for us to do something so ordinary seemed out-of-the-ordinary, partly because none of our friends had plans to settle down but mostly because neither had we until we met each other.

True or false: the writer was surprised at her own decision to marry in her twenties.

We saw marriage as the beginning of a great adventure. The first five years were spent having fun. We now have two beautiful daughters and a massive mortgage, and although I would be lying if I said we feel like love-struck teenagers every day, when times get tough we draw strength not only from each other but also from the knowledge that our family is built on foundations forged entirely from love, not convenience, body-clock-related desperation or unromantic inevitability.

Do the writer and her husband own their own house?

Our first year of marriage was probably the hardest as we learnt to adjust to the rhythm not only of each other but of married life. For example, he liked staying in bed. I rose with the lark. I liked long walks. He preferred short taxi rides. His ideal Sunday was in the pub watching football, mine in Ikea's soft furnishing department. I liked rock music. He liked Leonard Cohen.

True or false: the writer found it hard to get used to living with somebody who is different to her and also to being married.

We are still very distinct people but we have learnt to compromise and appreciate our differences. These days I am a connoisseur of the all-day lie-in, while he loves walking. I still hate football but realise that for him, hell is Ikea. We saw Leonard Cohen last month and both agreed it was the best concert ever. Neither of us can really remember what life was like before we met, and without wanting to sound too irritating, I think we'd have married even earlier had we met in time.

True or false: the writer thinks that a successful marriage is more about finding the right person than about marrying at a certain age.

- 4 Do the statements on the left answer the questions on the right? Put a tick when they do, and write 'not given' if they do not.

Statements	Questions	✓/not given
The report showed changing lifestyles and new opportunities for women.	According to the report, are women getting chances they did not have before?	1
The average age at first marriage for women is now two months before their thirtieth birthday.	Does this mean that women often have more than one marriage?	2
The proportion of babies born to those under twenty-five has halved since 1971.	Does this mean that fewer babies are being born?	3
Women now outnumber men in further and higher education.	Do we know if there are more women than men who continue their education after secondary school?	4

- 5 Read the statements and the text below and write TRUE if the text confirms the information, FALSE if the text says the opposite is true, or NOT GIVEN if there is not enough information in the text. Explain your answers.

*Example: Unemployment is now worse than it has ever been over the last fourteen years. TRUE. The text says that unemployment is at a '14-year high'.*

- 1 McDonald's is busy after school hours because young people are their main customers. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 In McDonald's, customer satisfaction is partly dependent on who the customers are served by. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 The majority of McDonald's employees are over 60. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 The supermarkets Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury's are larger than Morrisons. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Morrisons supermarket is financially in a good position at the moment. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Two thirds of the jobs at Morrison will be taken up by people between the ages of 25 and 75. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Morrisons needs more people to work on their tills. \_\_\_\_\_

More than one in six young people are out of work, raising fears of a 'lost generation' of potential workers, as unemployment hit a 14-year high. Even McDonald's – a brand synonymous with today's youth – appeared to snub its main customer base with a new campaign to boost the recruitment of older staff. According to a Lancaster University study commissioned by the company, customer satisfaction was 20 per cent higher in those branches employing workers over 60. At present, 1,000 of McDonald's 75,000 workers in Britain are over 60.

Young people were granted some hope yesterday as Morrisons, Britain's fourth-largest supermarket, said that it would employ an extra 2,000 workers this year, having already surpassed the 5,000 jobs that it had said it would create this year. As job losses have mounted during the recession, supermarkets have been among the biggest recruiters. Morrisons said yesterday that a third of the new jobs would be filled by recruits aged 18 to 24. The jobs include vacancies for butchers, bakers and fishmongers as well as checkout operators. Morrisons trains staff through its own food academy and is aiming to have trained 100,000 workers to NVQ Level 2 by next spring.



## Part 3: Exam practice

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the following text?

Write:

**TRUE** if the text confirms the statement  
**FALSE** if the text confirms the opposite of the statement  
**NOT GIVEN** if it is impossible to know from the text

Statement	Your answer:
On average, women marry men who are older than them.	
Married couples in their forties are more likely to divorce than others.	
Women often stay at home while men go out to work.	
People in their thirties usually have not made much money yet.	
People's experiences in their previous relationships can damage their current relationships.	
People who marry in their thirties are pressured by their families to have children quickly.	

*The trend is to get married later in life, but Andrew G. Marshall argues that the earlier you commit, the greater your chances of a long, happy partnership.*

Over the past 35 years we have been waiting longer before settling down. According to the Office for National Statistics, men are getting married for the first time seven years later and women six years later. This means that the average man is aged 32 when he asks 'Will you marry me?' and the average woman is 29 when she says 'Yes'. But is this trend towards the thirty-something marriage making us happier and more satisfied? And when it comes to the forty-something crunch – the most common age for divorce – who is most vulnerable: those who took the plunge early at twenty-something or the ones who waited until thirty-something?

When couples seek my help as a marital therapist, I start by asking for the history of their relationship. People who married in their twenties often report tough times at the beginning: living with in-laws, financial problems or moving around the country as one partner climbed the career ladder. Also, couples who marry relatively early can grow apart, especially when one partner has been successful at work, travelled, met new people and grown in confidence while the other has been home-based.

However, the greatest threat to the twenty-something marriage is reaching 40 and wondering if the grass could be greener elsewhere. This is particularly dangerous when someone who married his or her first love starts fantasising about what he or she has missed. The temptation to have an affair can be overwhelming and very damaging. By contrast, the thirty-something marriage seems to sidestep these problems. At this age people are more established in careers and can start a relationship on a firm financial footing. They have a clearer idea of who they are and what they need from a relationship. When these couples reach their forties, they are less likely to be nostalgic or curious about the single life.

Yet, when faced with forty-something couples in crisis, I always feel more optimistic about the outcome for those who married in their twenties than those who married in their thirties. Why should this be? If you marry later, you are more likely to bring old baggage into your relationship. In some cases, I help couples to unravel the influence of someone from maybe two or three relationships back. For example, to someone who once had a suspicious partner – forever quizzing them about their movements – an innocent inquiry such as ‘What time will you be back?’ can sound aggressive.

Another problem of marrying later is higher expectations. This is because one of the best ways of recovering from a failed relationship and starting to look again is to tell yourself: ‘I deserve better’, or ‘Next time I’ll meet Mr or Miss Right’. There is nothing wrong with this strategy. But unfortunately, if the next relationship does not deliver, the bitterness becomes that bit greater and the desire for perfection that bit stronger.

The final issue about getting married at thirty-something, particularly your late thirties, is the need to start a family almost immediately. Many couples have no time to get to know each other properly or put down solid roots together. If a relationship has been built on long weekend lie-ins and brunches, the demands of small children can be a shock. This sense of isolation is worse if the grandparents are correspondingly older, too, and not fit enough to help.

Although the ultimate deciding factor for the success of a relationship is the character, determination and generosity of each partner (and that is not determined by age), my advice is always to seize the day and commit.