IELTS Reading
Academic

Test 4

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

READING PASSAGE 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1–14, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

Sounds Good!

Rory Mitchell explains how to turn our digital music files into superior sounds

Digital music

The vast majority of audio recordings we listen to nowadays are in digital formats, such as MP3 files. These compressed files are extremely convenient to use. Their small size means MP3 files can be downloaded easily and quickly, and thousands of them can be stored on computers.

The MP3 format also enables us to create a portable collection of our entire music collection. While many of us save our MP3 files directly onto our computers, it's always a good idea to back up files onto a portable memory stick, or USB drive. This means that we have access to our music collection should the worst happen and our computer develops a fault. This makes MP3 far more practical than older formats such as CDs.

However, like most things in life, there is a compromise to be made for all this convenience. The trade-off is the poor sound quality of digital audio files. To appreciate why this is, it's important to understand how sound works. The sound coming from a musical instrument or a person singing is nothing more than vibrating air. Microphones convert this movement of air into a variable electrical signal, otherwise known as an analogue signal. During the recording process, the analogue signal is converted into digital information. In order for us to be able to listen to that recorded music, we need equipment to convert it back to analogue. Our phones and laptops contain Digital to Analogue Converters (DACs) that do this but they tend to be poor quality. This negatively affects the quality of what we hear. Of course, this isn't an issue if you simply want to listen to music on your phone while sitting on the bus, but you can certainly hear the limitations of digital audio files when you play them through high-quality hi-fi equipment.

Although it's possible to play MP3 files on hi-fi equipment by plugging in your phone or laptop, the result will be nowhere near as good as it could be due to the limitations of your device's DAC. This means that, no matter how expensive your hi-fi system, you won't be able to enjoy the full range of the music as the artist intended. It's like filling a sports car with low-quality fuel – it'll still work but you won't be able to appreciate the potential of the car.

Fortunately, help is at hand, as it's relatively easy to convert digital MP3 files into high-quality analogue output which can be enjoyed on your hi-fi stereo system.

Can I use my laptop?

It's certainly possible to use your laptop computer to convert digital files into analogue signals, but the end result will still be disappointing when it's attached to your sound system. Most laptops have only a very basic internal DAC which is not powerful enough to function effectively with a hi-fi sound system. A good-quality DAC makes it easier to pick out all the individual sounds and tones of the music, resulting in a richer listening experience. This is the key to achieving the excellent sound quality that you seek from your stereo equipment. One option might be to buy a separate external DAC that can be attached to your laptop. However, external laptop DACs can be extremely expensive. In any case, if your computer is running other programmes or is updating while it's attached to your hi-fi system, the music playback is likely to be disturbed.

Instead, it's well worth investing in a single board computer (SBC) onto which you can instal a high-quality DAC. Both SBCs and their DACs are extremely cheap so for little extra expense, you can have a dedicated machine for audio purposes. Whatever you decide, the process of converting digital MP3 files into analogue sound to be played on your stereo is straightforward.

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Data processing

First, insert your USB of MP3 files into the computer. All MP3 files consist of two types of data, processed by the computer in different ways. Data tags, containing information such as the song name, are sent to and displayed on the screen. For instance, when you attach a SBC to your TV, you will be able to see which song you are listening to. The audio data, which is the music recording itself, is sent to the DAC. The DAC accurately converts the digital audio into an analogue signal.

Amplification and output

Once the audio data has been converted, it is sent from the DAC to the hi-fi system, where it is amplified. Amplification involves taking a small analogue signal and making it much larger. This makes the signal more powerful. Finally, the amplified analogue signal is fed to the hi-fi speakers. This signal travels through a coil in the speaker which converts the electrical energy into a mechanical motion, which is why speakers vibrate.

With these steps in place, you can sit back and enjoy the way music is supposed to sound on a hi-fi system. I guarantee that, once you've heard the sound quality that can be achieved, you'll fall in love with your music collection all over again!

Questions 1–4
*Answer the questions below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 1–4.

1 How is sound defined in the passage?

_____

2 What type of device does the writer recommend instead of a laptop?

_____

3 During which process is the analogue signal increased?

_____

4 Which part of a hi-fi speaker creates vibrations?

_____

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Questions 5–8
Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 5–8, write:

YES	*If the statement agrees with the claims of the writer*
NO	*If the statement contradicts the claims of the writer*
NOT GIVEN	*If it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this*

5 Microphones transform sound into analogue signals. ☐

6 Expensive computers have better DACs. ☐

7 Sound quality can be improved with a more powerful DAC. ☐

8 There are three types of data found in MP3 files. ☐

Questions 9–11
*Choose **THREE** letters A–F. Write the correct letter A–F in answer boxes 9–11.*

*The list below gives some reasons why MP3 digital files are popular. Which **THREE** of these reasons are mentioned by the writer of the text?*

A MP3 files are simple to download.

B MP3 recordings are cheap to purchase.

C MP3 files are less likely to be damaged than CDs.

D MP3 files are extremely portable. ☐ **9**

E MP3 files take up little storage space on computers. ☐ **10**

F MP3 files are easy to record using basic equipment. ☐ **11**

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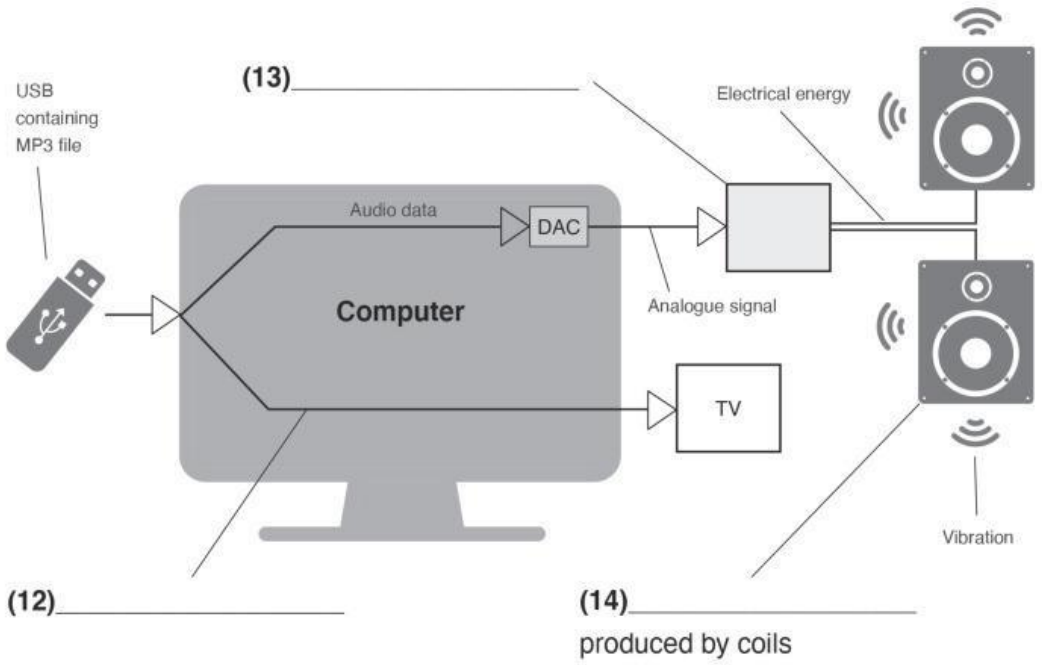
Questions 12–14
Complete the diagram below.

*Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer. Do not write articles (a, an, the).*

Write your answers in gaps 12–14.

How Do Audio Systems Work?



Description: A simple flow diagram that shows how MP3 files are converted into an analogue signal.

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READING PASSAGE 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 15–27, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

Conservation Strategy

Section A Although estimates vary, it is believed that approximately 900 different animal species have died out in the last 500 years. A further 35,000 species are officially recorded as at risk of extinction, though this is unquestionably an underrepresentation of the true number under threat. The survival chances of only a tiny proportion of the world's wildlife have been assessed, so it's highly likely that far more species are at risk of dying out. In fact, estimates on the true number vary enormously but range from 10 million to almost 50 million. Experts have also calculated that 25% of the world's mammals are under threat, and 40% of amphibians are endangered. Such statistics are undoubtedly alarming. However, numbers alone are not enough to highlight the seriousness of the issue, or the solutions.

Section B Of course, it's important to distinguish between cases of preventable animal extinction and extinction that occurs due to natural evolutionary reasons. Somewhere between 90% and 99% of all the species that have ever existed have died out. Many species gradually disappear when they are unable to adapt to changing circumstances such as availability of food or the appearance of new predators. In these cases, other species evolve to fill the vacant role. The Earth's ecosystems are complex networks of living things, in which animals, plants and waterways are dependent on one another. Natural extinction helps to maintain the planet's delicate ecological balance.

Section C When left undisturbed, nature finds a way to restore itself. However, the natural balance of the world's ecosystems is changing, leading to significant biodiversity loss. Construction, tourism, mining, manufacturing and other aspects of human life are responsible for much of the environmental destruction we see in the world nowadays. Such activities directly lead to the loss of natural habitats, increase pollution and soil erosion, and also play a major role in climate change. All of this is having a disastrous impact on the planet's wildlife. Species are disappearing at rates estimated to be between 1,000 and 10,000 higher than rates of natural extinction. There's no doubt that humans have a disproportionately negative impact on the world. What's less clear is how best to resolve this.

Section D Wildlife management is far from straightforward, especially given the fact that it requires vast financial resources. To put this in context, it has been estimated that it costs over a million dollars a year to save just one single species of condor bird native to one particular area of North America. Since there are

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currently fewer than four hundred of these endangered condors in existence, saving each one comes at a cost of over $2,500 a year. With this in mind, wildlife management often involves weighing up competing environmental needs, and making painful strategic decisions to prioritise some species over others. The factors influencing such decisions are extremely complex, and often controversial.

Section E In recent years, the concept of "conservation triage" has gained increasing attention. This involves leaving some species to face extinction in order to allocate more resources to species with a greater chance of survival, or which are perceived to be more important in some way. Conservation triage recognises that it makes sense to invest our limited resources in species that will have the best environmental outcomes. However, there is no accepted formula to evaluate the relative merits of saving one species over another. The lack of consensus regarding which species should be prioritised means that wildlife agencies often adopt differing approaches when it comes to conservation efforts.

Section F Some conservation strategies focus entirely on "flagship" species. These are animals promoted as icons to raise public awareness of environmental issues. They are selected on the basis that they are commonly regarded as attractive or charismatic, and therefore valued in society. For instance, the possibility that the beloved giant panda may become extinct has highlighted the importance of protecting natural habitats and having tighter controls against deforestation. However, while cute animals may generate public sympathy, there is little evidence that this leads to significant environmental gains. In fact, if images of flagship species appear too often in marketing, the public may even assume they are no longer endangered.

Section G Although flagship species may be "cute", the arguments for alternative approaches are more compelling. It surely makes more sense to prioritise species which make the greatest overall contribution to nature, regardless of whether they are perceived to be attractive. Keystone species perform essential functions in ecosystems. For instance, elephants in the wild clear pathways for small animals. Insects and bees are essential for the pollination and dispersal of tree and plant seeds. Should keystone species disappear, the survival of all the forms of life in that environment would be at risk. Likewise, indicator species are vital as they provide valuable information about the condition of natural habitats. Some types of crayfish are used as indicator species. By monitoring crayfish populations, ecologists can understand more about the overall condition of our waterways. This clearly highlights the need for a pragmatic rather than a sentimental approach to conservation.

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Questions 15–20
Reading Passage 2 has 7 sections, A–G.
*Choose the correct headings for Sections **A–C** and **E–G** from the list of headings below.*
Write the correct number i–viii in answer boxes 15–20.

List of headings	
i	Helpful species
ii	Humanity's ecological footprint
iii	The complexity of conservation
iv	The extent of the problem
v	Ranking species
vi	Species as symbols
vii	The failure of wildlife conservation
viii	A natural phenomenon

Example:

	Answer
Section **D**	*iii*

15	Section **A**	
16	Section **B**	
17	Section **C**	
18	Section **E**	
19	Section **F**	
20	Section **G**	

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Questions 21–23
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.
*Write the correct letter **A–D** in answer boxes 21–23.*

21 The purpose of the second paragraph is to

A highlight how species extinction could be prevented.

B argue that species extinction is a growing issue.

C compare the rates of preventable and natural forms of extinction.

D explain how it is natural for many species to become extinct.

22 The passage mentions the condor bird as an example of a creature that

A has been successfully saved from extinction.

B is relatively expensive to protect.

C has been prioritised over other species.

D is a threat to North American native species.

23 What aspect of conservation does the writer support?

A Focusing on protecting species that serve important purposes.

B Encouraging the public to get involved in environmental programmes.

C Using public opinion to determine how to allocate conservation resources.

D Focusing on emotional arguments in conservation marketing campaigns.

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Questions 24–27
Complete the summary below. Chose ***NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS*** *from the passage for each answer.*

Write your answers in gaps 24–27.

Conservation Strategies

When the financial resources required to protect species from extinction are **(24)**_____, difficult decisions have to be made about how best to use these funds. There is now growing acceptance that such choices should be made based on the best long-term environmental prospects of the planet, an approach known as **(25)**_____.

One way to determine which species should be prioritised for conservation is by considering their overall impact on ecosystems. For instance, **(26)**_____ species directly help maintain ecosystems in numerous ways, such as by distributing seeds which ensures that plants continue to grow.

However, it's impossible to deny that we often hold more affection for some species compared to others, simply because they are more attractive. This can be used as a way of bringing attention to the need for conservation. A case in point is the fact that the **(27)**_____ has been used to raise awareness of environmental issues.

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READING PASSAGE 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 28–40, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.

About us: For over two hundred years, Havermore Academy has been at the forefront of linguistic research and language instruction. We are renowned not only for the quality of our teaching, but also our world-class facilities and innovative programmes.

The Havermore approach: At Havermore, flexibility is the key. With the exception of our full-time Language Teaching programme, which is delivered entirely at our beautiful campus, Havermore students have the option to combine campus learning with remote study, or take their courses completely online.

Havermore Academy offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses which are unparalleled in the scope and depth of their content. As well as our full degree programmes, we provide online foundation courses and access to one hundred supplementary language modules covering thirty different languages. All Havermore students are entitled to take one supplementary language module per semester at no extra cost. These supplementary language modules add further value to the Havermore experience, granting students the opportunity to learn an additional language from scratch.

Many of our programmes also offer participants an option to obtain official accreditation from professional bodies. These are additional qualifications that can be taken alongside the Havermore programme. Please refer to the Academic Office for more information about fees for professional accreditation.

Flagship postgraduate programmes: Havermore is particularly well regarded for its postgraduate degrees. Our three main masters' programmes are in Forensic Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting. Graduates from these programmes go on to highly successful careers in a diverse range of fields including criminal justice, international relations, publishing and international business. Although these three programmes are distinct in content and focus, they all include the compulsory module "Sociocultural Frameworks of Linguistic Analysis", in which participants explore the various factors shaping written and spoken communication.

Forensic Linguistics

Forensic linguistics is a relatively new branch of applied linguistics, and concerns the application of linguistic knowledge and methods to contexts such as criminal investigation and legal process. Forensic linguists analyse spoken and written discourse to identify patterns and characteristic traits to build a stylistic profile or "fingerprint" that can be used for investigative purposes. Our masters' course trains participants in the analytical skills required to examine spoken and written language in a range of specialist contexts. A unique feature of the course is the compulsory work placement that students take in their final semester. This enables students to gain valuable, real-life professional insights. Although the course is primarily intended to develop participants' practical skills, it also provides a solid theoretical foundation should students wish to pursue an academic-research career rather than field-based work.

Translation and Interpreting

Havermore Academy has been running its Translation and Interpreting postgraduate programmes for decades, and in this time we have trained interpreters and translators specialising in fifty different foreign languages. Our graduates use their foreign-language expertise to embark on rewarding careers working with leading international organisations, corporations and policy makers. Applicants wishing to enrol onto either of these programmes will be expected to have native or near-native proficiency in at least one foreign language. The level of expertise and skill required from these professions means that translating and interpreting are rarely undertaken by the same individuals. Understanding the key differences between the two fields will help you to identify the right programme for your needs and interests.

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Translators work solely with written texts and documents. They typically convert written materials from a foreign language (the source language) into their native language (the target language). This requires extremely high attention to detail since translators must be able to convey the precise meaning and stylistic tone of the original source text. Many translators specialise in particular fields such as medical, technical, literary or legal translation. Harvermore Academy offers specialist optional modules in these fields as part of the masters' course. Prospective students intending to specialise in one of these areas will be required to demonstrate prior subject knowledge of their chosen field, typically through their undergraduate degree or evidence of prior relevant work experience. Students wishing to specialise in a particular area will be required to indicate this before commencing their programme.

Interpreters work with spoken language, often in two directions: translating from the source language into the target language and vice versa. As well as fluent speaking skills, interpreting involves a high level of listening comprehension, notetaking skills and the ability to make instant linguistic decisions. Although accuracy is important, interpreting does not require the same level of precision as translation, since the focus is on summarising and explaining the main message of what is being said. The fast-paced, dynamic aspects of interpreting make it a stimulating career for people who are confident working in high-pressure situations. As with the Translation course, applicants may choose to specialise in a particular area of subject knowledge. Unique to the Interpreting course is the opportunity to specialise in sports interpreting, a reflection of the increasingly global nature of professional sport.

Contact us: For in-depth syllabus information about our courses, please consult the relevant faculty pages on our website, or contact our Academic Office. We welcome applications from local and international students, and bursaries are available for applicants who can demonstrate outstanding academic credentials. These bursaries cover tuition fees.

Questions 28–34
Complete each sentence with the correct ending A–J from the box below.

*Write the correct letter **A–J** in answer boxes 28–34.*

N.B. You may use any letter more than once.

28 Translation applicants wishing to focus on a particular area of expertise ☐

29 Students taking the Language Teaching programme ☐

30 Obtaining an award from an official professional body ☐

31 Studying sociolinguistics ☐

32 Students studying for a Masters' in Interpreting ☐

33 The Forensic Linguistics course ☐

34 Proficiency in a foreign language ☐

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A	is primarily focused on research-based careers.
B	is a required aspect of the Translation course.
C	must be able to demonstrate prior knowledge of their intended subject.
D	develops students' ability to analyse and notice linguistic patterns.
E	may have the possibility to take a module concerning professional sport.
F	are not eligible to apply for financial bursaries.
G	do not have the possibility of studying their course online.
H	should expect to complete substantial amounts of coursework.
I	is one of the oldest courses offered by Havermore Academy.
J	is an optional aspect of some Havermore programmes.

Questions 35–39
*Answer the questions below using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 35–39.

35 How many different foreign languages are offered in the supplementary language programme?

_____

36 What do all Forensic Linguistics students have to do in their final semester?

_____

37 Which course trains students to work with written texts in a source language?

_____

38 In addition to the website, where can students find information about Havermore courses?

_____

39 What do students need to have in order to receive a bursary?

_____

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Question 40
Choose the correct letter, A, B, C, D, or E.
Which of the following is the most suitable title for Reading Passage 3?

*Write the correct letter **A–E** in the answer box below.*

A Invest in your future at Havermore Academy

B Why study a foreign language?

C Training to be a language teacher

D Student life at Havermore Academy

E Career opportunities for linguistics graduates

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