

Exercise 9

Read the information. Then skim the text and choose the correct answers to complete the sentences.

Skimming a text means reading it quickly to get the main idea(s). To skim, you don't need to read the whole text. For example, you could just read the first sentence (topic sentence) of each paragraph. A lot of people find this a useful way to start when doing an IELTS Reading task.

In this exercise, you're going to practise skimming a text. The questions in this exercise are intended to help you practise skim-reading. They are NOT intended to resemble the actual IELTS Reading test. You'll see some IELTS Reading style questions in the following exercise.

Superfoods

Investigative journalist Bjorn Stigsson looks into the science of the so-called 'superfoods'.

Health bloggers are constantly going on about the so-called superfoods that can do wonders for our bodies, or so it is claimed. If you believe all the hype, you'll probably believe that a diet of mackerel and broccoli can make you live forever!

So, let's investigate the claims, and see if the science really backs them up. Curry is said to be a superfood, and the magical power it lays claim to is that it can help extend life. At least, that's what someone has decided on the basis of what happened to a few rats in a laboratory somewhere, which had a diet rich in capsaicin. Curry also contains a high amount of capsaicin, and so it wasn't long before someone concluded that, therefore, humans would live longer if they ate lots of curry. As for the evidence, oh, well, never mind that – unsubstantiated claims are much more headline-friendly. And so it wasn't long before a chef in Bedford, UK, hit the headlines when he claimed to have created the world's healthiest meal – chicken curry with blueberries. He claimed that, being loaded with antibacterials, it could deal 'a devastating blow' to cancer. Could it simply be, I wonder, that he just wanted to go one better than his competitor businesses in Bedford?

Another superfood is beetroot, which is rich in nitrates that can be converted into nitric oxide. It is believed that people with higher-than-average blood

pressure who eat beetroot are able to reduce it to healthier levels, although evidence gathered from people with heart problems is very limited. In addition, there is some good data on the benefits of beetroot, but much of it focuses on people with excellent health, such as the cyclists who were the participants in a well-received piece of research from 2013. This established that a diet rich in beetroot enabled them to cope better with the lower oxygen levels at high altitudes. These findings are of use to climbers and mountain residents alike.

It's been said that if you're going to make just one change to your diet, it should be to start eating blueberries. They're rich in fibre and vitamin K, but then so are many other things. It's their levels of antioxidants that really set them apart, which may be one of the reasons why people who eat them a lot are less prone to heart disease. Studies conducted among women aged over 70 who had not had a stroke also found that memory loss was delayed by a couple of years on average among the blueberry-eaters. However, before we jump to conclusions, it should also be pointed out that the sample size was very modest and that berry-eaters tend to have above-average incomes, which in turn can contribute to good health.

So, do I believe that some foods really are 'superfoods'? No. Some foods, such as broccoli and mackerel, are more nutritious than others such as bread. And we all need a rich and balanced diet, so do by all means cook up some broccoli now and then, but don't live on it exclusively. And don't delude yourself into thinking that it'll save your life – eating so-called superfoods is a solution, but it's not *the* solution.

1. The writer's main point is that people should ...
 - be sceptical about claims made about superfoods.
 - try to eat as many superfoods as possible.
2. The writer's tone is best described as ...
 - humorous and light-hearted.
 - serious and academic.