

UNIT 2: TALENTS

Exam skills 1 In Reading and Use of English Part 7, it is useful to look for words and phrases in the text which have similar meanings to words and phrases in the questions. Match words a-f with two synonyms from the list below.

a accidentally

a accidentally

b ability

b ability

c currently

c currently

d cover (sth) up

d cover (sth) up

e participate

e participate

f pressure

f pressure

be involved

talent

by chance

these days

conceal

skill

stress

demands

unintentionally

hide

presently

take part

Exam practice

Multiple matching 3 You are going to read an article about four extraordinary people on page 23. For questions 1-10, choose from the people A-D. The people may be chosen more than once.

WRITE THE LETTER (A, B, C or D) IN EACH SLOT.

Which person

- 1 did not complete his education?
- 2 gets away with the odd mistake?
- 3 accepts the fact that his career is dangerous?
- 4 took a long time to develop his abilities?
- 5 has found success despite having a disability?
- 6 improves his skill by doing something else at the same time?
- 7 received tuition to help him improve his talent?
- 8 doesn't do anything to protect himself?
- 9 changed his goal in life?
- 10 passes his skills on to other people?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

A Derek Paravicini

Derek Paravicini was born blind, with severe learning difficulties and autism. He has limited verbal skills, poor short-term memory and cannot read even Braille, but he has an amazing talent: he can play any piece of music after only one hearing. He could play a toy organ when he was two, and when he was five his musical genius was recognized by music teacher Adam Ockelford quite by chance when his parents went round the school for the blind, where Adam gave lessons. In the following years, Adam painstakingly taught Derek how to play properly and, at nine, Derek gave his first of many major public performances. Derek – whose nickname is 'The Human iPod' – is able to play any song in any key and in any genre. He does occasionally play the wrong note, but because he is able to improvise, he can cover it up without anyone even noticing.

B Dr Norman Gary

Norman Gary's interest in bees started when he was fifteen. His ambition was to become a professional bee-keeper but instead he ended up becoming an academic, doing research in the field of apiculture (bee keeping). Norman's unique ability is that he is able to cover his body with thousands of bees; he can also control the bees to make them do what he wants

using food (a sugar solution) and scent. He acquired these skills after years of practice and is considered to be the leading expert on bees in the United States. As such, his skills were sought by the likes of Hollywood film producer Chris Carter for a scene in the movie *The X-Files*. Despite having been stung around 75,000 times, Norman does not consider what he does as especially dangerous, explaining that bees only become aggressive when they feel threatened.

C Ron White

Ron White calls himself a 'brain athlete,' but he's not your average memory master, despite earning the title of USA Memory Champion. A high-school dropout, Ron discovered his amazing talent when he enrolled in a memory class and noticed that not only did he have a passion for this skill, but that he could also beat everyone in the class. Since then he has trained up to six hours a day to turn his brain into a supercomputer, enabling him to memorize and recall data at record speeds. Ron says the key to his training is to be distracted while memorizing things; this gives his brain incredible focus. For example, to become the USA Memory Champion he memorized cards while

snorkelling. Ron currently teaches memory techniques to people all over the United States. During conferences, he manages to learn the names of everyone in the audience that he has shaken hands with – up to 200 people.

D Eskil Ronningsbakken

Norwegian Eskil Ronningsbakken is an extreme artist known for the super-human balancing acts he performs in locations around the world. Eskil, whose love for heights stems from a childhood passion for climbing trees in the Norwegian countryside, was fascinated at an early age by a TV programme which featured an Indian yogi doing balancing acts. He decided that this was what he wanted to do and joined the circus at the age of eighteen, where he perfected his skills. Yoga and meditation naturally play an important role in what he does, too. He practises them regularly in order to better his focus and concentration. Eskil's jaw-dropping acts include doing a handstand on a pile of chairs precariously balanced above a 300-metre drop. He performs all his feats without a safety net or harness. One slip and he would fall to his death. Eskil is well aware of the risks involved in what he does. 'I feel fear, of course I do. We are humans and we have a natural sense of self-preservation,' he admits.

