IELTS Practice Reading Test

(reference: IELTS.R11.ee)

Reading Passage 1

Since ancient times, people have marvelled at the fact that cats always manage to land on all four paws, no matter what height they fall from. It took scientists a considerable amount of research to explain this phenomenon. Only with the advancement of photography was it possible to find a plausible explanation when, at the end of the nineteenth century, French physiologist Marei took pictures of falling cats in different stages of their descent. These pictures were later presented to the Academy of Science for further examination. Specifically, it was ascertained that the cat's tail, which was previously believed to play an important role in the phenomenon, doesn't help in any way. The latter was proven by a series of experiments with tailless animals.

Having debunked the first myth, the scientists assumed that cats somehow push off from the experimenter's hands to gain momentum, which allows them to change body position in midair. This technique is somewhat similar to what springboard athletes use. This proposition, however, got rejected as well, proven wrong by a series of photoshoots. Cats were able to alter their body position even when simply thrown. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it became clear that they are able to do so by actively moving their paws and entire body.

At the beginning of their fall, a cat moves its body so that the front half is turned to the right. This way, the front limbs are moved closer to their head while the rear extremities are drawn as far as they can. Right after that, the cat bends its rear opposite to its front. It all means that a cat directs its front body part towards the ground, being able to clearly see what spot to choose for landing. They part their rear extremities to compensate for the inertia of their front and rear body. Finishing their landing, the feline extends its front limbs, stopping the body from rotating. As the rear extremities gradually reach their final position, the cat assumes a stance to ground with no harm to itself.

It was also established that if a cat is dropped with its limbs pressed to the body, it is unable to turn itself upright and land on its feet. As the technology of photo shooting advanced, it became possible to observe the process in more detail. Among other findings, it was noted that if a cat is propelled upwards with its paws facing up, it will keep that stance until reaching the peak of the ascent, at which point it will then start to turn.

Scientists have also observed how a cat's fall is affected by its sense organs. If the cat is blindfolded, then it will display lower proactivity during the fall. It looks rather odd and awkward, and if the cat in question is put in a spinner prior to being thrown, then it confuses up and down, landing on its back. Interestingly, the absence of hearing has no apparent impact on the way the cat acts while falling.

Another question on everyone's mind is how cats manage to stay alive after falling from great heights. The answer to this is rather simple: a cat weighs much less than a human, and at the same time, it has greater aerodynamic drag, resulting in a rate of fall of about 17 metres per second. To give you an idea of how fast or slow that is, a parachute jumper will reach a velocity of almost 50 metres per second. What is more surprising though is that a cat falling off a higher altitude has more chances to stay alive, supposedly because it relaxes its muscles mid-fall, spreading its body to create better aerodynamic resistance.

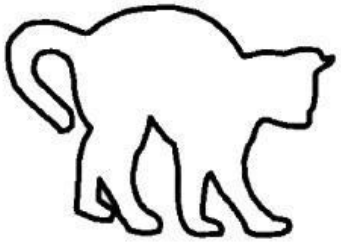
Some people have tried to imitate the movements of a falling cat to land upright. One of the daring ones was a high-board diver and Olympic champion, Brian Phelps. As it turned out, it took the highly-trained man 0.3 seconds to do what cat manages to do in just 0.12. Phelps managed to turn his body upright midair after being propelled with his belly pointing down. No other person managed to reproduce said trick.

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Questions 1-3. *Complete the summary. Choose* ***ONE WORD ONLY*** *from the passage for each answer.*

Cat's ability to land on all fours has always fascinated people. It was only with a breakthrough in **1** _____ that scientists succeeded in solving this mystery. The picture of a cat in the state of **2** _____ helped to study the phenomenon in more detail. One of the interesting findings was that cat's **3** _____ plays no role in aiding it to turn upright.

Questions 4-8. *Complete the flow-chart. Choose* ***ONE WORD ONLY*** *from the passage for each answer.*



Start of the fall

↓

Cat's front body turns **4** _____

↓

Cat arches its back in the **5** _____ direction

↓

Rear limbs are drawn apart to make up for **6** _____ of the body

↓

Front paws are extended just before **7** _____

↓

Cat positions itself to **8** _____ safely

Questions 9-13. *Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 2? Write:*

TRUE *if the statement agrees with the information*
FALSE *if the statement contradicts the information*
NOT GIVEN *if there is no information on this*

9. Cats always land on all fours.

10. Cat's aural abilities have no impact on successful landing.

11. Even the biggest of falls leave cats uninjured.

12. Longer falls increase cat's chances to land on four legs.

13. No man managed to successfully reproduce cat's landing technique.

Reading Passage 2

Waking numbness or sleep paralysis

Imagine yourself waking up and not being able to move, not even your finger. The room is pitch black, but you can sense somebody — somebody malicious standing next to your bed or even sitting on your chest, stopping you from breathing.

Such a bizarre phenomenon is commonly referred to as waking numbness, or more ominously, "sleep paralysis" (SP). Unlike today, people of the past thought of it as something supernatural, thus spawning many superstitions around it. In older times, the cause was believed to be demons, or incubi—an evil spirit

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with the physical appearance of a human male. Some cultures believed the reason for that to be malicious magical rituals or curses aimed at the person suffering from this state.

According to official data, at least five percent of people experienced this state at some point in their lives. Some go through it only once, whereas there are individuals who face the symptoms fairly regularly. Whether you belong to one group or the other, there is good news for you: this state poses no danger to either your life or your health.

This state is very similar to the rapid eye movement (REM) stage of sleep, the one during which you have dreams. The biological purpose of this state is to prevent you from making any abrupt movements, thus ensuring a long, uninterrupted rest. In cases of sleep paralysis, the brain wakes up while the body is still sleeping. Until the body wakes up, you are left motionless. Alternatively, you might experience being able to move your body, but the delay between your impulse to move it and the actual movement feels unbearably long.

The symptoms are not limited to numbness of the body. One can feel imminent danger, fear, or stifling pressure; it can also be difficult to breathe or even have a sensation like being choked. Palpitation, or accelerated heart rate, is also rather common. Some report having an illusion of involuntary body movement, like turning over to one side or to one's stomach or back, even though in reality the person lies still. Voices, unnatural sounds and noises like approaching footsteps are often reported by patients suffering from sleep paralysis. Hallucinations are not unheard of either—silhouettes of ghosts or people. The latter can be held accountable for the popular evil spirit myth.

Sleep paralysis can often be caused by sleeping on one's back. Sleeping on your body side drastically lowers your chances of experiencing most of the symptoms. It can also be a symptom of various sleep disturbances (such as insomnia or narcolepsy). It can only be triggered by waking up naturally. If the person is woken up abruptly, whether it is a bright light or an alarm clock ringing, then sleep paralysis does not take place.

There is no surefire way to battle this condition. A common recommendation is to establish a sleeping routine and follow it religiously. Some break sleep paralysis by rolling their eyes, moving their tongue or thumb on their right hand (or their left hand for lefties). Others are more successful with relaxing completely and remaining calm; this reduces the negative emotional impact, and the state gradually recedes. Brain activity has also been reported to help—thinking about something complex or running calculations in your head seems to aid in overcoming the numbness. Using your pharynx to pronounce something is a good way to break the state too; since you can't open your mouth, it will come out as incomprehensible moaning, but it is likely to help.

Research has shown that analytically minded people are less susceptible to the negative effects of the state. When they happen to suffer from it, they feel less depressed after the occurrence because they are usually not superstitious—they do not allow negative emotions stemming from beliefs connected with evil spirits. As the scientists explained, the type of people mentioned above tend to explain everything from a scientific point of view, whereas people who rely on intuition are more likely to base their conclusions on a less rational basis.

Questions 14-17. *Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage 2? Write ...*

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information
FALSE if the statement contradicts the information
NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

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14. People nowadays believe sleep paralysis to be caused by the supernatural

15. Five percent of people suffer from sleep paralysis symptoms regularly

16. Sleep paralysis can make people see things

17. Avoiding sleeping on your back helps reduce sleep paralysis occurrence

*Questions **18** and **19**. Choose the correct letter **A-D**.*

18. Symptoms of waking numbness do not include

A Anxiety

B Pounding heart

C Nausea

D Hallucinations

19. According to the passage

A SP can be dangerous

B SP is biologically redundant

C There are ways to dispel the state

D Smarter people do not suffer from SP

*Questions **20-26**. Complete the summary using words from the box below.*

hallucinations	*danger*	*breath*	*speak*	*stop*
help	*disease*	*harm*	*experience*	*superstitions*
think	*state*	*fear*		

Sleep paralysis is a **20** _____ of not being able to move or **21** _____ right after one wakes up. It has certain **22** _____ surrounding it — most of them dating back to the ancient times. Biologically, this phenomenon is to **23** _____ you from waking caused by involuntary body movements. Other typical symptoms of sleep paralysis include **24** _____ and struggling for **25** _____. Despite this, a person with sleep paralysis faces no **26** _____ from it.

Reading Passage 3

The honey bee, or *apis mellifera*, is a fascinating insect. They live in big families or swarms. These swarms have historically been appeared in varying climatic and geographical zones, as long as flowering plants were present there. Natural selection and evolution ensured gradual improvement of the species. Eventually, biological differences shaped the honey bee that inhabits our planet today. Nowadays there exist three distinct types of honey bees, each with defined duties and responsibilities.

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The Worker Bee. The predominant type of bee in the hive, they are exclusively female. However, over the course of evolution, they have been deprived of the ability to mate with male bees and, therefore, have offspring. Neither their deteriorated reproductive organs nor the size of their bodies allow that. However, female bees retained their maternal instincts, which makes the young of the hive their prime concern. They have gained and, in the evolutionary course, greatly developed other qualities important for a family member: they feel the urge to build shelter and gather food for future use; they ensure that the larvae are satiated; and their hive is warm and well-protected from intruders. The working bee does everything to make the hive function properly.



The Queen. The queen does not normally leave the hive. There are several occasions when she does so—one of them is the period of chastity to search for mating partners. It makes its first venture out of the hive to scout the surroundings, usually during the warm and quiet morning hours while drone bees are still inside the nest. The only other time the queen leaves her nest is for mating rituals. This usually coincides with the period when young bees go out to learn the vicinity of their hive for their future pollination duties. The queen can go as far as 7 kilometres away from the apiary (or hive, for wild bees). At such a great distance from her home, she is likely to encounter drones from other families, reducing the chances of inbreeding.

A newly-born queen is yet to be considered the supreme mother of the bee family, as she isn't fertile at this point. It is only after several days that she reaches puberty and, with it, the ability to lay eggs after mating with drones. After her first mating eggs start growing inside her bosom, her belly grows larger, and she turns bulky and cumbersome. The queen becomes slow; her movement—paced and gracious. The queen resides in empty honeycombs that she uses to lay eggs. Those eggs are of two types: fertilised and unfertilized. The former give life to female specimens—working bees and other queens—while the latter bring males, or drones. The queen is the cornerstone insect of the swarm, regulating the pace at which it functions, its population, and its prosperity. The queen is the sole ruler of the bee society.

However, the queen bee is nothing without her humble servants. She won't be able to lay an egg unless the worker bees prepare a honeycomb for it. She is totally reliant on worker bees for food and protection because her size doesn't allow her to either provide for or defend herself. It is the ultimate goal for any bee to ensure that the queen is safe, happy, and has everything in abundance. And that isn't surprising—if the queen dies, the whole societal structure of the hive collapses. That is why whenever a queen falls ill, the bees grow agitated and promptly hatch another queen by feeding a larva with royal jelly exclusively.



The Drone. Drones are hatched at the end of spring, when the hive has enough strength to start swarming. Drones are male bees whose primary and only goal is to fertilise the queen. Without them, bees would not be able to procreate, so technically, they are as important as the queen. Bees try to hatch as many drones as they can sustain to ensure female impregnation. They spare no expense in bringing drones up—a growing drone eats up to six times more than a worker bee. Among other foods, an adult drone consumes bee bread, a staple consisting of honey and pollen.

Drones usually mate in the air at an altitude of up to 30 meters. They might choose to travel far away from their hive to find a mating partner, so they require an acute sense of smell to track a bee queen down as well as sharp eyesight and strength to see and catch her. A drone's eye has up to eight thousand facets, compared to only four or five thousand for a worker bee. This grants drones extreme spatial awareness and a quick reaction capacity to any changes around them. They are also blessed with longer antennae—the bee's organ of smell. They can sense the presence of a bee queen from 50 metres away.

Drones are exempt from any work in the hive. They do not take part in defending it; they can't even get food to feed themselves and would starve if it weren't for worker bees. Their only *raison d'etre* is to

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impregnate bee queens. Nature has liberated drones from any duties other than the procreative one. This all comes at a great cost, though. After the mating with the queen is over, the drone dies. Drones are part of the bee family for only as long as the swarming period lasts. After that, drones are exiled, their purpose fulfilled, and no longer needed.

Questions 27-35. *Complete the table below. Choose* ***NO MORE THAN ONE WORD*** *from Reading Passage 3 for each answer.*

Type	Responsibility	Comments
Worker bee	• Ensuring there is enough **27** _____ • **28** _____ the hive from trespassers • Feeding the **29** _____	Unable to **30** _____ despite being **31** _____
Queen bee	Breeding new bees	Completely **32** _____ on worker bees
Drone	**33** _____ the queen bee.	• Cannot get **34** _____ for themselves • **35** _____ from the hive after swarming is over.

Questions 36-40. *Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage 2? Write ...*

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information
FALSE if the statement contradicts the information
NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

36. Worker bees constitute the majority of the hive population

37. There can only be one queen in the hive at a time

38. The gender of a newborn bee is decided by chance

39. Drones are larger than worker bees in size

40. Drone's perception is better than that of a worker bee.

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