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IELTS ACADEMIC

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Two complete IELTS Academic Reading tests: six original passages, 80 questions across ten question types, full answer keys with the passage location for every answer, and the band score table.

What's inside

1. Before you start	2
2. Test 1: Academic Reading	3
3. Test 2: Academic Reading	13

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BEFORE YOU START

Two complete Academic Reading tests

Each test has three passages and 40 questions, one mark each, to be done in 60 minutes with no extra time to transfer answers. Time yourself, write your answers on paper, then mark them with the answer key at the end of each test.

Band	Average marks out of 40
8	35
7	30
6	23
5	15

About these marks

These are average raw marks out of 40 for Academic Reading. The exact number of marks needed for each band varies slightly from one test version to another, so treat these figures as a guide, not as an official conversion table.

Tip

Answer the question groups in the order they appear: they usually follow the order of the passage, which saves time.

Common mistake

Writing more than the word limit in completion and short-answer questions. A hyphenated word counts as one word; an extra word loses the mark.



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TEST 1

Test 1: Academic Reading

60 minutes. Three passages, 40 questions.

READING PASSAGE 1 · QUESTIONS 1 TO 13

The Hidden Life of Lichens

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1 to 13, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

A Walk across almost any old stone wall, gravestone or tree trunk and you will find patches of crust in grey, orange or pale green. Most people take them for a stain or a kind of moss. They are lichens, and they are among the most successful living things on the planet. Lichens grow on bare rock in deserts, on frozen ground near the poles and on the bark of trees in rainforests. Some can survive being dried out completely for months and then resume growth within minutes of being wetted. Yet for all their toughness, they are not a single organism at all.

B A lichen is a partnership. Its main body is built by a fungus, which provides a protective structure and anchors the whole thing to its surface. Inside that structure live cells of a green alga, a cyanobacterium, or sometimes both. These partners carry out photosynthesis, using sunlight to turn water and carbon dioxide into sugars. The fungus cannot make its own food, so it depends on the sugars its partners leak. In return, the fungus shelters the algal cells from drying out and from harsh light, and it absorbs minerals from rain and dust that the partners could not gather alone. Biologists call this arrangement symbiosis, meaning a close and long-lasting relationship between different species.

C Whether the relationship is a fair one has been debated for a long time. Some researchers describe it as a model of cooperation in which both sides gain. Others point out that the fungus controls the shape of the lichen and the rate at which sugars are taken, and that the algal cells grow more slowly inside a lichen than they would on their own. On this view the fungus is closer to a farmer than a friend, keeping its partner alive but harvesting most of what it produces. The truth may lie somewhere between the two positions, and it may differ from one lichen species to another.

D Lichens are extremely slow growers. Many crust-forming types expand outward by less than a millimetre a year, and a patch the size of a dinner plate may have taken centuries to form. This slowness has an unexpected use. Because growth rates for a given species in a given climate are fairly steady, the diameter of the largest lichen on a rock surface gives a rough estimate of how long that surface has been exposed to the air. Geographers have used this method, known as lichenometry, to date rockfalls, old stone structures and the retreat of glaciers, especially in cold regions where other dating methods are difficult to apply.

E Lichens are also valued as early warning signals. Because they have no roots and take in water and nutrients directly from the air, they absorb whatever the air carries, including sulphur compounds and heavy metals. Some species are so sensitive that they vanish from city centres long before trees show any sign of damage, while a few hardy types tolerate quite polluted air. By mapping which species are present and which are missing, scientists can build a picture of air quality over an area without installing a single instrument. In several countries, lichen surveys have been used alongside official monitoring stations for decades, and schoolchildren are sometimes recruited to carry them out.

F Humans have found more direct uses as well. For centuries, certain lichens were boiled to produce dyes, giving wool deep purples, reds and browns, and these colours were prized before synthetic alternatives appeared. In cold northern lands, one species known as reindeer moss, which is in fact a lichen and not a moss at all, forms the main winter food of reindeer herds and therefore supports the people who depend on those herds. Lichen extracts are added to some perfumes and traditional medicines, and researchers continue to test lichen compounds for their ability to kill bacteria, since a slow-growing organism that is rarely attacked by microbes is likely to have strong chemical defences of its own.

G Perhaps the most striking thing about lichens is what they reveal about the way life colonises bare ground. On a fresh lava flow or a newly exposed rock face, lichens are often the first living things to settle. Their acids slowly break down the rock surface, and the dust and dead material they trap begins to form a thin soil. Mosses follow, then grasses, and eventually shrubs and trees. Without the quiet, patient work of lichens, many landscapes we now think of as green would have taken far longer to become so.

Questions 1 to 6: Identifying information (true/false/not given)

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1? 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.

1. Some lichens can start growing again very soon after a long dry period.
2. The fungus in a lichen is able to produce its own food.
3. All scientists agree that both partners in a lichen benefit equally.
4. Lichenometry gives more accurate dates than other dating methods.
5. A small number of lichen species can live in polluted air.
6. Lichen dyes were more expensive than synthetic dyes.

Questions 7 to 10: Note completion

Complete the notes below. Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

7. How lichens turn rock into soil: lichens are usually the first ___ to settle on new rock
8. their ___ wear away the surface of the rock
9. trapped dust and dead material form a thin ___

10. ____ arrive next, followed by grasses, shrubs and trees

Questions 11 to 13: Short-answer questions

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

11. What name do biologists give to the close relationship between the fungus and its partners?

12. Which animals depend on reindeer moss for food in winter?

13. What can scientists assess by recording which lichen species are present in an area?

READING PASSAGE 2 · QUESTIONS 14 TO 26

Worth Their Salt

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 14 to 26, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

A Few substances are as ordinary today as salt. It sits on every table, costs almost nothing and is used so freely that most people never think about where it came from. For most of human history, however, salt was scarce, valuable and fiercely controlled. Cities grew where it could be made, roads were built to carry it, and governments taxed it to fund armies. The history of salt is, in a quiet way, the history of trade itself, and it explains a surprising number of the roads, towns and customs we still live with.

B The human need for salt is biological. The body cannot make sodium, yet nerves and muscles cannot function without it, and it is lost constantly in sweat. People who eat mostly meat take in enough salt from their food, but once communities settled and began to live mainly on grains and vegetables, they had to find salt elsewhere. The shift to farming therefore created a demand that hunting societies had never felt, and the long search for a reliable supply began. Animals feel the same need, which is why wild herds travel to natural salt licks and why early herders learned to follow them there.

C Salt was also the first great preservative. Before refrigeration, the only ways to keep meat, fish or vegetables through the winter were drying, smoking or salting, and salting was the most dependable of the three. A barrel of salted fish could be carried for months and sold far inland, and whole fishing economies were built on this fact. Salt also made it possible for armies to travel long distances, since soldiers could carry preserved rations rather than depend on whatever they could find on the way. Control of salt was therefore not only a matter of taste but of survival and military power.

D Producing salt took skill and patience. In hot, dry coastal regions, sea water was led into shallow ponds and left to evaporate under the sun until a crust of crystals could be raked off. Where the climate was cooler, brine from salty springs was boiled in large iron pans over wood fires, a method that consumed entire forests over the years. In a few places, salt could be mined directly from underground deposits left behind by ancient seas, and these mines became some of the deepest and most elaborate workings of their age. Each method shaped the landscape and the daily labour of the people who lived around it.

E Because salt was heavy and needed everywhere, moving it created some of the earliest long-distance trade routes. Caravans crossed deserts carrying slabs of salt to exchange for gold, cloth and grain in regions that had none of their own. Rivers were used wherever possible, and canals were sometimes dug for the salt trade alone. Towns that stood at the meeting points of these routes grew rich as markets and customs posts, and several of them keep a reference to salt in their names to this day. In some regions, blocks of salt were themselves used as money, passed from hand to hand and only eaten when they had become too worn to trade.

F Rulers quickly realised that something everyone needed and nobody could make at home was the perfect thing to tax. Salt duties were among the oldest and most hated of all taxes. They were easy to collect, because production was concentrated in a few places, and they were almost impossible to avoid. In some states the salt monopoly funded roads, walls and wars for centuries. It also encouraged smuggling on a vast scale, and the punishments for carrying untaxed salt could be severe. More than one popular uprising began as a protest against the price of salt.

G The end of salt's special status came with technology rather than politics. Improved mining and large-scale evaporation made salt cheap, and the invention of refrigeration removed its role as the main preservative. Within a few generations, a substance that had been guarded, taxed and fought over became a commodity so plentiful that it is now spread on winter roads by the tonne. What remains is a habit of language: we still speak of someone being worth their salt, a phrase that preserves the memory of a time when salt was a measure of value.

Questions 14 to 20: Matching headings

Reading Passage 2 has seven paragraphs, A to G. Choose the correct heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below. Write the correct number, i to ix, next to questions 14 to 20.

List of Headings

- i Why farming changed the need for salt
- ii The decline of a precious commodity
- iii Different ways of obtaining salt
- iv Salt as a source of government income
- v Preserving food and feeding armies
- vi Routes and towns created by the salt trade
- vii A common substance with an uncommon past
- viii The health risks of eating too much salt
- ix How salt is used in modern industry



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14. Paragraph A

15. Paragraph B

16. Paragraph C

17. Paragraph D

18. Paragraph E

19. Paragraph F

20. Paragraph G

Questions 21 to 24: Summary completion

Complete the summary below. Choose ONE WORD ONLY from the passage for each answer.

21. Salt was produced in several ways. On hot coasts, sea water was placed in shallow 21 ___ and allowed to evaporate in the sun.

22. In cooler regions, 22 ___ from salty springs was heated in iron pans,

23. a process which, over time, destroyed whole 23 ___.

24. In a few areas, salt was 24 ___ from deposits beneath the ground.

Questions 25 to 26: Multiple choice

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

25. According to the writer, rulers favoured salt taxes because they

A were simple to collect.

B were welcomed by ordinary people.

C were the only tax available.

D reduced smuggling.

26. What finally ended the high value of salt?

A protests against salt prices

B new technology

C the growth of road networks

D changes in what people ate

READING PASSAGE 3 · QUESTIONS 27 TO 40

In Defence of Forgetting

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 27 to 40, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.

A We tend to treat forgetting as a failure. A name that will not come, a fact that slipped away before an exam, a face we cannot place: each feels like a small breakdown in a machine that ought to work perfectly. Memory courses and apps promise to fix the problem, and the ideal they sell is a mind that keeps everything. I want to argue that this ideal is mistaken. A mind that forgot nothing would not be a better mind. It would be a worse one, and quite possibly an unbearable one. The case for forgetting is not a comfort offered to the forgetful; it is a description of how a healthy mind is supposed to work.

B Consider first what memory is for. We do not store the past for its own sake, as a library stores books. We store it so that we can act well in the future: so that we recognise danger, repeat what worked and avoid what did not. For that purpose, detail is often a burden. If you remembered every time you had parked your car, in full, you would struggle to find today's space among a thousand nearly identical memories. Forgetting the old parking spaces is what makes the current one easy to retrieve. Far from being noise in the system, a great deal of forgetting is the system doing its job.

C The same principle applies to learning. When we meet a new idea, we do not want to keep every example we were given, with all its irrelevant detail. We want to extract the pattern and drop the rest. A child who has seen a few dogs can recognise a new one of a breed never met before, precisely because the memories of individual dogs have blurred into a general idea of what a dog is. Perfect recall of each animal would make that general idea harder to form, not easier. Generalisation, which is at the heart of intelligence, depends on letting go of particulars.

D There is also an emotional case. Painful experiences lose their sharpness over time, and this fading is usually a mercy. People who retain unusually vivid memories of ordinary life often report that old arguments and embarrassments return with the same force they had on the day they happened. Grief that never softened would be a life sentence. The gradual loss of emotional detail is one of the main ways in which people recover from loss and move on, and no one who has watched that process closely would wish to switch it off.

E None of this means that all forgetting is good. Forgetting where you put your keys, or the name of a colleague you see every day, is a nuisance and sometimes a warning sign. But it is worth noticing that these failures are mostly failures of attention rather than of storage. We do not forget where the keys are; we never properly registered it in the first place, because our mind was elsewhere. The remedy for that kind of forgetting is not a better memory but a more present one, and that is a different project altogether.

F The appeal of total recall is understandable in an age that records everything. Our devices keep every photograph, every message and every search, and it is tempting to think the mind should match them. But a camera roll with ten thousand images is not a memory; it is a storage problem. What the mind does, and what no device yet does well, is decide what matters. It keeps the shape of a holiday and lets the individual meals fade. It keeps the lesson of a mistake and, with luck, loses the sting. That selective process, which looks like loss from the outside, is in fact a kind of judgement, and it is exercised thousands of times a day without any effort on our part.

G So the next time a detail escapes you, resist the urge to treat it as a defect. Ask instead whether the detail was ever worth keeping. Most of the time, the honest answer is that it was not, and that your mind, working quietly beneath your awareness, has already reached the same conclusion. We should practice memory skills where they serve us, by all means. But we should also learn to respect the editor inside our heads, whose cuts are what make the story readable at all.

Questions 27 to 32: Identifying writer's views (yes/no/not given)

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 3? Write YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer, NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer, NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this.

27. Products that promise a memory which keeps everything are based on a false ideal.
28. The main purpose of memory is to help us act effectively in the future.
29. People with unusually detailed memories find that old embarrassments lose their force.
30. Most everyday forgetting is caused by problems with storing information.
31. Older people forget more than younger people.
32. Devices are better than the human mind at deciding what is important.

Questions 33 to 36: Matching sentence endings

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

- A is a problem of storage rather than a true memory.
- B makes it easier to retrieve the most recent one.
- C is a sign of a serious medical condition.
- D depends on individual memories becoming less distinct.
- E allows people to recover from loss over time.
- F can be prevented with the right training.
- G makes learning new ideas more difficult.

33. Forgetting where the car was parked on earlier days
34. Forming a general idea of what a dog is
35. The gradual fading of painful memories
36. A collection of ten thousand photographs

Questions 37 to 40: Multiple choice

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

37. In paragraph E, the writer says that forgetting the name of a colleague
A is always a sign of illness.
B is usually the result of not paying attention.
C cannot be prevented.
D is more common than losing keys.

38. The writer compares the mind to a camera roll in order to show that
A devices can store more than the mind.
B the mind chooses what to keep.
C photographs are a reliable record.
D technology will soon copy the mind.

39. What does the writer mean by 'the editor inside our heads' in paragraph G?
A the process that removes unimportant details
B the ability to learn memory techniques
C the part of the mind that records events
D the urge to treat forgetting as a defect

40. Which of the following best summarises the writer's main argument?
A Forgetting is usually a sign that memory is working properly.
B Memory training is a waste of time.
C Technology has damaged human memory.
D Painful memories should be deliberately removed.

Test 1: answer key

Q	Answer	Where to find it
1	TRUE	Paragraph A: dried out for months and then resume growth within minutes of being wetted.
2	FALSE	Paragraph B: the fungus cannot make its own food, so it depends on the sugars its partners leak.
3	FALSE	Paragraph C: whether the relationship is fair has been debated; some see the fungus as a farmer harvesting most of what the alga produces.

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Q	Answer	Where to find it
4	NOT GIVEN	Paragraph D says the method is used where other methods are difficult to apply; nothing is said about comparative accuracy.
5	TRUE	Paragraph E: a few hardy types tolerate quite polluted air.
6	NOT GIVEN	Paragraph F mentions that the colours were prized before synthetic alternatives appeared, but says nothing about price.
7	living things	Paragraph G: lichens are often the first living things to settle.
8	acids	Paragraph G: their acids slowly break down the rock surface.
9	soil	Paragraph G: begins to form a thin soil.
10	Mosses	Paragraph G: mosses follow, then grasses, and eventually shrubs and trees.
11	symbiosis	Paragraph B: biologists call this arrangement symbiosis.
12	reindeer (herds)	Paragraph F: forms the main winter food of reindeer herds.
13	air quality	Paragraph E: scientists can build a picture of air quality over an area.
14	vii	Paragraph A contrasts salt's ordinary status today with its scarce, valuable past.
15	i	Paragraph B: the shift to farming created a demand that hunting societies had never felt.
16	v	Paragraph C: salt as the first great preservative, allowing fish to be sold inland and armies to travel.
17	iii	Paragraph D describes evaporation ponds, boiling brine and mining.
18	vi	Paragraph E: trade routes, caravans, canals and towns that grew rich.
19	iv	Paragraph F: salt duties funded roads, walls and wars.
20	ii	Paragraph G: salt became cheap and lost its special status.
21	ponds	Paragraph D: sea water was led into shallow ponds and left to evaporate.
22	brine	Paragraph D: brine from salty springs was boiled in large iron pans.
23	forests	Paragraph D: a method that consumed entire forests over the years.
24	mined	Paragraph D: salt could be mined directly from underground deposits.
25	A	Paragraph F: easy to collect because production was concentrated in a few places, and almost impossible to avoid.

Q	Answer	Where to find it
26	B	Paragraph G: the end of salt's special status came with technology rather than politics.
27	YES	Paragraph A: the ideal they sell is a mind that keeps everything; I want to argue that this ideal is mistaken.
28	YES	Paragraph B: we store the past so that we can act well in the future.
29	NO	Paragraph D: such people report that old arguments and embarrassments return with the same force.
30	NO	Paragraph E: these failures are mostly failures of attention rather than of storage.
31	NOT GIVEN	The passage never compares age groups.
32	NO	Paragraph F: what the mind does, and what no device yet does well, is decide what matters.
33	B	Paragraph B: forgetting the old parking spaces is what makes the current one easy to retrieve.
34	D	Paragraph C: the memories of individual dogs have blurred into a general idea.
35	E	Paragraph D: one of the main ways in which people recover from loss and move on.
36	A	Paragraph F: a camera roll with ten thousand images is not a memory; it is a storage problem.
37	B	Paragraph E: failures of attention rather than of storage; our mind was elsewhere.
38	B	Paragraph F: what the mind does, and what no device yet does well, is decide what matters.
39	A	Paragraph G: the editor whose cuts make the story readable, following the point that unneeded details are dropped.
40	A	Paragraph B: a great deal of forgetting is the system doing its job; paragraph G: respect the editor inside our heads.

Your score

Count your correct answers out of 40 and compare with the band table at the start. Then re-read the passage for every wrong answer and note whether the cause was the word limit, a paraphrase you missed, or a Not Given you answered.

TEST 2

Test 2: Academic Reading

60 minutes. Three passages, 40 questions.

READING PASSAGE 1 · QUESTIONS 1 TO 13

Forests Between Land and Sea

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1 to 13, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

A Along tropical and subtropical coasts, where rivers meet the sea, there grows a forest unlike any other. Its trees stand in salt water on tangled, stilt-like roots, and their trunks are flooded twice a day by the tide. These are mangroves, and for a long time they were regarded as useless swamps, breeding grounds for insects that were best drained and cleared. That view has changed completely. Mangroves are now understood to be among the most valuable ecosystems on the planet, and their loss is treated as a serious environmental problem by governments and scientists alike.

B The first thing to understand about mangroves is how they survive at all. Salt kills most plants, and few can tolerate roots that are regularly flooded and starved of oxygen. Mangroves have evolved a set of answers. Some species filter salt out at the root, allowing almost fresh water into the plant. Others take the salt in and then push it out through glands on their leaves, where it dries into visible crystals. To cope with waterlogged mud, many species send up special breathing roots that stick out of the ground like pencils and take in air directly. The arching prop roots that give mangroves their strange appearance do the same job while also holding the tree steady in soft ground.

C Reproduction is equally unusual. Instead of dropping seeds that might be washed away before they could sprout, many mangroves grow their seedlings while they are still attached to the parent tree. The young plant develops a long, pointed shoot, and only when it is ready to grow does it drop. If it lands in mud it may root at once; if it lands in water it can float for weeks, sometimes crossing great distances, until it reaches a suitable shore. This is one reason why the same mangrove species can be found on coasts thousands of kilometres apart, carried there by currents rather than by any human hand.

D The dense root systems do far more than support the trees. They slow the movement of water, which causes mud and sand carried by rivers to settle rather than be swept out to sea. Over time this builds up the shoreline and can even extend it outward. The same roots absorb the energy of waves, so that coasts protected by a healthy mangrove belt suffer much less damage from storms than cleared coasts nearby. Communities that removed their mangroves to make building land or fish ponds have often discovered this too late, when a storm arrived and there was nothing left to break its force.

E Beneath the water, the roots form a sheltered nursery. Young fish, crabs and prawns hide among them from larger predators and feed on the rich organic material that collects in the mud. Many of the species caught commercially in open water begin their lives in mangroves, so a coastal fishery can depend on a forest that the fishermen never enter. Above the water, the branches hold nesting birds, and the mud is worked over by crabs whose burrows let air into the soil and help the trees to breathe.

F More recently, scientists have recognised mangroves as powerful stores of carbon. The trees grow quickly, and their fallen leaves and dead roots are buried in waterlogged mud where, starved of oxygen, they decay extremely slowly. Carbon that would be released into the air within a few years in a dry forest can remain locked in mangrove mud for a very long time. Area for area, mangrove forests are thought to hold more carbon than most forests on land, which makes their clearance doubly damaging: the stored carbon is released, and the capacity to capture more is lost. For this reason, mangrove protection now features in the climate plans of many coastal nations.

G Protecting what remains is now a priority in many countries, and replanting schemes are common. Not all of them succeed. Seedlings planted in the wrong place, on exposed mudflats where mangroves never grew, often die within a season. The most successful projects restore the natural flow of fresh and salt water first and then allow the forest to return on its own, planting only where it is necessary. The lesson, as with many ecosystems, is that the best way to bring a mangrove forest back is to understand why it grew there in the first place.

Questions 1 to 6: Matching information

Reading Passage 1 has seven paragraphs, A to G. Which paragraph contains the following information? Write the correct letter, A to G. NB You may use any letter more than once.

1. a description of how young mangrove plants reach new coasts
2. a reference to a change in the way mangroves are regarded
3. an explanation of why some replanting projects fail
4. how mangroves deal with the salt in sea water
5. a comparison between protected and unprotected coasts during storms
6. the part mangroves play in the early life of sea creatures

Questions 7 to 10: Table completion

Complete the table below. Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

7. What mangrove roots do: slow the water. Result: mud and sand 7 ___ instead of being carried out to sea
8. What mangrove roots do: absorb the energy of waves. Result: less damage from 8 ___



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9. What mangrove roots do: shelter young sea creatures. Result: act as a 9 ___ for fish, crabs and prawns

10. What mangrove roots do: bury dead material in mud. Result: material decays 10 ___ and carbon stays locked away

Questions 11 to 13: Short-answer questions

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

11. Through what part of the leaf do some mangroves remove salt?

12. What do the burrows made by crabs allow into the soil?

13. On what kind of ground do wrongly placed seedlings usually die?

READING PASSAGE 2 · QUESTIONS 14 TO 26

Two Wheels and a Revolution

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 14 to 26, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

A The bicycle looks so simple that it is easy to assume it was invented in a single stroke. In fact it took the best part of a century to reach the form we know, and each step along the way changed not only the machine but the people who rode it. Few inventions have done so much with so little: two wheels, a frame, a chain and the power of human legs.

B The earliest ancestor of the bicycle had no pedals at all. It was a wooden frame with two wheels in line, and the rider sat astride it and pushed along the ground with both feet, lifting them to coast downhill. Often called the running machine, it was first taken up by wealthy young men as a novelty, and it was heavy, uncomfortable and difficult to control on rough roads. It did, however, prove something important: that a person could balance on two wheels in motion, a thing that many people at the time doubted.

C The next step was to add pedals, fixed directly to the front wheel. Now the rider could lift both feet from the ground and drive the machine forward by turning the cranks. Because the pedals were attached to the wheel without any gearing, one turn of the pedals meant exactly one turn of the wheel, and speed depended entirely on the size of that wheel. The obvious response was to make the front wheel bigger, and so the high wheeler was born, with a front wheel that could stand taller than the rider and a tiny rear wheel trailing behind.

D The high wheeler was fast, and for a time it was the favourite of sporting riders. It was also dangerous. The rider sat almost directly above the huge front wheel, so that any stone or rut in the road could pitch him forward over the handlebars onto his head. Mounting and dismounting required real skill, and the machine was all but impossible for anyone wearing a long skirt. For these reasons the high wheeler remained the toy of athletic young men, and cycling stayed a minority pursuit.

E The design that changed everything was the safety bicycle. Its two wheels were of equal and moderate size, the rider sat low between them, and the pedals drove the rear wheel through a chain and a pair of toothed rings of different sizes. The gearing meant that a small wheel could now be made to travel as far per pedal stroke as the giant wheel of the high wheeler, without the height and the danger. Almost anyone could learn to ride it in an afternoon. Within a few years the high wheeler had vanished from the roads.

F One further improvement made the safety bicycle a pleasure rather than a punishment. Early machines ran on solid rubber tyres, and on the stone roads of the day they shook the rider so badly that one popular name for them was the boneshaker. The air-filled tyre, an inflated rubber tube inside a tougher outer casing, absorbed the bumps and also, to the surprise of many, made the bicycle faster, because it rolled over small obstacles instead of bouncing off them. Racing riders adopted it at once, and ordinary riders soon followed.

G The social effects were immediate and far-reaching. For working people, the bicycle offered the first form of personal transport they could afford, and it widened the distance they could travel for work or for courtship. For women, it brought a new freedom of movement and helped to drive a change in clothing, since riding in a floor-length dress was impractical. Cycling clubs campaigned for better road surfaces and clearer signposting, and the improved roads they won were later inherited by the motor car. Several engineers who began by building bicycles went on to build early aircraft, using the same light tubular frames and wire-spoked wheels.

H Today, more than a century on, the basic layout of the safety bicycle is unchanged. Materials have shifted from steel to aluminium and carbon fibre, gears have multiplied, and electric motors now give assistance on hills. But a rider from the first generation of safety bicycles would recognise a modern machine at once and could ride it without instruction. In an age of constant redesign, that is a rare thing, and perhaps the best evidence that the design was right. Cities that once built their streets around the car are now painting cycle lanes back onto them, and the machine that helped to create the modern road is quietly reclaiming a share of it.

Questions 14 to 19: Identifying information (true/false/not given)

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.

14. The earliest two-wheeled machine was moved by the rider's feet pushing on the ground.
15. The running machine was first used mainly by working people.
16. The high wheeler cost more to buy than the running machine.
17. Most people needed several weeks to learn to ride a safety bicycle.
18. Solid rubber tyres made early safety bicycles uncomfortable to ride.
19. Cycling clubs opposed the arrival of the motor car.

Questions 20 to 23: Matching features

Look at the following statements and the list of bicycle designs below. Match each statement with the correct design, A, B, C or D. NB You may use any letter more than once.

- A the running machine
- B the high wheeler
- C the safety bicycle
- D the air-filled tyre

- 20. It showed that a person could balance on two moving wheels.
- 21. It could throw the rider forward over the front of the machine.
- 22. It used a chain to drive the back wheel.
- 23. It rolled over small obstacles rather than bouncing off them.

Questions 24 to 26: Sentence completion

Complete the sentences below. Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

- 24. The bicycle gave working people their first affordable form of ____.
- 25. Cycling clubs demanded better ____ as well as clearer signposting.
- 26. Some engineers who started with bicycles later built early ____.

READING PASSAGE 3 · QUESTIONS 27 TO 40

The Myth of Multitasking

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 27 to 40, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.

A Watch anyone at a desk for ten minutes and you will see them answer a message, glance at a document, check a notification, return to the document and answer another message. We call this multitasking, and many people list it on job applications as a strength. I believe it is nothing of the kind. What most of us call multitasking is rapid switching, and the evidence that switching makes us slower, more error-prone and more tired is now hard to ignore. The habit is so widespread that questioning it can sound eccentric, but the case against it is simple and, I think, convincing.

B The distinction matters. True multitasking, doing two demanding things at the same moment, is almost impossible for the human brain when both tasks require conscious attention. We can walk and talk, because walking needs no thought. We cannot write a report and follow a conversation at once; we alternate between them, often so quickly that it feels simultaneous. Each alternation carries a cost. The mind must put down the rules of one task and pick up the rules of another, and that handover takes time and effort, even when it is too brief to notice.

C Those small costs add up. When a task is interrupted, returning to full concentration can take far longer than the interruption itself. A message that took twenty seconds to read may leave a residue of distraction lasting many minutes, during which work continues but at a lower quality. Over a working day of constant interruption, the total loss is substantial, and the person affected is usually the last to see it. People who switch most often tend to rate their own performance highest, which suggests that the feeling of being busy is easily mistaken for the fact of being productive.

D Why, then, does the habit persist? Part of the answer is that switching is rewarding in the moment. Each new message or alert offers a small novelty, and the brain prefers novelty to the steady effort of a single long task. Part of it is social: a quick reply signals that we are attentive and available, and in many workplaces being seen to respond counts for more than the quality of what is produced. And part of it is simply that the tools we use are designed to interrupt. An application that never alerted us would be judged a failure by the people who built it, because their measure of success is how often we return to it, not how much we achieve while we are away.

E The costs are not only to output. Constant switching appears to be tiring in a particular way. Each change of task draws on the same limited reserve of self-control that we use to resist temptation and manage our mood, and when the reserve is low we become irritable and impulsive. People who spend the day reacting to interruptions often describe feeling exhausted without having done anything they can point to, and that description is accurate: they have spent their energy on the switching rather than on the work.

F There are honest exceptions. Some jobs, such as emergency dispatch or air traffic control, genuinely require attention to be spread across several streams of information, and people in those roles are selected and trained for it. Even there, the skill is not doing many things at once but monitoring many things and acting on one at a time in the right order. The rest of us, who are neither trained nor selected, have no reason to imagine we can do what those specialists find difficult, and every reason to notice that their working environments are designed to keep distractions out rather than to invite them in.

G The remedy is less dramatic than it sounds. It does not require abandoning technology or working in silence. It requires deciding, for defined periods, that one task will have the whole of our attention, and arranging the environment so that it can. Notifications can be turned off for an hour. A door can be closed. Messages can be answered in batches at set times rather than one by one as they arrive. None of this is new, and all of it works, usually within a week of being tried. The hardest part is accepting that a mind doing one thing well is not idle, but is doing precisely what minds do best.



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Questions 27 to 32: Matching headings

Reading Passage 3 has seven paragraphs, A to G. Choose the correct heading for paragraphs B to G from the list of headings below. Write the correct number, i to viii, next to questions 27 to 32. Example:

Paragraph A, answer ix.

List of Headings

- i The difference between doing two things and switching between them
- ii Jobs where divided attention is really necessary
- iii The hidden size of the losses
- iv Simple ways to protect attention
- v Reasons why the habit continues
- vi Effects on energy and mood
- vii How technology companies could redesign their products
- viii Evidence that some people are born multitaskers
- ix A strength that is really a weakness (Example: Paragraph A)

27. Paragraph B

28. Paragraph C

29. Paragraph D

30. Paragraph E

31. Paragraph F

32. Paragraph G

Questions 33 to 37: Identifying writer's views (yes/no/not given)

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 3? Write YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer, NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer, NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this.

33. It is a mistake to describe multitasking as a strength on a job application.

34. Walking while talking is an example of true multitasking.

35. The feeling of being busy can be confused with real productivity.

36. Younger workers switch between tasks more often than older workers.

37. Specialists such as air traffic controllers handle several tasks at exactly the same moment.

Questions 38 to 40: Summary completion

Complete the summary using the list of words, A to H, below.

- A productive
- B self-control
- C irritable
- D exhausted
- E novelty
- F attentive
- G calm
- H skilled

38. Constant switching also affects how people feel. Every change of task uses the same limited supply of 38 ___ that helps us resist temptation.

39. When this supply runs low, people become 39 ___ and impulsive.

40. Those who spend the day responding to interruptions often feel 40 ___ even though they cannot say what they have achieved.

Test 2: answer key

Q	Answer	Where to find it
1	C	Paragraph C: the seedling can float for weeks until it reaches a suitable shore.
2	A	Paragraph A: once regarded as useless swamps; that view has changed completely.
3	G	Paragraph G: seedlings planted on exposed mudflats where mangroves never grew often die.
4	B	Paragraph B: some filter salt at the root, others push it out through glands on their leaves.
5	D	Paragraph D: coasts protected by mangroves suffer much less damage than cleared coasts nearby.
6	E	Paragraph E: a sheltered nursery for young fish, crabs and prawns.
7	settle	Paragraph D: causes mud and sand carried by rivers to settle rather than be swept out to sea.
8	storms	Paragraph D: suffer much less damage from storms.
9	(sheltered) nursery	Paragraph E: the roots form a sheltered nursery.
10	extremely slowly	Paragraph F: they decay extremely slowly.
11	glands	Paragraph B: push it out through glands on their leaves.

Q	Answer	Where to find it
12	air	Paragraph E: crabs whose burrows let air into the soil.
13	exposed mudflats	Paragraph G: on exposed mudflats where mangroves never grew, often die within a season.
14	TRUE	Paragraph B: the rider sat astride it and pushed along the ground with both feet.
15	FALSE	Paragraph B: first taken up by wealthy young men as a novelty.
16	NOT GIVEN	The passage gives no information about the price of either machine.
17	FALSE	Paragraph E: almost anyone could learn to ride it in an afternoon.
18	TRUE	Paragraph F: solid rubber tyres shook the rider so badly that one name for them was the boneshaker.
19	NOT GIVEN	Paragraph G says the roads the clubs won were later inherited by the motor car; no opinion of the clubs is given.
20	A	Paragraph B: it proved that a person could balance on two wheels in motion.
21	B	Paragraph D: any stone or rut could pitch him forward over the handlebars.
22	C	Paragraph E: the pedals drove the rear wheel through a chain.
23	D	Paragraph F: it rolled over small obstacles instead of bouncing off them.
24	personal transport	Paragraph G: the first form of personal transport they could afford.
25	road surfaces	Paragraph G: campaigned for better road surfaces and clearer signposting.
26	aircraft	Paragraph G: went on to build early aircraft.
27	i	Paragraph B: true multitasking versus alternating between tasks.
28	iii	Paragraph C: those small costs add up; the person affected is usually the last to see it.
29	v	Paragraph D: why, then, does the habit persist?
30	vi	Paragraph E: tiring, irritable, impulsive, exhausted.
31	ii	Paragraph F: some jobs genuinely require attention to be spread across several streams.
32	iv	Paragraph G: notifications off, door closed, messages in batches.

Q	Answer	Where to find it
33	YES	Paragraph A: many list it as a strength; I believe it is nothing of the kind.
34	NO	Paragraph B: true multitasking needs two demanding tasks; we can walk and talk because walking needs no thought.
35	YES	Paragraph C: the feeling of being busy is easily mistaken for the fact of being productive.
36	NOT GIVEN	The passage never compares age groups.
37	NO	Paragraph F: the skill is not doing many things at once but monitoring many things and acting on one at a time.
38	B	Paragraph E: the same limited reserve of self-control that we use to resist temptation.
39	C	Paragraph E: we become irritable and impulsive.
40	D	Paragraph E: describe feeling exhausted without having done anything they can point to.

Your score

Count your correct answers out of 40 and compare with the band table at the start. Then re-read the passage for every wrong answer and note whether the cause was the word limit, a paraphrase you missed, or a Not Given you answered.



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