

Reading Exam 2020

Task 2 (10 points) Read the text and decide if each statement (1-10) is true (T), false (F) or not mentioned (NM), according to the text. Tick (✓) the appropriate box. An example (0) has been given.

RUBIK'S CUBE

In Bangkok on a low stage, a young man examined a Rubik's Cube. Around him, an audience stood, precariously, on tables and chairs, or peered down from skyboxes. In one fluid motion, he activated a timer on the table before him and his fingers disappeared in a blur of activity. When he set the puzzle down and stopped the timer, just seconds later, the audience erupted, "Feliks with a 7.95!"

Feliks Zemdegis, an Australian of Latvian origin, had been there before. In 2011, when he was just 15 years old, he travelled to Bangkok from his native Melbourne to attend the biennial World Rubik's Cube Championship for the first time. The year before, he had become the first person to solve the puzzle in fewer than 10 seconds on average. Together he has set over 100 Rubik's Cube records during his speedcubing career and has previously achieved this title on multiple occasions. In 2018 he completed the world-famous puzzle in just 4.22 seconds, an achievement recognised by the World Cube Association and Guinness World Records. As a result, in the events and forums where competitive Rubik's Cube solvers congregate he is something of a celebrity.

When, in the spring of 1974, Ernő Rubik, a Hungarian professor of design, invented his eponymous cube, he was certainly unaware that it would become one of the world's best-selling toys. Nor did he envision that it would impact fields as diverse as science, art, and design. He certainly could not have imagined that, one day, his puzzle would be at the centre of a competitive sport in which the top performers can solve it in less time than it takes to read this sentence aloud. The first Rubik's Cube competitions

began in the early 1980s and were largely a promotional affair that vanished with the collapse of the initial fad for the puzzle. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Internet allowed hobbyists around the world to find each other and run competitions of their own.

Actually, when Rubik invented his cube, he had little idea how to solve it. No matter which way he turned the puzzle, the colours seemed only to get more mixed up. Still, he refused to believe that it could not be solved. “It was a code I myself had invented!” he wrote in an unpublished manuscript, quoted in a 1986 Discover profile. “Yet I could not read it.” Eventually, Rubik began to develop sequences of moves that would allow him to rearrange a few pieces of the puzzle at a time. First, he aligned the corners. Then, he attacked the edges. After about a month, he could solve the puzzle at will.

The biggest factor in the speed of today’s cubers has more to do with practice than anything else. Wayne Gretzky, the greatest hockey player of all time, could famously predict where the puck would travel before it arrived – a skill he attributed not to innate talent, but simply to his father’s coaching. The same principle applies in cubing. Having solved the puzzle so many times, elite cubers like Zemdeg are able to visualize what it will look like several steps in advance – an ability known in the sport as ‘look ahead’ – so that, once the solve begins, they rarely have to pause to figure out their next move. It is even more important than turning fast.

Interestingly, hardly anyone uses a traditional Rubik’s Cube in competition anymore. Most cubers employ models in which the interior mechanism that Rubik originally designed has been revamped to minimize friction thus allowing the players to turn it faster.

Statements		T	F	NM
0.	<i>Feliks Zemdegis is a Rubik's Cube speedsolver.</i>	√		
1.	The first time Feliks solved the Rubik's Cube under 10 seconds was in 2011.			
2.	Feliks has a reputation among Rubik's Cube speedsolvers.			
3.	Feliks decided to set a world record when he was 15.			
4.	Ernő Rubik anticipated that his cube could be used for various purposes.			
5.	The main goal for the first Rubik's Cube competitions was to advertise the cube itself.			
6.	When Ernő Rubik made the Rubik's Cube, he needed to figure out a solution to the puzzle.			
7.	Ernő Rubik's solution of the puzzle was accidental.			
8.	Wayne Gretzky was not only a keen hockey player, but also a Rubik's Cube fan.			
9.	Being able to solve the Rubik's Cube remarkably quickly is a natural ability.			
10.	The original Rubik's Cube has been modified to boost performance in competitions.			

Task 3 (8 points)

Read the extract from a novel and do the task. Choose from the phrases (A-J) the one which fits each gap (1-8). Write the appropriate letter (A-J) in the gap. An example (0) has been given. There is one extra phrase which you do not need to use. Use each phrase only once.

A GOOD DAY

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

It was high summer in London, and the raindrops felt almost warm on Max Skinner's face as he ran up Rutland Gate and into Hyde Park. He followed the curve of the Serpentine while the shapes of other people determined to suffer before breakfast came and went in the grey predawn murk, (0) I , their progress marked by the moist slap of their footsteps on the path.

The weather had discouraged all but the hard-core joggers. It was too wet for the familiar faces who sometimes provided Max with a little welcome distraction. Too wet even for the Dachshunds (1)_____, their embarrassed owner clumsily after them mouthing apologies.

Turning at the top of the Serpentine, Max started back toward the Albert Memorial, (2)_____. There was a deal that he'd been nursing along for months, a deal that would deliver a bonus big enough to pay his infinitely patient tailor and, much more important, get the bank off his back. Occasional murmurs of discontent about the size of his overdraft had turned into letters couched in ever more alarming terms, underlining the fact that it had been a lean year so far. But it was going to change, Max felt sure. With a surge of optimism, he sprinted down Rutland Gate, (3)_____.

and let himself into the stucco-fronted Georgian house that a developer had converted into what he described as highly desirable executive studio apartments.

Max's second-floor apartment was a work in progress; or, (4)_____, an unfinished symphony. At the moment, it was a place used for sleep and very little else. There were two good modern paintings leaning against the wall, a few pieces of spiky avantgarde furniture, a dusty and sorry-looking ficus, a battery of stereo and video equipment. Despite having been there for more than two years, Max had managed to avoid giving the apartment any personal touches, apart from a small pile of running shoes in one corner. He went into the tiny, unused kitchen, opened the refrigerator, (5)_____, and took the latter with him into the bathroom.

Hot water and a cold drink. The after-run shower was a daily reward for one of his few healthy habits. He worked too hard, ate in the irregular way of bachelors, and slept too little, (6)_____. Forty was several years away, and by then, he told himself, he would have his life and his finances in order, ready to settle down and – who knows – make another gallant attempt at marriage.

He studied his reflection in the shaving mirror. Blue eyes, only slightly bloodshot; dark brown hair, cut short in the current fashion; skin taut over high cheekbones; (7)_____. Could be worse, he thought.

Five minutes later, he was ready to conquer the financial universe, (8)_____: dark suit, dark blue shirt, dark tie, a bulky watch designed for deep-sea divers obsessed with punctuality, cell phone and car keys at the ready. He ducked through the drizzle and into the obligatory black car for the drive to the City, where today, he felt sure, the long-awaited deal would come through. And then the bonus. He'd finish furnishing the apartment, hire a housecleaner to keep it spotless, take a few days off. Not even the weather forecast on the radio – scattered showers, followed by outbreaks

of heavier rain, with a chance of hail – could dampen his spirits. This was going to be a good day.

Adapted from “A Good Year” by Peter Mayle

Phrases	
A	but he ran, and he was young
B	as a decorator friend with his eye on a lucrative assignment had said
C	his thoughts on the day ahead
D	dressed in the uniform and trappings of the modern young executive
E	as yet, no obvious bags or wrinkles
F	whose joy it was to nip at every passing ankle
G	empty except for a bottle of water and a carton of orange juice
H	shook himself like a dog on the doorstep
	<i>their faces slick with rain and sweat</i>
J	eager for the delicious treat that may come afterwards