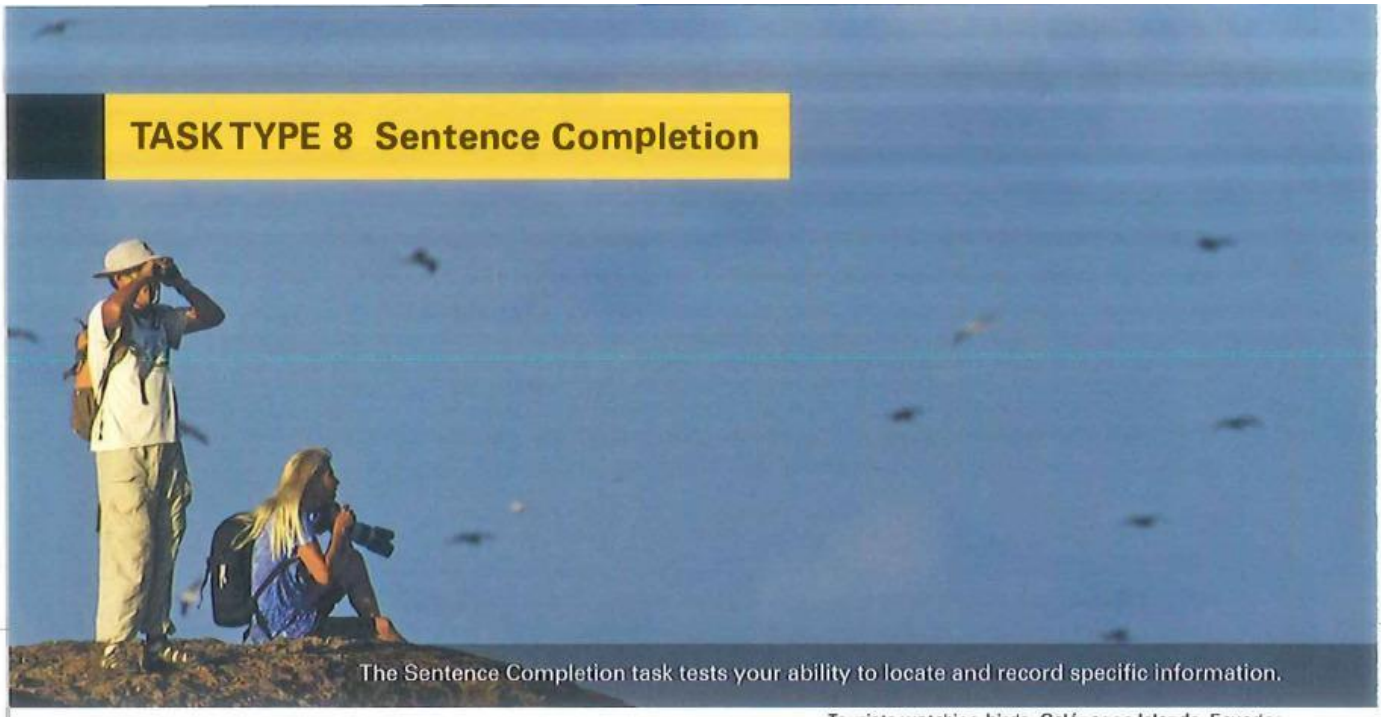
TASK TYPE 8 Sentence Completion



The Sentence Completion task tests your ability to locate and record specific information.

Tourists watching birds, Galápagos Islands, Ecuador

A About the task

1 Read the information about the task type. Then look at a quiz you found on a website. Choose the correct options to complete the sentences.

The Sentence Completion task tests your ability to locate and record specific information from a reading passage. It's often used to test your understanding of a factual passage about a specific subject. You usually read facts about a subject, and you may be asked to write words or numbers to complete sentences. Some of the information from the passage is already written on the question paper. Your job is to read the passage and find information to complete the gaps. On the question paper, you see a set of sentences that report the information from the passage. In each sentence, one, two or three key words are missing. You read the passage and write the missing words in the gap.

Here are the basic rules for the Sentence Completion task:

- The sentences follow the order of information in the passage.
- The instructions tell you how many words to write in each gap.
- The wording of the sentences in the questions is not exactly the same as the wording in the passage, but they contain the same information.
- When you read the passage, you see the words that you need to write.
- You write the words in the same form as you see them in the passage (e.g. singular/plural) – you don't need to change them in any way.
- Spelling counts! The words you write must be spelled correctly.

It's especially important to read through the sentences before you read the passage, and think about the type of information you're looking for. In the passage, you see different words that could fit logically into each gap. You have to read carefully to choose the correct information, so that the sentence reports the meaning of the passage exactly.

How well do you know IELTS?

SENTENCE COMPLETION TASKS

1 You are mostly reading for *facts and figures / ideas and opinions.*
2 The questions are in *random order / the same order as the information in the passage.*
3 You always have to write *two words / the number of words indicated in the instructions.*
4 You have to use *words from the passage / your own words* to fill the gaps.
5 You have to *find words which already fit / change the words you find so that they fit* the grammar of the sentence.
6 Correct spelling is *not important / important.*

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B Sample questions

2 Read the passage and answer the questions. Use the rules about the task from Section A to help you. Then check your answers. Which questions did you find difficult?

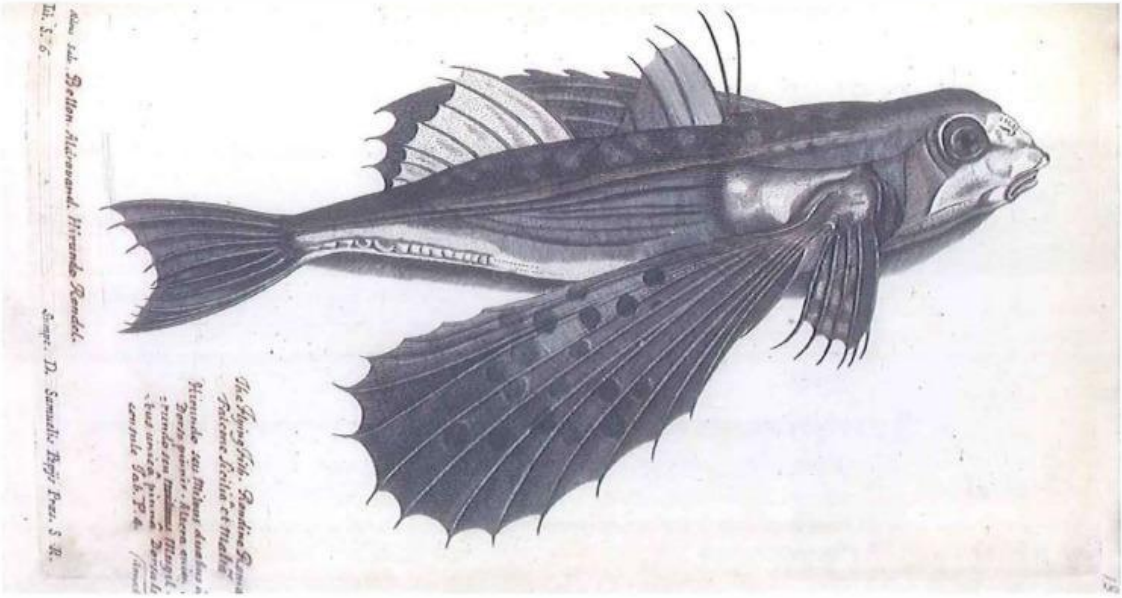
IELTS PRACTICE TASK

First Publication of Newton's Principles

You have probably never heard of the book entitled *History of Fish*, even though it played quite a key role in the history of scientific thought. The book, written by John Ray and Francis Willughby, was in fact an impressive collection of wood engravings, depicting various types of marine creatures, with an accompanying text. It was first published in 1686 by the Royal Society in London, the world's oldest scientific academy, and was justly recognised as a seminal work in the study of natural history. The heavy cost involved in producing such a lavish work, however, meant committing a large portion of the Society's funds to it. When, therefore, the book failed to sell quite as many copies as predicted, the Society found itself in financial difficulties. Almost bankrupt, it was obliged to withdraw an offer to publish Sir Isaac Newton's masterpiece *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*.

But luck was on Newton's side. One of his earlier publications, *Law of Universal Gravitation* (1684) was much admired by a man called Edmond Halley. Halley is chiefly known today for his discovery in 1705 of the famous comet that is named after him. At this time, however, Halley was a humble clerk employed by the Royal Society. On hearing that Newton's latest work was not to be published, he decided to take it on as his personal project. He managed to raise sufficient financial backing to allow the Society to publish it after all in 1687. So near was the Society to bankruptcy that Halley didn't even get paid as an employee that year, receiving instead unsold copies of Ray and Willughby's book to the value of his annual salary.

Featured in Newton's work were his three laws of motion which, together with his law of universal gravitation, explain the orbits of planets. The book is still widely regarded as one of the most significant scientific works by both physicists and mathematicians. It seems odd to us to think that the Royal Society nearly missed the chance to publish it because it was more impressed by a book about fish.



Questions 1–5

Complete the sentences below.

Choose ***NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER*** *from the passage for each answer.*

1 Ray and Willughby's book featured a type of illustration which are known as ..... .
2 Ray and Willughby's book was regarded as important in the field of ..... .
3 The Royal Society was nearly ..... as a result of publishing Ray and Willughby's book.
4 At the time the books were published, Halley was working as a ..... at the Royal Society.
5 Newton's greatest work was eventually published in the year ..... .

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C Tips and tactics

3 Work in pairs. Read the tips and tactics and discuss these questions.

a Which tips and tactics do you think are the most useful?
b Did you use any of these tips and tactics when you answered the sample questions in Section B?
c Which tips will you use in the future?

1 Before you read the passage, look at the sentences and think about what you're going to read.
2 Think about the type of information that's missing in each sentence. For example, are you looking for a name, a number, a specific term or something else?
3 Look for clues in the sentence that tell you the type of information you're looking for, e.g. 'in the field of ...' and 'working as a ...'.
4 Sometimes the sentence tells you what to look for, e.g. 'in the year ...', but you may see a number of years in the passage. Read carefully to find out which is correct.
5 Most of the missing information is facts about the topic, so the words that you need to write are mostly nouns. Check if the word is singular or plural in the passage.
6 Read the passage quickly. Remember that the sentences follow the order of information in the passage.
7 Then go through the sentences one by one. Read the relevant section of the passage again and find the words to complete the sentences.
8 Remember, the word(s) you need to write are in the passage. Don't put the information you read into your own words.
9 Don't just write down the first word you find that fits the gap – keep reading and keep thinking about the meaning.
10 Remember, the instructions tell you how many words to write – if you write more, your answer will be marked wrong. Most answers are single nouns, e.g. 'clerk', or compound nouns that include two words, e.g. 'wood engravings'.
11 Write numbers as figures, e.g. '104' – not as words, e.g. 'one hundred and four'.
12 If you aren't sure, always write something. No marks are taken off for wrong answers.

D Skills-building exercises

FOCUS
Identifying what type of information is missing

4 Read the sentences (1–6). Can you predict the type of information which is missing in each of the gaps? (There is no passage to refer to.)

1 Johnson was working as a ..... by the time his original work was published.
2 Johnson's original work was first published in a journal called ..... .
3 Johnson decided to visit ..... in order to do further research.
4 Johnson got funding from a ..... to help pay for his further research.
5 Johnson had difficulty with ..... during the research project.
6 Johnson's breakthrough came when he began studying ..... rather than larger animals.

5 Read the passage on page 131 and make a note of the following information.

1 Three occupations are mentioned in the first paragraph. Write the words here.

.....

2 'Cavities' is a plural noun. There are five more plural nouns in the second paragraph. Write the words here.

.....

3 There are four types of taste mentioned in the article. Which two are mentioned in the paragraph about Hanig's work?

.....

4 In the paragraph about Boring's work, there are three terms for pictures. Write these terms here.

.....

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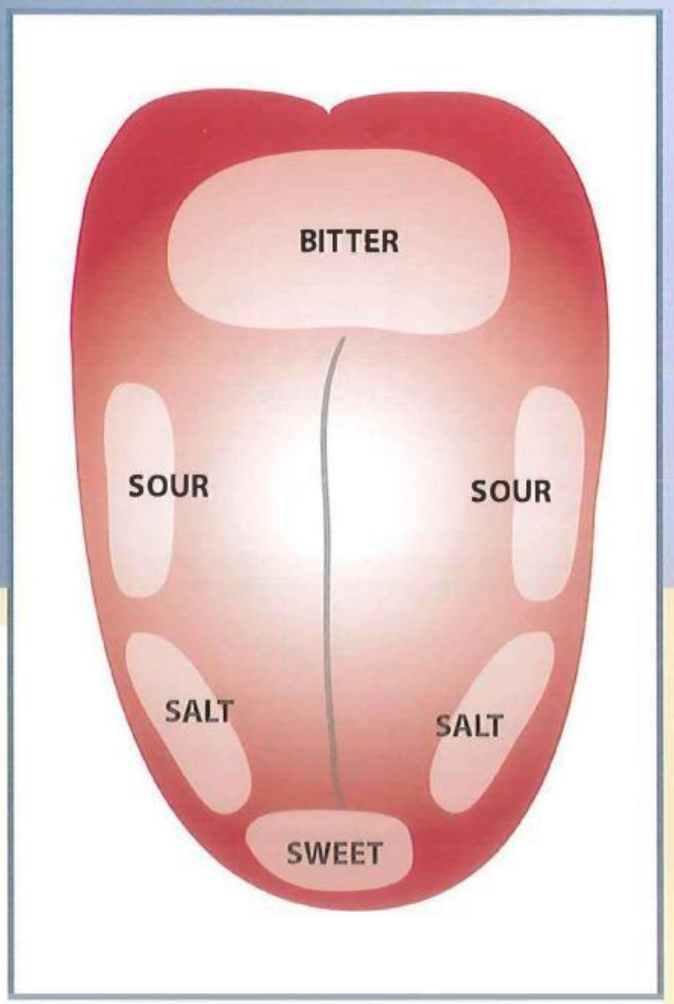
6 Look at the sentences (1–4). Read the passage again carefully and complete the sentences. Use your answers from Exercise 5 to help you. Write *NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER* for each answer.

1 The idea of the four basic tastes had its origin in the work of a ..... .
2 Close observation of the tongue revealed small cavities that looked like ..... .
3 Hanig's experiments suggested a link between the front of the tongue and ..... tastes.
4 Boring preferred to use the word ..... for the picture of the tongue he produced.

THE FOUR BASIC TASTES



When humans eat, they use all of their five senses – sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste – to form judgments about their food. But as every cook knows, and scientists have long confirmed, it is taste that is most influential. Indeed, it was the Ancient Greek philosopher Democritus who first formulated the notion that people could perceive four primary tastes – sweet, sour, salty and bitter – which couldn't be replicated by mixing together any of the others.

When tongue cells were studied under a microscope in the late 19th century, they appeared to resemble tiny keyholes, and scientists put forward the idea that these cavities came in four different shapes, each corresponding to one of the primary tastes.

Then, in 1901, a German scientist named D.P. Hanig set out to measure the relative sensitivity of the tongue to the four known basic tastes. He concluded that this varied in different parts of the tongue, with sweet sensations peaking in the tip and salty ones more prevalent at the sides.

In 1942, Edwin Boring, a psychologist at Harvard University, took Hanig's raw data and created a visual image, what he termed a map of the tongue, showing which areas were most sensitive to which taste. The concept is easy enough to refute with a home experiment. Place salt on the side of your tongue and you'll taste salt. Place sugar on the other side and you'll taste sweet. But for some unknown reason, scientists never bothered to do this, and Boring's ideas and accompanying diagram continued to be widely accepted.

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FOCUS

Identifying the target information in the passage

7 Read the sentences (1–4). What type of information is missing in each of the gaps?

1 Escoffier lacked the scientific knowledge to identify the ..... of the new taste he had developed.
2 Ikeda first identified the fifth taste in a dish made from ..... , which he analysed.
3 Ikeda was also responsible for developing a product, which is widely used as a ..... .
4 Collings' research showed that there are ..... in various parts of the mouth.

8 Look at the words and phrases that are underlined in the sentences in Exercise 7. Then do the following:

a Read the passage quickly and underline the names of three people when you see them.
b Read the text around each name and find the underlined idea in each question Remember that the passage may use different words to express these ideas.
c Find the information you need to complete the sentence and write the word or words in the gap. Write *NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER* for each answer. Be careful to copy the spelling exactly.

The fifth taste

In fact, taste is more complicated than sweet, sour, salty and bitter, and most scientists today agree that there's a fifth distinct taste. In the late nineteenth century, an influential cookbook entitled *The Guide Culinaire* was published. Its author, a distinguished French chef called Auguste Escoffier, created meals that tasted unique – like no combination of salty, sour, sweet and bitter before achieved. Not being a scientist, however, he wasn't able to analyse the chemical composition of the unique quality he had created.

It was Kikunae Ikeda, a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, who eventually managed to do that in 1908. He had noticed that the flavour of a seaweed soup was quite distinct from the four primary tastes, and went on to discover that various chemical compounds known as glutamates were responsible for its distinct taste. He named this taste *umami*, a Japanese word meaning delicious or yummy. Umami is common in a number of Japanese foods, as well as in mushrooms, cheeses, fish, soy sauce and various cured meats.

The taste of umami itself is subtle and blends well with other tastes to expand and round out flavours. It is also present in monosodium glutamate, a food additive which Ikeda isolated and patented for commercial use. Most people don't recognize umami when they encounter it, but it plays an important role in making various types of food taste good, and monosodium glutamate is still used to flavour many types of processed food today.

In 1974, a scientist named Virginia Collings published findings demonstrating that all tastes can be detected anywhere there are taste receptors – around the tongue, on the soft palate at the back roof of the mouth, and even in the epiglottis, the flap that prevents food from entering the windpipe. In 2002, scientists agreed that humans do have specific receptors in the tongue for umami. Even so, some textbooks continue to print Boring's tongue map and neglect to mention the fifth taste. And so the debate continues.

9 Work in pairs.

a Check your answers for Exercise 7. If they are different, try to decide which answer is better.
b Underline the sections of the text that you needed to answer each of the sentence completion questions in the passage.
c Discuss why some words from the passage fit the gaps and others do not.

10 Look at this student's answers. Why were they marked wrong?

Exercise 7
1 unique quality
2 seaweed soup
3 food additive
4 taste receptors in the tongue

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IELTS PRACTICETASK

Predicting Volcanic Eruptions

Predicting a volcanic eruption is hard even in developed countries such as Italy, Iceland and the USA, where there is intensive monitoring to detect movements beneath the surface. But in the developing world the majority of active volcanoes, including some that pose a high risk to large populations, have no local monitoring or warning system.

Help is on the way, however, from the sky. Earth-observing satellites, such as the European Space Agency's Envisat, can detect unrest in unmonitored volcanoes using a technique called Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR). InSAR is the most revealing way to show slight deformations in the ground due to movements of molten rock below. It works by combining satellite radar images of the same place taken at different times. This is displayed in the form of rainbow-coloured interference patterns, or interferograms as they are known, in which the arrangement of coloured bands shows the direction and extent of ground deformation. InSAR is particularly useful for tropical volcanoes, where cloud cover can obscure visual observations, because the radar beam can see through it.

As a result, many volcanoes previously thought to be dormant are now known to be showing signs of unrest. The resources for acquiring more detailed, ground-based monitoring can now be targeted at such volcanoes. A recent review of InSAR technology in the journal *Science* gave Mount Longonot, Kenya, as an example. Radar data from Envisat showed a nine-centimetre uplift over two years in the volcano, which was previously thought dormant.

While InSAR has enormous potential, it is still a new technique that relies on frequent observations and long-duration space missions. A series of Earth-observing satellites called Sentinel is expected to provide the data continuity required for serious InSAR volcano modelling. Sentinel is expected to observe all land masses regularly, with a six-day cycle in operation for the next two decades.

'InSAR is a growing field,' says Juliet Biggs of Bristol University, co-author of the *Science* paper. 'In the past ten years of my involvement ... the community has gone from a small handful of specialists to a wide range of practitioners.'

Of course, early warning of eruptions still faces challenges, as scientists try to work out how to tell whether a period of volcanic unrest will lead to eruption. Unrest usually subsides without an eruption, and false alarms can undermine public trust. But consistent InSAR monitoring will give vulcanologists a clearer picture of potentially threatening behaviour.

Questions 1–8

Complete the sentences below.

Choose ***NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS*** *from the passage for each answer.*

1 There is relatively little monitoring of most active volcanoes located in ..... .
2 InSAR techniques can indicate pieces of land where ..... may be moving beneath the surface.
3 The term ..... is used to describe the coloured patterns produced by InSAR techniques.
4 InSAR can be used in places where ..... makes other methods problematic.
5 The type of movement measured at Mount Longonot is described as ..... .
6 InSAR techniques depend on space flights of ..... in order to function.
7 Regular data for InSAR modelling will be provided on a ..... by Sentinel.
8 The writer is concerned about the effects of ..... on people's attitude towards predicting volcanic activity.

Which statement best describes how you feel about Sentence Completion tasks?

- I feel confident about doing Sentence Completion tasks.
- I did OK, but I still need to do more work on Sentence Completion tasks.
- I need more practice with Sentence Completion tasks. I need to focus on ...

▶▶ For further practice, see the DVD-ROM.

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