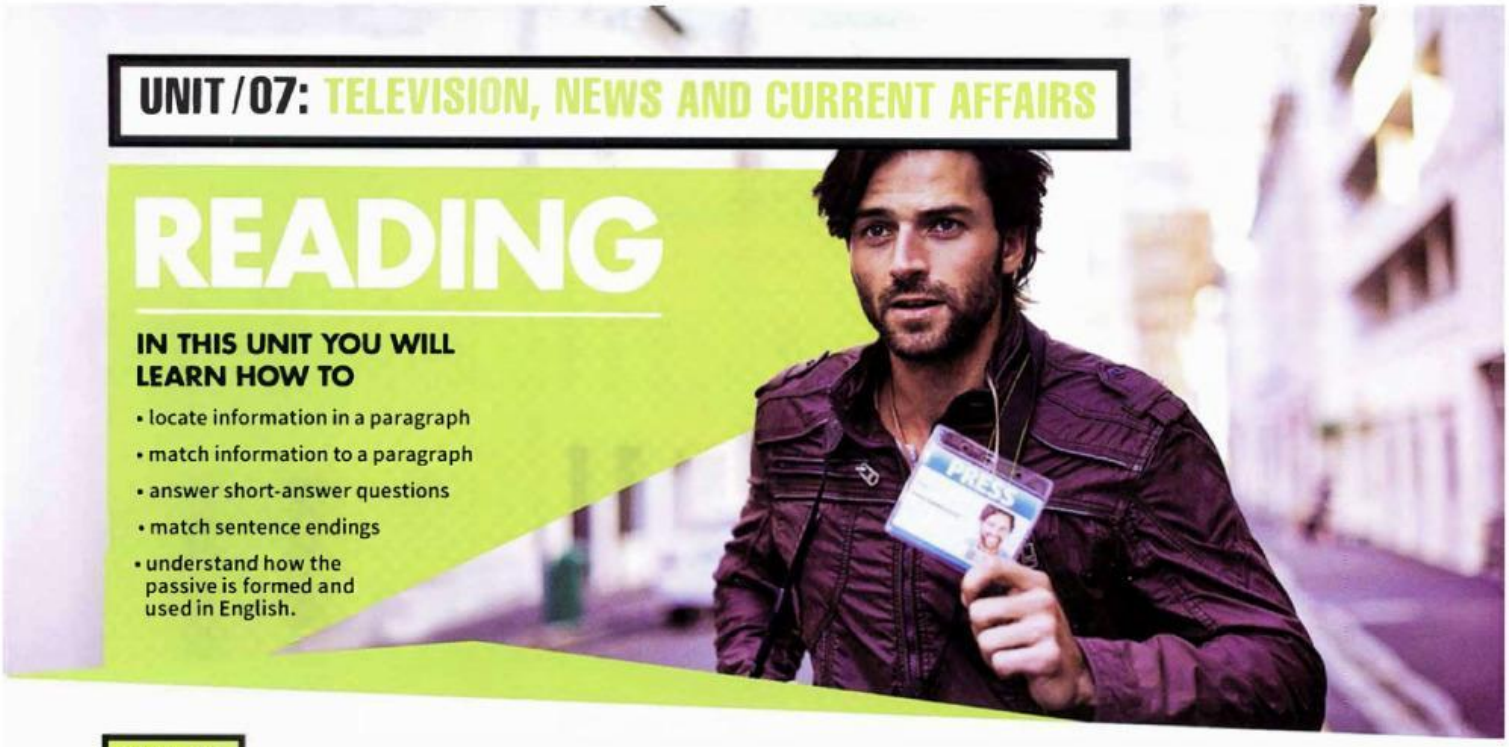
Homework - Unit 3 - Lesson 7

Reading practice



LEAD-IN

0 1 **Are you a citizen journalist? Which of the following have you done? Tell your partner, giving details.**

- liked or rated a news story online
- shared a news story on social media
- commented on a news story online
- sent a photograph/video to a news outlet or website
- written a blog

0 2 **The following pairs of news-related words are either near synonyms or near antonyms (opposites). Write S or A.**

1 journalist – reporter
2 research – investigate
3 mainstream – alternative
4 break a story – get a scoop
5 broadcast – publish
6 media outlet – news agency
7 amateur – professional
8 eyewitness – source

0 3 **What are the differences in meaning between the near synonyms in exercise 2?**

LOCATING INFORMATION IN A TEXT

0 4 **Skim read the text on pages 140–141 and match the summaries (1–7) to the paragraphs (A–G).**

1 Advantages of 'We media'
2 The need for critical thinking
3 The changing definition of a journalist
4 The changing role of the audience and the media
5 A case study
6 What citizen journalists can contribute
7 Media response to participatory journalism

Most IELTS Reading tasks expect you to find specific information in the text. Skimming the text as a whole first, to understand its structure, will help you predict where in the text the relevant information is likely to be found. Once you think you have located the probable paragraph(s) where the information will be found, scan through it/them quickly to find the information, remembering to look for synonyms or paraphrases of the key words in the question.

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THE FUTURE OF **JOURNALISM**?

A It used to be easy to define what a journalist was. They had a degree in English or journalism, usually owned a camera and were employed full time by a news outlet, TV or radio station or newspaper. Their days were spent conducting interviews, researching the next big story and writing articles. However, in recent years the line between these 'professional' journalists and the public has become blurred. There is a growing trend for amateur journalism that often bypasses the established media sources. The upshot is that virtually anyone can be a journalist. After all, if you are present when a story breaks, or you yourself are part of the news story, why wait for a 'real' journalist to interview you as an eyewitness? You can use the camera on your phone and tell the story yourself and post it on your own blog or on social media.

B It is not only on sites like Facebook and Twitter that amateur journalism is on the rise. There are now open publishing sites, such as the Independent Media Center or 'Indymedia', which aim to bring a 'grassroots dimension' into the news arena. Ohmynews, one of South Korea's most influential online sources for the latest in current affairs, has 2 million readers every day and a nationwide army of 26,000 'citizen' journalists. More and more often these citizen journalists and open sites are getting the scoop on major stories. The first mention of the problems facing the doomed space shuttle Columbia appeared on an online discussion forum 11 minutes before the Associated Press broke the news. What is more, there has been a fundamental change in how we interact with the news. Nowadays, with the growth in online versions of newspapers, the public can easily comment, point out errors, and share alternative viewpoints. These opportunities are particularly vital if you find yourself the subject of a news story – whether for positive or negative reasons. If the story involves you, you can provide vital context and supplementary information which can change readers' views on your story.

C When this trend for participatory media was in its infancy, there was plenty of mistrust of amateur 'journalists' who lacked the credentials of journalists working in established media outlets. If a story didn't come from well-known news organisations like CNN or *The Times*, it wasn't taken seriously. Now that perception is changing. Trust in alternative media sources is growing. In fact, mainstream media now regularly recruit members of their own staff from the ranks of amateur news bloggers. Simultaneously, there has been a general shift away from a 'broadcast model', in which the few broadcast to the many, towards a more inclusive model in which the audience can play an active role. The traditional 'filter then publish' news model has been replaced by 'publish then filter', with millions of keen amateurs involved at all stages of the process.

D So, how have the media establishment reacted to this change? Initially, it was seen as a challenge to their hegemony. They had always been the gatekeepers: those who decided what was news and how that news should be presented. Participatory journalism represents the democratisation of the media: and therefore a threat to this. Media futurists predict that by 2021, 50% of news will be produced by citizen journalists, so traditional media have had little choice but to embrace the trend or be left behind. Many already have, by adding features that invite participation, such as comments sections and links to social media.

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E There are many potential benefits to 'We media', as participatory journalism is sometimes called. It can help forge stronger relationships between the media and local communities, since people feel their views are represented, creating a sense of trust and shared responsibility. Members of the public who participate in creating the news gain memorable experiences and build their reputation in a given community. 'We media' can also give a voice to those who haven't had one due to educational, economic, social or cultural barriers. It is a liberating phenomenon with the potential to reduce inequality in society.

F Of course, like anything else, participatory journalism has its critics and in particular there are those who claim that news reporting on social media is used to manipulate people and even spread misinformation or 'fake news'. Whilst this is no doubt true in some cases, it is a sweeping generalisation. For example, during the 2011 London riots, it was widely reported on mainstream media that the rioters and looters used social media to spread news about what was happening and to incite others towards violence and protest. However, what is interesting is that the event has now been studied in detail and it has been revealed that this was not the case. In actual fact, citizen journalists played a positive role as the situation unfurled. They were the first to alert the authorities to early incidents of rioting taking place, and helped the police identify offenders by photographing them in the act and sharing the photos on social media. Without ordinary Londoners responding to news in this way, many of the perpetrators would most likely have escaped justice.

G The evidence so far is that participatory journalism is here to stay and set to develop in ways as yet unimagined. The implication for every user of media is that we need to be ever more open to the possibility of false information. The 'publish then filter' model necessitates all readers and viewers honing their critical faculties and verifying reports by independent means before accepting and sharing them. This will be a positive trend if it develops the thinking skills of the population as a whole. An educated citizenry who do not believe what they read without question is surely an asset to any society.

MATCHING INFORMATION

05 **Scan each paragraph and find the following information.**

Paragraph **A**: something a journalist traditionally possessed
Paragraph **B**: the name of a Korean news site
Paragraph **C**: two well-known media outlets
Paragraph **D**: the year in which half of the news may be produced by amateurs
Paragraph **E**: four types of obstacles to participation in society
Paragraph **F**: two types of criminals
Paragraph **G**: something audiences need to sharpen or improve

This task type asks you to match a piece of information to the paragraph that contains it. The information could be specific details, examples, descriptions, reasons and explanations, or a summary of the ideas. You may not need to use all of the paragraphs and some paragraphs might match more than one piece of information. The information in the paragraphs will be paraphrased differently in the corresponding question.

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06 **Which synonym or paraphrase for the underlined words helped you locate the information in exercise 5?**

07 **Look at the exam task. Without reading the text again, for each numbered piece of information, say where in the text you think it will be found. Write B for beginning, M for middle or E for end.**

*The text has seven paragraphs, **A–G**.*
Which paragraph contains the following information?
*Write the correct letter, **A–G**. NB You may use any letter more than once.*

1 Why some journalists fear the new trends
2 Details of civil unrest in a major city
3 Why education is needed in the context of this change in the media
4 Subjects journalists traditionally study at university
5 How the story of a spaceship disaster broke
6 Why participatory journalism is good for disadvantaged groups

08 **Check your answers by reading the text. Write the paragraph letter (A–G) next to the questions (1–6) in exercise 7.**

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

This task requires you to answer some direct questions which begin with question words such as *What*, *Which* or *Where*. You will be told the maximum number of words to write. The questions have to be answered with words taken from the text and are in the same order as the information appears in the text. As with similar tasks, it is useful to underline the key words in the questions and predict what kind of information is missing.

09 **Underline the question word and key words in these questions. Then decide what kind of word you are looking for. The first one has been done for you.**

1 In the past, what role would a member of the public who saw a newsworthy event be expected to play?
role – probably a noun
2 What was the subject of the story given as an example of an amateur journalist scoop before it was reported by a major news agency?
3 From which group of people have the media establishment begun to hire staff?
4 What had mainstream media traditionally seen their role in news reporting as being?

10 **Now answer the questions in exercise 9. Choose NO MORE THAN THREE words from the text for each answer.**

11 **Look at the second part of the task and the possible answers. For each, decide what the correct answer is and say why the other options are incorrect.**

7 What has amateur journalism been accused of increasing the risk of?
A fake news
B critical thinking
C untrue stories
8 What did citizen journalists help police to do during the London riots?
A play a positive role
B identify offenders
C alert the authorities
9 According to the text what is the 'new model' of broadcasting?
A filter then publish
B publish then filter
C We media

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12 **Answer these short-answer questions. Choose NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS from the text for each answer.**

1 Which well-known open publishing site is mentioned in the text?
2 According to the text, what process of change is the media currently undergoing that challenges the establishment's traditional role?
3 What positive effect on society as a whole might citizen journalism produce?

MATCHING SENTENCE ENDINGS

This task requires you to match sentence beginnings with a list of possible endings (there will be more sentence endings than you need). Because the beginnings and endings will often all match grammatically and make sense, you can't guess the answers from grammatical or semantic clues. Instead, locate the part of the text mentioned in each sentence beginning and then read it in detail to identify the ending that matches.

13 **Read the sentence beginning and two possible endings. Read the relevant part of the text (the second half of paragraph B) carefully and choose which one is correct.**

The citizen journalist scoop on the Columbia Space Shuttle story is an example of
A how we are interacting more with traditional media.
B how participatory media is growing.

14 **Complete each sentence with the correct ending (A–E) below.**

1 Amateur journalists may lack the credentials of professionals
2 Newspaper editors were the gatekeepers of the news
3 Anyone could find themselves the subject of a news story

A which means most of them are afraid of participatory journalism.
B but now they can offer extra information to alter people's perceptions.
C but this is less of a disadvantage than it used to be.
D but formal qualifications are no longer required by media outlets.
E but now they need to accept that this situation is changing.

GRAMMAR FOCUS: THE PASSIVE

15 **Look at the passive sentence from the text. Identify the parts.**

The traditional 'filter then publish' model has been replaced by 'publish then filter'.

1 the subject of the sentence
2 the agent
3 the past participle of the main verb
4 the verb 'to be' in the present perfect tense
5 the preposition introducing the agent

16 **Rewrite the sentence from exercise 15 in the following tenses:**

Present simple: *The traditional 'filter then publish' model is replaced by 'publish then filter'.*
Present continuous:
Past perfect:
Future simple with *will*:

17 **Read these statements about the passive and say if they are true or false.**

1 Any sentence can be changed from active into passive and vice-versa.
2 The passive helps the writer control the order of information in a sentence.
3 The passive is rarely used in spoken English.
4 Saying who or what did the action (the agent) is optional.
5 Academic English uses the passive voice fairly frequently.

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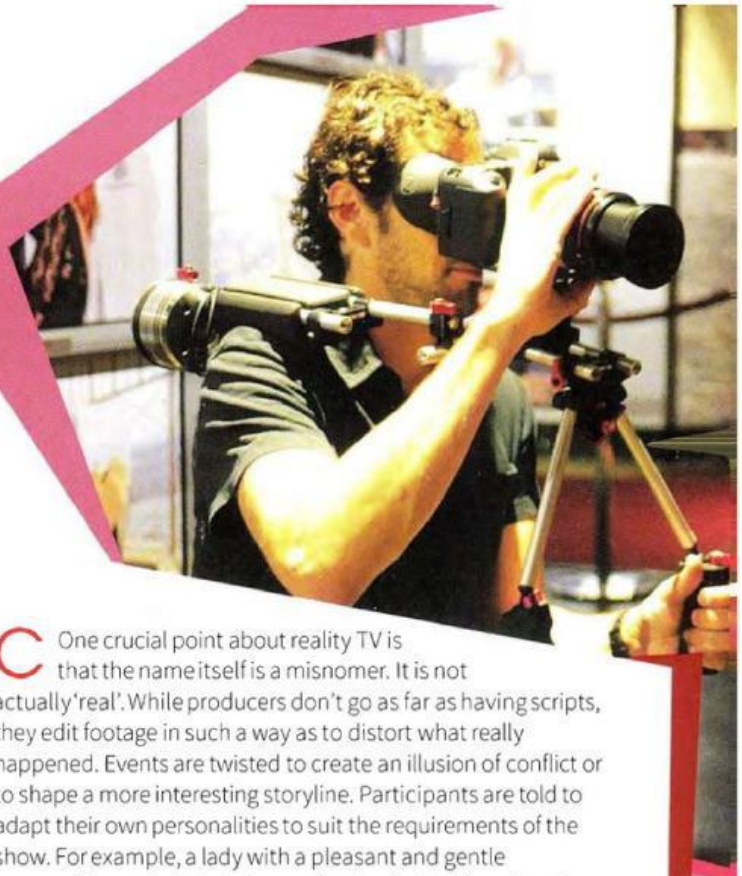
EXAM SKILLS

18 **Read the passage and answer questions 1–14.**

REALITY TV



A Reality TV accounts for 67% of TV programmes watched by Americans. A huge range of programme types come under the banner 'Reality TV', some of them more edifying than others. There are those which follow the pattern of one of the earliest reality shows, *Big Brother*, where a group of people have to co-exist in a house, their every move being filmed. Then there are the competitive shows where ordinary people compete in skills such as singing, cooking, diving, ice-skating or work-related skills like sales and entrepreneurship. Another sub-genre is the self- or home improvement/makeover type of show, such as *What Not to Wear*, *The Biggest Loser* or *Hoarders*. Some of the most popular reality TV shows are those of the social experiment sub-genre, such as *The World's Strictest Parents*, where misbehaving teens are sent to live in a less liberal family, usually in a distant country. Perhaps the most educational type which comes under the reality TV heading are the programmes that follow someone with an interesting or useful job doing their ordinary day-to-day work. This is the one type of reality TV show most parents encourage their children to watch, as they can learn about the work of police officers, paramedics, doctors, pilots and teachers.

B So how can we account for the immense popularity of reality TV? One reason it has found favour with viewers is that for most ordinary people it is their best hope of achieving at least a degree of fame or notoriety. A tiny minority might even become really famous and be rewarded with a TV show of their own. A survey of 239 people revealed that, contrary to common belief, most reality TV fans were not less sociable or less intelligent than others. It was thought that the main aim of watching such shows was to be able to discuss them with friends and co-workers. However, that has always been one of the reasons people watch any kind of TV programme. What is different about reality TV aficionados is that they desire a rise in status and strongly value prestige. Reality TV has produced 'stars' with little or no actual talent in conventional terms. Although they can't sing, dance or act, the force of their personality has shot them to stardom through an appearance on a TV show. From there, many have launched careers as 'TV personalities' and achieved the wealth and fame they craved. It is no wonder, then, that so many hope to follow their example.

C One crucial point about reality TV is that the name itself is a misnomer. It is not actually 'real'. While producers don't go as far as having scripts, they edit footage in such a way as to distort what really happened. Events are twisted to create an illusion of conflict or to shape a more interesting storyline. Participants are told to adapt their own personalities to suit the requirements of the show. For example, a lady with a pleasant and gentle personality was told to 'act mean' or be ejected from the show. Similarly, though viewers assume that either judges or the voting public have the power to eliminate contestants, in fact the producers retain the decision-making power. If a candidate in a singing competition has been voted off by the public, he or she may be kept on for amusement value, not for the quality of his or her singing. One producer admitted that a '24-hour bathroom makeover' actually had a crew working on it behind the scenes for at least two weeks.

D Apart from the illusions of reality, what other criticisms are made of reality TV? Author Mark Andrejevic wrote in the *New York Times* in 2012 that reality TV in post 9/11 society represents the 'normalisation of surveillance'. In all our favourite TV shows, the cameras are on the participants 24 hours a day. It therefore doesn't seem so strange when our own activities are caught on CCTV as we move around our cities and workplaces. Another accusation levied at some of these shows is that they glamorise vulgarity and consumerism. An American show called *Toddlers and Tiaras*, for example, shows little girls dressing up in skimpy costumes and make-up to take part in beauty pageants. Their parents spend thousands of dollars to parade their tiny children, some barely old enough to walk, in front of judges, who evaluate their beauty, clothes and modelling skills. The children featured in this and similar shows are growing up to focus only on winning and many are totally unable to accept defeat. Many reality TV shows feature a 'confessional', where contestants are encouraged to back-stab and report on their fellow contestants. Unethical behaviour is valued and rewarded because it boosts viewing figures. The plethora of shows encouraging us to change our weight, wardrobe, job, house and car creates generations of discontented individuals who feel themselves inadequate with who they are and what they have.

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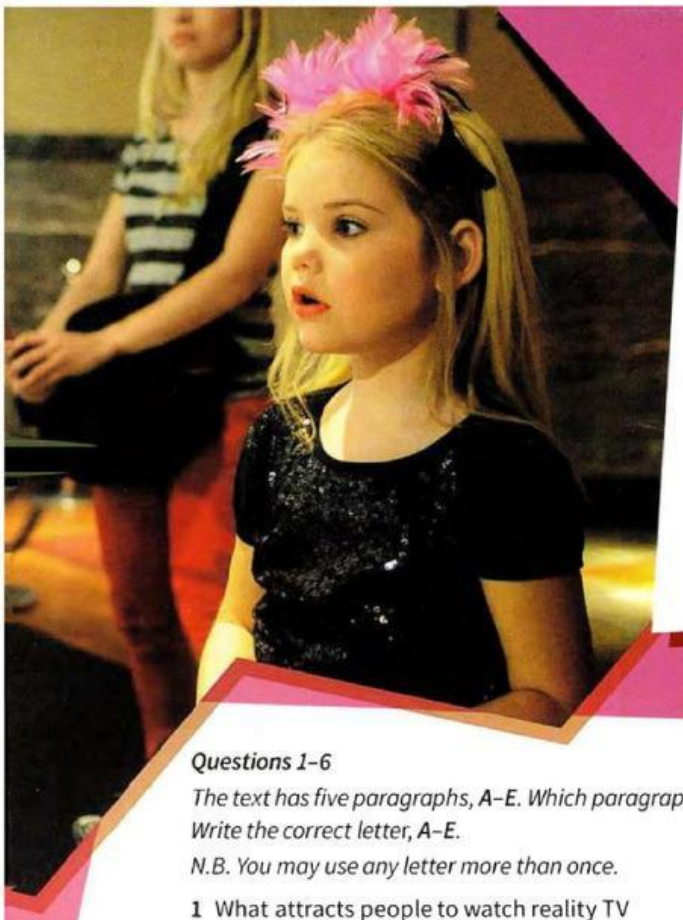

E To make matters worse, the experience of being on reality TV is not what it appears. These shows are so popular with the television companies because they are so cheap to produce. The producers' aim is to get as much talent as possible for as low a price as possible. While appearing on a reality show, you can expect your expenses to be paid, but you will probably only receive $20 or $30 a day. What is more, you can expect every aspect of your background and family to be investigated in detail. Anything you would prefer to remain hidden will inevitably come out. And the person who becomes the reality star will not be 'you'. It will be a character created by the producers who happens to have your face. So, if you are longing for your 15 minutes of fame, be aware of the risks of achieving it through reality TV.

Questions 1–6

*The text has five paragraphs, **A–E**. Which paragraph contains the following information? Write the correct letter, **A–E**.*

N.B. You may use any letter more than once.

1 What attracts people to watch reality TV
2 An explanation for the promotion of bad behaviour on reality TV
3 A description of a show the writer disapproves of
4 An example of why the term reality TV is misleading
5 Some examples of shows that might benefit young people
6 A piece of research that reveals information about fans of reality TV

Questions 7–10

*Answer the questions below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

7 How does the writer describe programmes that show people doing their job?
8 What does the writer say can help people achieve fame if they have no special talent?
9 Who has the ultimate decision about the elimination of competitors?
10 What feature of reality TV invites participants to criticise their peers?

Questions 11–14

*Complete each sentence with the correct ending, **A–G**, below.*

11 People who like watching reality TV
12 The effects of reality TV on society
13 Producers of reality TV
14 People who take part in reality TV shows

A include the development of competitiveness and materialistic attitudes.
B will pay lots of money for the right people.
C may not realise how intrusive and financially unrewarding it will be.
D are willing to distort reality to attract more viewers.
E tend to aspire to raising their status in society.
F are usually grateful to be given a chance of becoming famous.
G are particularly damaging for young girls.

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