

1 Family matters

Exam focus: Matching headings

Aims: Skim-reading | Understanding the structure of a paragraph
Understanding the function of a paragraph | Summarising paragraphs

Part 1: Vocabulary



1 What is the difference in meaning between the words in the groups 1–8? Use a dictionary to help you.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 friend / mate / flatmate | 5 colleague / business partner |
| 2 sister / sister-in-law | 6 acquaintance / stranger |
| 3 brother / sister / sibling | 7 aunt / great-aunt |
| 4 boyfriend / husband / partner | 8 half-sister / step-sister |

2 Collocations are words that are often found together. Complete the sentences 1–4 with the words a–f. Note how they collocate with the words in *italics*.

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|-----------------|
| a abilities | c apart | e non-identical |
| b adulthood | d lifelong | f older |

- Twins have a(n) _____ *bond* that other siblings may envy: they share their own language, play their own games from early childhood, share bedrooms and birthday parties.
- James and his brother Frank are _____ *twins*, and they don't look alike at all.
- A few years ago we sent out a questionnaire to pairs of twins asking about their *psychic* _____, and one identical twin in five reported some kind of telepathy.

- 4 Surprisingly, the 'twin effect' can become stronger as twins *grow* _____ and *move* _____. Often the older one will be dominant until they *reach* _____.

- 3 Underline the words related to the topic of family in the passage. Do not use a dictionary. Do Exercise 4 before you check your answers.

Widows and widowers whose spouses pass away without making a will are set to receive a bigger inheritance payout from next month. If a person dies without making a will, the amount left automatically to his or her spouse or civil partner is changing from £125,000 to £250,000 where there are children.

Experts have welcomed the change, which takes effect on February 1, but emphasise that it is still important to make a will, particularly if you are unmarried or separated but not divorced. However, people should not be misled into thinking that these changes mean that they do not need to make a will. It still remains the case that unmarried couples are not entitled to receive anything on the death of their other half if he or she has not made a will.

Modern family life is becoming ever more complicated, with second marriages and children from more than one relationship. A will is the only way to ensure that those you love or are obliged to care for are adequately provided for. After the spouse has received his or her legal share, the rest of the estate is shared by children or grandchildren. If there are none, surviving parents will get a share. If there are none of these, any brothers and sisters who shared the same two parents as the deceased will receive a share.

If your family circumstances have changed, it is important that you make or update a will to ensure that your money and possessions are distributed according to your wishes. For example, you may be separated and your ex-partner now lives with someone else. If you are married or enter into a registered civil partnership, this will invalidate any previous will you have made.

- 4 Match the words and phrases 1–12 from the passage in Exercise 3 with the definitions a–l. The words and phrases relating to the topic of death have been shaded.

1 widow	a a husband or wife, considered in relation to their partner (formal)
2 widower	b a former member of an established couple
3 spouse	c to have stopped living together as a couple
4 will	d somebody's wife, husband or partner
5 inheritance	e a person who has recently died
6 ex-partner	f a woman whose husband has died and who has not married again
7 [be] separated	g money or property which you receive from somebody who has died
8 [be] divorced	h a man whose wife has died and who has not married again
9 other half [informal]	i a document in which a person declares what should be done with their money and property after they die
10 estate	j to be legally separated from a husband or wife because the marriage has ended
11 deceased (noun)	k to prove that an argument, conclusion, or result is wrong or cause it to be wrong
12 invalidate	l all the money and property somebody leaves behind them when they die

Part 2: Practice exercises



Exam information: Matching headings

This task tests whether you understand the organisation of texts and can identify the main idea or topic in each section of a text.

You will be given a numbered list with headings, as well as a text divided into sections. The headings will be in the form of short statements which summarise the information in a section. You will need to read the text sections and decide which of the headings best fits that section.

Exam tip: You have limited time to take the IELTS exam, so read only what you need to know in order to do the task. It is a good idea to read the first sentence of a short paragraph only. In longer paragraphs, read the first and last sentence. This technique is called 'skim-reading'.

- 1 Skim-read the text below. Then write one sentence saying what it is about. Do not look back at the text, but use your own words.

If you're in your thirties or forties and still going back to the family home for every big family celebration, any problems that have developed with your parents over the years are likely to be mentioned. You can easily end up remembering childhood problems and start behaving like an angry child, but you should try to resist this. Parents, meanwhile, should remember that they are no longer in charge of their children's lives. Parents need to enjoy their children for who they are now, as adults, rather than behaving like they did when they had more control over them.

- 2 The content of a paragraph is linked to its structure. The questions 1–9 will help you to understand the content and structure of the paragraphs a–c.

Paragraph a

Almost half of all grandparents lose all contact with their grandchildren after a separation or divorce, according to a new report. It found that forty-two per cent never see their grandchildren again after the break-up. Even more – sixty-seven per cent – are prevented from providing any sort of childcare or taking their grandchildren on outings, even when they had done so regularly in the past.

- 1 Which sentence is the topic sentence, the one that summarises the main idea(s) in the paragraph?
- 2 Does the paragraph as a whole become more specific or more general?
- 3 The second sentence mentions 'the break-up'. What does this refer to, and why is 'the' used, and not 'a'?

Paragraph b

The value of grandparents to children should not be underestimated. The report shows the need for the government to address the importance of grandparents in future policy and legislation. It also demonstrates the need to amend the Children Act 1989 to remove the obstacle that requires the biological family to ask permission prior to making an application to the court for contact. Especially when a family is going through difficulties, it is important that the children can turn to someone who is not directly involved and is calm and relaxed, and that person is often a grandparent.

- 4 The paragraph says 'The value of grandparents to children should not be underestimated'. Is this the same as saying that the value of grandparents to children is very important?
- 5 Which sentence expresses a similar idea to the first sentence, but with more detail?
- 6 Which sentence is the topic sentence?

Paragraph c

To have a society that is family-friendly, anti-discrimination laws will need to be introduced. Parenting would become a school subject, staircases would be rebuilt so that buggies and prams could access any building and advertising for sweets and non-educational toys would be forbidden. Companies would be forced to only employ people who can travel to work in less than forty minutes and there would also be a thirty-five-hour working week and more holidays. In a world like this, there would be less divorce and crime, but we would be earning and producing less.

- 7 Identify the introduction, the main body, and the conclusion of this paragraph.
- 8 Which of these three parts gives you the most important information?
- 9 The first sentence mentions a society that is 'family-friendly'. You may know words like 'environmentally friendly', 'child-friendly' and 'eco-friendly'. What does 'friendly' mean in this context?

3 Which paragraph a–c in Exercise 2 ...

- 1 states cause and effect? ____
- 2 develops an argument? ____
- 3 gives information/a description? ____

4 Write short headings for the passages 1–3.

1 _____

Nicholson defines the traditional family as 'the unit of parents with children who live together'. The bond between husband and wife is seen as particularly important, and the family feels itself to be separate from other kin. This family group is often referred to as the nuclear family.

2 _____

Traditional families have disadvantages:

- Because both partners now tend to work, they have tremendous time pressures, making it difficult to carry out satisfactory and rewarding childcare.
- Children who are the victims of abuse by parents have relatively little opportunity to turn to other relatives for help.
- Traditional families place a heavy burden of expectation on the partners, and, with work and childcare commitments, it may be difficult for them to provide the love and companionship each partner expects.

However, traditional families do have some advantages:

- Their small size tends to encourage intimacy between family members, and, when the relationships work, they can be rewarding and long-lasting.
- Traditional families can be economically successful because they are not usually expected to share their resources with others.

3 _____

Having someone else's child stay overnight is quite a responsibility. Some children begin having sleepovers with friends during the early school years, others still haven't started by age 11. It is important not to start too early: just because they say they want to have a sleepover at someone else's house, doesn't mean it's a good idea. When there is a sleepover at your house, be prepared with some strategies to get the children to stop talking and calm down. Agree lights out time in advance and have some calmer activities before bedtime.

5 The following passage has five sections, a–e. Choose the correct heading for sections a–e from the list of numbered headings i–ix. Follow these steps; they will help you do the exercise.

- In this task, there are more headings than sections, so read the sections first. (If there were the same number of sections as headings, it would be a good idea to read the headings first.)
- For each section of the passage, read the beginning and the end. Some of the sentences are long so there is no need to read the whole sentence. Underline some key words.
- Read the headings next. If they are long, underline some key words.
- You may now already be able to match some of the headings to the sections.
- Look at the remaining sections in more detail to help you match them to the headings.

List of headings

- | | | | |
|-----|--|------|----------------------------------|
| i | New families: beneficial or harmful? | vi | Families: then and now |
| ii | The government reaction | vii | The first criticisms of 'family' |
| iii | The typical western family | viii | The 'happy family' model |
| iv | Political families | ix | The function of families |
| v | The disappearance of the traditional model | | |

Section a

The family has often been regarded as the cornerstone of society. In premodern and modern societies alike it has been seen as the most basic unit of social organization and one which carries out vital tasks, such as socializing children.

Section b

Until the 1960s few sociologists questioned the importance or the benefits of family life. Most sociologists assumed that family life was evolving as modernity progressed, and that the changes involved made the family better suited to meeting the needs of society and of family members. A particular type of family, the nuclear family (based around a two-generation household of parents and their children), was seen as well adapted to the demands of modern societies.

Section c

From the 1960s, an increasing number of critical thinkers began to question the assumption that the family was necessarily a beneficial institution. Feminists, Marxists and critical psychologists began to highlight what they saw as some of the negative effects and the 'dark side' of family life.

In the following decades the family was not just under attack from academic writers. Social changes also seemed to be undermining traditional families. Rising divorce rates, cohabitation before marriage, increasing numbers of single-parent families and single-person households, and other trends all suggested that individuals were basing their lives less and less around conventional families.

Section d

Some have seen these changes as a symptom of greater individualism within modern societies. They have welcomed what appears to be an increasing range of choice for individuals. People no longer have to base their lives around what may be outmoded and, for many, unsuitable conventional family structures. Others, however, have complained about the changes and worried about their effect on society. Such changes are seen as both a symptom and a cause of instability and insecurity in people's lives and in society as a whole. This view has been held by traditionalists who want a return to the ideal of the nuclear family. For them, many of society's problems are a result of increased family instability.

Section e

Alongside these developments in society and sociology, family life has become a topic of political debate. Politicians have become somewhat more willing to comment on families. Sometimes they have devised policies to try to deal with perceived problems surrounding the family. In short, the family has come to be seen as more problematic than it was in the past. The controversies that have come to surround families and households are the subject of this chapter.

Section a _____

Section b _____

Section c _____

Section d _____

Section e _____

Part 3: Exam practice

READING PASSAGE

This reading passage has 5 sections, A–E.

*Choose the correct heading for sections A–E from the list of numbered headings below.
Write the correct number i–viii next to sections A–E.*

List of Headings

- i** The science of marriage
- ii** The importance of honest communication
- iii** The power of thought
- iv** The likelihood of marrying again
- v** Technological advances
- vi** The benefits of avoiding arguments
- vii** The real predictor for a lasting marriage
- viii** The consequences of early dissatisfaction

Section A _____
Section B _____
Section C _____
Section D _____
Section E _____

Section A

Marriage is a much-researched topic, and the way married couples communicate in particular has been the subject of many studies. These days, research into marriage often involves hours of recordings, followed by a thorough analysis of data with the help of modern software applications.

Section B

One such study analysed five years' worth of data, obtained from 750 participating couples. At the start of the study, participants who felt they were in a harmonious relationship reported having happy marriages. In other words, low levels of conflict corresponded to a perceived higher degree of happiness. At the end of the five-year period, however, many of these couples had separated or had started divorce proceedings. The outcome of this study suggests that keeping the peace rather than talking about problems and working through them can have harmful effects on a relationship.

Section C

In a more recent, larger scale study, people were observed over a fifteen-year period. The researchers recorded the timings of marriages, divorces and remarriages and discovered patterns that helped them estimate how likely divorce was. If participants admitted the possibility of divorce to themselves during the first year of the study, the probability of it actually happening was ten times greater than for those couples who had not thought about it at all. Clearly, once the idea of divorce is in somebody's mind, they are more likely to act on it.

Section D

Yet another piece of research confirms that the way men and women feel at the beginning of their marriage makes a difference to its eventual outcome. Those who feel disappointed, perhaps because marriage itself is different from their expectations, or because their lifestyle is not what they had envisaged, are more likely to divorce.

Section E

Having said that, relationships are complex and their development is the result of many different influences. The end of a marriage is unlikely to be brought about by one particular factor, and is more probably the result of a combination of small incidents that add up over time. It is also worth bearing in mind that in most countries it is the minority of marriages that fail. No one can truthfully claim that their marriage is happy or perfect all the time, but the fact remains that most married people stay together for life. The secret of a happy marriage, it seems, lies where most people have always thought it does: in the effort made on a daily basis by both partners to treat each other with consideration and courtesy, and to cheerfully accept each other's faults as well as their good qualities.