Unit 8: Exercise 7

Read the advice. Choose the correct advice, A–G, for the students. There is one extra piece of advice.

Advice

A Remember that IELTS tests your language skills, not your knowledge of specialist subjects like zoology. The tasks are all carefully designed so that they are of the same level of difficulty for everyone. So, don't worry if you see a passage about a subject that you know nothing about. The task will always test you on your understanding of the passage, not on facts that some people might already know.

B Always keep your eye on the time, as 60 minutes will pass very quickly. Never leave answers blank, as you definitely won't get any marks for these unanswered questions. But if you take a guess at an answer, you have a reasonable chance of being lucky and picking up extra marks. Remember, with a multiple-choice question (A, B, C or D), you have a 25% chance of guessing the answer correctly!

C Aim to spend a maximum of 20 minutes on each section. And remember that you need to work quickly in order to read approximately a thousand words of text and answer 13 or 14 questions, so never spend too much time on any one section or on any one question.

D As a general rule, just write one word if you can in a gap-fill answer. You may need to write more than this if the answer is a compound, such as *bus station*. But if you write more words in a gap than the limit, your answer will be marked wrong.

1 Xinjie, 24, from China

Overall, I think I did the test reasonably well. The main problem I had was that I spent about 30 minutes on the first passage, so because you get an hour for the whole test, I had to hurry through the other two. I got to the end of the test and answered all the questions. But I guess my marks for the second and third passages will probably be lower than for the first.

Xinjie's problem: not allocating the right amount of time to the different passages in the test

Advice for Xinjie: [ ]

2 Bunny, 30, from the Philippines

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When I saw that the second of the reading passages was about a wildlife conservation project, I thought, 'Oh great, that'll be really easy for me'. I've got a Master's in zoology, you see, so I figured that I'd already know some of the answers. But then when I started reading the passage, I realised that there weren't any questions about the kind of details that zoologists are expected to already know. They were all about the specific content of the passage. So, for me, already having knowledge about the subject didn't really help me at all. I was a bit disappointed, but I suppose that makes the test fairer for everyone, because it wouldn't have mattered if people knew about zoology or not.

Bunny's problem: being overconfident about one of the passages

Advice for Bunny: [ ]

3 Juanita, 25, from Venezuela

When I was doing a gap-fill task, I knew the answer was 'professor', so I wrote 'academic', because that's a synonym of 'professor' and we're supposed to use synonyms in the IELTS test. But after the test, my friend told me that in gap-fill tasks in the IELTS Reading test, we have to write exactly the same word as in the passage. So, I wish I'd just written 'professor'.

Juanita's problem: not following the instructions, not writing 'a word from the passage' in the answer

Advice for Juanita: [ ]

4 Sanjay, 24, from India

I normally do pretty well in IELTS Reading practice tests. The thing is, this time I went too slowly and didn't get around to answering questions 35–40 on the third passage. I don't know why it happened. I've done lots of practice tests and always managed my time pretty well. I usually finish with about five minutes to spare, so I just quickly check through all my answers.

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Sanjay's problem: running out of time

Advice for Sanjay: [ ]

5 Anna, 37, from Russia

I've been learning English for years and years. But in this practice test, there were questions where we had to say if information in the passage we'd just read was true, false or not given. I've done true or false questions before this course loads of times and found them easy, so I just answered 'true' or 'false', because I wasn't sure what 'not given' is supposed to mean.

Anna's problem: not being familiar with an IELTS Reading task type

Advice for Anna: [ ]

6 Arafa, 27, from Egypt

Overall, I'm getting better marks now in practice tests than when I started doing them about a year ago. With the test I've just done, it went OK, I guess, but I think I made one silly mistake. There was a question about food science, and the answer was 'cabbage'. But it was also clear from the passage that the cabbage in question was cooked, and the writer considered it a healthy food, so I wrote 'healthy cooked cabbage', because I wanted to show that I had understood the passage fully. The instruction did say 'Write NO MORE THAN TWO words from the passage for each answer'. I wrote three, but I hope it isn't going to be marked wrong.

Arafa's problem: not following instructions, writing too many words for an answer

Advice for Arafa: [ ]

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