

UNIT 8: CULTURE

A. READING

Exercise 1. Read the information. Then choose the 11 task types that are used in the IELTS Reading test.

It is important that you are familiar with all the IELTS Reading task types mentioned here, and that you practise doing them. But you don't need to remember what they all are.

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| ☐ Completing a flow-chart | ☐ Matching sentence endings |
| ☐ Completing summary notes | ☐ Multiple-choice questions |
| ☐ Identifying which information is in which paragraph | ☐ Putting paragraphs of a text in the right order |
| ☐ Inserting missing sentences into a text | ☐ True / False |
| ☐ Labelling a diagram | ☐ True / False / Not Given (for facts stated in the text) |
| ☐ Labelling a map | ☐ Writing short answers to questions |
| ☐ Matching features (e.g. people in a text) to statements | ☐ Yes / No / Not Given (for opinions expressed in the text) |
| ☐ Matching headings to paragraphs | |

Exercise 2. Read the information. Then complete the sentences. Use the prepositions and relative pronouns in the box.

In more formal IELTS Reading texts, such as academic articles, you might come across relative clauses with a preposition (*from, with, etc.*) followed by a relative pronoun (*which, whom, etc.*).

about which from where of whom upon which with whom

- 1 The paper is co-authored by a team of academics, three _____ are winners of the Nobel prize.
- 2 Someone made a rather insensitive remark, _____ he got up and stormed out of the room.
- 3 The blue whale, _____ we have all heard so much, really is as awe-inspiring when seen in real life as it is on TV.
- 4 Bertrand Russell first met Alfred North Whitehead, _____ he would go on to write a classic textbook on mathematics, at the University of Cambridge.
- 5 The products are taken on a conveyor belt to a depot, _____ they are transported by lorry to sales outlets around the region.

Exercise 3. Read the information. Then read the sentences. Can the words in bold be removed? Choose the correct answers. The first one has been done for you.

Writers sometimes leave out words in relative clauses. For example, *the book / read* really means *the book **that** / read*.

- 1 The Empire State **Building**, **which** occupies a central position in Manhattan, was completed in 1931.
- ☐ The word in bold can be removed.
- ☒ The word in bold can't be removed.
- 2 The conclusion **that** the scientists reached was that further studies were needed.
- ☐ The word in bold can be removed.
- ☐ The word in bold can't be removed.
- 3 I'm reading a book **which** was very well reviewed in the press.
- ☐ The word in bold can be removed.
- ☐ The word in bold can't be removed.
- 4 The US president **who was** assassinated in 1963, John F. Kennedy, is generally looked at favourably by historians.
- ☐ The words in bold can be removed.
- ☐ The words in bold can't be removed.
- 5 The populations of many birds of prey have fluctuated over the years. Now, one of the species **that** conservationists were most concerned about, the red kite, is thriving in many parts of the UK.
- ☐ The words in bold can be removed.
- ☐ The words in bold can't be removed.
- 6 One of the most popular tourist destinations in the English county of Wiltshire is Lacock, **where** photography **was** invented in 1835.
- ☐ The words in bold can be removed.
- ☐ The words in bold can't be removed.
- 7 The Ataturk Dam in Turkey is one of the largest dams **that has** ever **been** built.
- ☐ The words in bold can be removed.
- ☐ The words in bold can't be removed.
- 8 Much attention has been paid to the changing number of people in the UK speaking Welsh, a language now believed **to be** spoken by around half a million people.
- ☐ The words in bold can be removed.
- ☐ The words in bold can't be removed.

Exercise 4. Read the information. An international group of students who are preparing for the IELTS test recently sat an IELTS Academic Reading practice test under test conditions. Read what they said afterwards about their experiences. Match the problems the students faced with the students. There is one extra problem.

This task is not intended to replicate the tasks you will do in the IELTS Academic Reading test. Instead, its purpose is to help you prepare for the test by knowing how to avoid some common problems that candidates experience.

being overconfident about one of the passages

making a mistake when transferring answers onto the answer sheet

not allocating the right amount of time to the different passages in the test

not being familiar with an IELTS Reading task type

not following instructions, writing too many words for an answer

not following the instructions, not writing 'a word from the passage' in the answer

running out of time

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:

2 Bunny, 30, from the Philippines

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:

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:

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.

Sanjay's problem:

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:

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:

Exercise 5. Read the advice. Choose the correct advice, A–G, for the above 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.

E There are many different kinds of questions in the IELTS Reading test, and it is essential that you get used to answering them all. Do lots of practice tests in the months before your real IELTS test. Many IELTS candidates find the 'Not Given' questions challenging, so remember that 'Not Given' means that we can't tell if a statement is correct or not, because there isn't enough information. 'Not Given' is different from 'False'; with a false statement, we know that it isn't true.

F Always make sure that you read the instruction carefully and do exactly what the task asks. Although you're expected to find the language in the reading passage paraphrased in the questions, you aren't expected to think of additional paraphrases when you write a word as an answer in a text completion or summary completion task. It is always safer to write the exact word from the passage, as the paraphrase may have a slightly different meaning. For example, an *academic* doesn't necessarily have the same professional qualifications as a *professor*, so while these words are similar, they are not exact synonyms.

G Read the passage and questions in the order that they are presented. Most of the time, the passage is presented before the questions. Also, it is a good idea to quickly skim read the whole passage first, to get a general idea of what it is about.

1. Xinjie, 24, from China: A/ B/ C/ D/ E/ G

2. Bunny, 30, from the Philippines: A/ B/ C/ D/ E/ G

3 Juanita, 25, from Venezuela: A/ B/ C/ D/ E/ G

4 Sanjay, 24, from India: A/ B/ C/ D/ E/ G

5 Anna, 37, from Russia: A/ B/ C/ D/ E/ G

6 Arafa, 27, from Egypt: A/ B/ C/ D/ E/ G

Exercise 6. Read the information. The reading passage has ten paragraphs, A–J. Which paragraph contains the following information? Write the correct letter, A–J, for each answer.

You need to work quickly. You have just 20 minutes to do this paragraph matching task, a True / False / Not Given task and some multiple-choice questions.

Remember: you don't have to use all of the letters, and it might be necessary to use some of them twice.

The state of the Welsh language

A Just over 3 million of the UK's 63 million inhabitants live in Wales, the landmass that juts off the west coast of Britain into the Irish Sea. And while, as in the whole of the British Isles, English is unsurprisingly seen everywhere there, Welsh is in evidence throughout the country, from bilingual road markings warning 'SLOW / ARAF' to the name of Wales's national political party, 'Plaid Cymru' (literally, 'the Party of Wales'). Welsh is one of Europe's strongest minority languages, and the fact that it has endured throughout the centuries alongside one of the world's most dominant languages, English, is clear proof of the determination and commitment of its speakers to keep it alive. Nevertheless, the status of Welsh remains fragile.

B The results of the census of the UK's population conducted in 2001 revealed that there were 582,400 people in Wales, or 20.8% of the population, who were able to converse in Welsh. This was up from the figure published in the 1991 census, both as a percentage and as a total. But these figures need to be treated with caution. A large portion of these were pupils learning Welsh as a second language. As such, their proficiency is likely to be limited, at least compared to pupils receiving Welsh-medium education across the curriculum.

C According to the 2012 government report *One Language for All*, Welsh language tuition should be given a higher status in schools and ranked alongside other core subjects such as maths and English. Yet, this recommendation proved controversial, with many commentators saying that forcing people to accept Welsh is 'forcing the language down people's throats' and describing it as 'social engineering'.

D Since being set up under the Welsh Language Act of 1993, the Welsh Language Board has held both the role of regulator, overseeing public organisations' schemes for using the Welsh language, and, at the same time, language champion, promoting the broader use of Welsh. This role is seen as being particularly vital given the fall in the number of Welsh speakers identified in the 2011 census.

E One cause for concern is the sustainability of the language in the Welsh-speaking heartlands. Rural areas of northern and western Wales have a much higher proportion of Welsh speakers than the more heavily industrialised and densely populated southern region, including the capital, Cardiff, and the major cities of Swansea and Newport. Areas such as Anglesey, Caernarvon, Conwy and Gwynedd have particularly high percentages of Welsh speakers in their populations. Nevertheless, the number of communities where over 70% of the population was able to speak Welsh dropped from 92 in 1991 to 54 in 2001. It has for many years been argued by the Welsh government and others that such a density of speakers will be an essential condition for Welsh to thrive and succeed in the coming decades. The Welsh government believes that between 1,200 and 2,200 Welsh speakers are being lost each year, which accounts for the overall downward trend. This results predominantly from the difference between the number of fluent Welsh speakers who migrate out of Wales, as compared with the numbers returning.

F Of course, fluency and frequency of use of the language are intrinsically linked. Research commissioned by the Welsh Language Board found that 58% of those who said they could speak Welsh considered themselves to be fluent. And the greater part of those (87%) described themselves as daily speakers of the language.

G Polls consistently suggest a strong degree of support for the promotion of the Welsh language, among both speakers and non-speakers of Welsh. For example, in a poll commissioned by the Welsh Language Board in 2008, over 80% of those questioned said that they considered Welsh as

‘something to be proud of’. Around three-quarters felt it was ‘something belonging to everyone in Wales’.

H The last 50 years have seen a wide range of measures to promote the Welsh language, such as the establishment of the Welsh Books Council in 1961, the Welsh language radio station BBC Radio Cymru in 1977 and the UK’s first Welsh language TV station, S4C, in 1984. Other measures include substantial budgeting for the translation of public documents into Welsh. Within Wales itself, there has been support from across the political parties for many initiatives, including 550 Welsh language schemes at community level.

I Clearly, the long-term survival of Welsh will depend on the actions of those young enough to be going through the education system at the moment. Professor Sioned Davies of Cardiff University, in her introduction to the report *One Language for All*, says of the compulsory Welsh classes in schools that there are ‘some individual examples of exemplary teaching’, but that children’s ‘attainment levels are lower than in any other subject’. She concludes that a change of direction in educational policy is needed urgently before it is too late.

J The report cites one interviewee who reported that having a working proficiency in Welsh ‘opens doors’. ‘No door is shut to you if you can speak Welsh,’ they said. Some people choose to pursue the formal route of Welsh language qualifications, others just hope to pick it up informally or learn it as one would a foreign language whose culture appeals. At any rate, the challenge is to find a common path to ensure that the language remains viable and robust.

- 1 a warning about interpreting statistics

Paragraph

- 2 who is responsible for the future of Welsh

Paragraph

- 3 children being taught other subjects in Welsh

Paragraph

- 4 criticism of a measure to promote the study of Welsh

Paragraph

- 5 research findings about attitudes towards the value of Welsh

Paragraph

- 6 information about the spread of Welsh speakers throughout the country

Paragraph

Exercise 7. Read the first part of the passage again (paragraphs A-G). Then read the statements. Choose True, False or Not Given.

- 1 The writer is surprised that the Welsh language has survived for so long.
☐ True
☐ False
☐ Not Given
- 2 Research in 2001 reported a decrease in the total number of Welsh speakers.
☐ True
☐ False
☐ Not Given
- 3 The Welsh Language Board has two main functions.
☐ True
☐ False
☐ Not Given
- 4 The declining number of Welsh speakers can be explained by the deaths of 1,200 to 2,200 of them each year.
☐ True
☐ False
☐ Not Given
- 5 The majority of people who speak Welsh fluently actually use it every day.
☐ True
☐ False
☐ Not Given
- 6 In Wales, most non-speakers of Welsh want to learn the language.
☐ True
☐ False
☐ Not Given

Exercise 8. Read the final part of the passage again. Choose the correct answers to the questions.

- 1 Which of the following does the article state has received generous funding?
 - ☐ A community schemes
 - ☐ B Welsh-language documentation
 - ☐ C Welsh-language radio
 - ☐ D Welsh-language television
- 2 Which of the following groups does the continual success of Welsh depend most upon?
 - ☐ A politicians
 - ☐ B teachers
 - ☐ C the media
 - ☐ D young people
- 3 What point does Sioned Davies make about Welsh teaching in schools?
 - ☐ A Few children are choosing to study Welsh.
 - ☐ B It is too late to introduce policies that will preserve Welsh effectively.
 - ☐ C Pupils are not achieving high standards.
 - ☐ D The quality of Welsh language teaching is unacceptably low.
- 4 What advantage of speaking Welsh is mentioned in the final paragraph?
 - ☐ A better understanding of Welsh culture
 - ☐ B greater ease of learning other languages
 - ☐ C increased opportunities
 - ☐ D more qualifications
- 5 What is the writer's main purpose in writing this article?
 - ☐ A to argue that more needs to be done to support the use of Welsh
 - ☐ B to criticise government policy with regard to the Welsh language
 - ☐ C to publicise a research report into the use of Welsh
 - ☐ D to report on the sustainability of the Welsh language