

# IELTS

# Reading Tests

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Reading Passage 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1–15, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below

Questions 1–5

Reading Passage 1 below has 5 paragraphs (A–E). Which paragraph focuses on the information below? Write the appropriate letters (A–E) in Boxes 1–5 on your answer sheet

NB Write only ONE letter for each answer

- 1 The way parameters in the mind help people to be creative
- 2 The need to learn rules in order to break them
- 3 How habits restrict us and limit creativity
- 4 How to train the mind to be creative
- 5 How the mind is trapped by the desire for order

The creation myth

- A It is a myth that creative people are born with their talents – gifts from God or nature. Creative genius is, in fact, latent within many of us, without our realising. But how far do we need to travel to find the path to creativity? For many people, a long way. In our everyday lives, we have to perform many acts out of habit to survive, like opening the door, shaving, getting dressed, walking to work, and so on. If this were not the case, we would, in all probability, become mentally unhinged. So strongly ingrained are our habits, though this varies from person to person, that, sometimes, when a conscious effort is made to be creative, automatic response takes over. We may try, for example, to walk to work following a different route, but end up on our usual path. By then it is too late to go back and change our minds. Another day, perhaps. The same applies to all other areas of our lives. When we are solving problems, for example, we may seek different answers, but, often as not, find ourselves walking along the same well-trodden paths.
- B So, for many people, their actions and behaviour are set in immovable blocks, their minds clogged with the cholesterol of habitual actions, preventing them from operating freely, and thereby stifling creation. Unfortunately, mankind's very struggle for survival has become a tyranny – the obsessive desire to give order to the world is a case in point. Witness people's attitude to time, social customs and the panoply of rules and regulations by which the human mind is now circumscribed.
- C The groundwork for keeping creative ability in check begins at school. School, later university and then work teach us to regulate our lives, imposing a continuous process of restrictions, which is increasing exponentially with the advancement of technology. Is it surprising then that creative ability appears to be so rare? It is trapped in the prison that we have erected. Yet, even here in this hostile environment, the foundations for creativity are being laid, because setting off on the creative path is also partly about using rules and regulations. Such limitations are needed so that once they are learnt, they can be broken.

- D The truly creative mind is often seen as totally free and unfettered. But a better image is of a mind, which can be free when it wants, and one that recognises that rules and regulations are parameters, or barriers, to be raised and dropped again at will. An example of how the human mind can be trained to be creative might help here. People's minds are just like tense muscles that need to be freed up and the potential unlocked. One strategy is to erect artificial barriers or hurdles in solving a problem. As a form of stimulation, the participants in the task can be forbidden to use particular solutions or to follow certain lines of thought to solve a problem. In this way they are obliged to explore unfamiliar territory, which may lead to some startling discoveries. Unfortunately, the difficulty in this exercise, and with creation itself, is convincing people that creation is possible, shrouded as it is in so much myth and legend. There is also an element of fear involved, however subliminal, as deviating from the safety of one's own thought patterns is very much akin to madness. But, open Pandora's box, and a whole new world unfolds before your very eyes.
- E Lifting barriers into place also plays a major part in helping the mind to control ideas rather than letting them collide at random. Parameters act as containers for ideas, and thus help the mind to fix on them. When the mind is thinking laterally, and two ideas from different areas of the brain come or are brought together, they form a new idea, just like atoms floating around and then forming a molecule. Once the idea has been formed, it needs to be contained or it will fly away, so fleeting is its passage. The mind needs to hold it in place for a time so that it can recognise it or call on it again. And then the parameters can act as channels along which the ideas can flow, developing and expanding. When the mind has brought the idea to fruition by thinking it through to its final conclusion, the parameters can be brought down and the idea allowed to float off and come in contact with other ideas.

Questions 6–10

Choose the appropriate letters A–D and write them in Boxes 6–10 on your answer sheet

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 6. According to the writer, creative people                  | 9. Advancing technology                 |
| A are usually born with their talents                        | A holds creativity in check             |
| B are born with their talents                                | B improves creativity                   |
| C are not born with their talents                            | C enhances creativity                   |
| D are geniuses   | D is a tyranny                          |
| 7. According to the writer, creativity is                    | 10. According to the author, creativity |
| A a gift from God or nature                                  | A is common                             |
| B an automatic response                                      | B is increasingly common                |
| C difficult for many people to achieve                       | C is becoming rarer and rarer           |
| D a well-trodden path  | D is a rare commodity                   |
| 11. According to the writer,                                 |   |
| A the human race's fight to live is becoming a tyranny       |   |
| B the human brain is blocked with cholesterol                |   |
| C the human race is now circumscribed by talents             |   |
| D the human race's fight to survive stifles creative ability |   |

Questions 11–15

Do the statements below agree with the information in Reading Passage 1?  
In Boxes 11–15, write

- Yes** if the statement agrees with the information in the passage  
**No** if the statement contradicts the information in the passage  
**Not Given** if there is no information about the statement in the passage

**Example** In some people, habits are more strongly ingrained than in others  
**Answer** Yes

- 11 Rules and regulations are examples of parameters
- 12 The truly creative mind is associated with the need for free speech and a totally free society
- 13 One problem with creativity is that people think it is impossible
- 14 The act of creation is linked to madness
- 15 Parameters help the mind by holding ideas and helping them to develop

Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 16–30, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below

LOCKED DOORS, OPEN ACCESS

The word, “security”, has both positive and negative connotations. Most of us would say that we crave security for all its positive virtues, both physical and psychological—its evocation of the safety of home, of undying love, or of freedom from need. More negatively, the word nowadays conjures up images of that huge industry which has developed to protect individuals and property from invasion by “outsiders”, ostensibly malicious and intent on theft or wilful damage.

Increasingly, because they are situated in urban areas of escalating crime, those buildings which used to allow free access to employees and other users (buildings such as offices, schools, colleges or hospitals) now do not. Entry areas which in another age were called “Reception” are now manned by security staff. Receptionists, whose task it was to receive visitors and to make them welcome before passing them on to the person they had come to see, have been replaced by those whose task it is to bar entry to the unauthorized, the unwanted or the plain unappealing.

Inside, these buildings are divided into “secure zones” which often have all the trappings of combination locks and burglar alarms. These devices bar entry to the uninitiated, hinder circulation, and create parameters of time and space for user access. Within the spaces created by these zones, individual rooms are themselves under lock and key, which is a particular problem when it means that working space becomes compartmentalized.

To combat the consequent difficulty of access to people at a physical level, we have now developed technological access. Computers sit on every desk and are linked to one another, and in many cases to an external universe of other computers, so that messages can be passed to and from. Here too security plays a part, since we must not be allowed access to messages destined for others. And so the password was invented. Now correspondence between individuals goes from desk to desk and cannot be accessed by colleagues. Library catalogues can be searched from one’s desk. Papers can be delivered to, and received from, other people at the press of a button.

And yet it seems that, just as work is isolating individuals more and more, organizations are recognizing the advantages of “team-work”, perhaps in order to encourage employees to talk to one

another again. Yet, how can groups work in teams if the possibilities for communication are reduced? How can they work together if e-mail provides a convenient electronic shield behind which the blurring of public and private can be exploited by the less scrupulous? If voice-mail walls up messages behind a password? If I can’t leave a message on my colleague’s desk because his office is locked?

Team-work conceals the fact that another kind of security, “job security”, is almost always not on offer. Just as organizations now recognize three kinds of physical resources—those they buy, those they lease long-term and those they rent short-term—so it is with their human resources. Some employees have permanent contracts, some have short-term contracts, and some are regarded simply as casual labour.

Telecommunication systems offer us the direct line, which means that individuals can be contacted without the caller having to talk to anyone else. Voice-mail and the answer-phone mean that individuals can communicate without ever actually talking to one another. If we are unfortunate enough to contact an organization with a sophisticated touch-tone dialling system, we can buy things and pay for them without ever speaking to a human being.

To combat this closing in on ourselves we have the Internet, which opens out communication channels more widely than anyone could possibly want or need. An individual’s electronic presence on the internet is known as the “Home Page”—suggesting the safety and security of an electronic hearth. An elaborate system of 3-dimensional graphics distinguishes this very 2-dimensional medium of “web sites”. The nomenclature itself creates the illusion of a geographical entity, that the person sitting before the computer is travelling, when in fact the “site” is coming to him. “Addresses” of one kind or another move to the individual, rather than the individual moving between them, now that location is no longer geographical.

An example of this is the mobile phone. I am now not available either at home or at work, but wherever I take my mobile phone. Yet, even now, we cannot escape the security of wanting to “locate” the person at the other end. It is no coincidence that almost everyone we see answering or initiating a mobile phone-call in public begins by saying where he or she is.