



雅思口语 9-12 月

口语新题

IELTS Speaking Answers

Part 1 & Part 2 & Part 3





September 2022 Template

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Part 1

Topic: Morning Time (2022.9)

Questions

Do you like getting up in the morning?

What do you usually do in the morning?

What did you do in the morning when you were little? Why?

Are there any differences between what you do in the morning now and what you did in the past?

Advice

- Since we are talking about habits and routines, we will mostly use the present simple tense.
- Pay attention to the verb forms in your answer - some verbs are used in the simple tense (I **get** up at 06:30) while others are used in the continuous tense (after **getting** up).
- We can use the first conditional in these types of questions (if I have time, then I will + present tense verb)
- In Q2, if your morning routine is quick or there is nothing particularly interesting to talk about, you can expand your answer by saying why you do each part of your morning routine.
- In Q3 and Q4, you can use connecting words like *whereas, back then, in those days, these days, now, nowadays, in the past* to connect the two time periods together (past and present).

Vocabulary and Sentences

- Circadian rhythm
- Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
- Pluck up the courage
- Cranky
- Face the day head-on
- Sweet spot
- To make your way to + place / destination
- Zero-in
- Little-to-no
- Getting things in order / Getting something in order



- I would rather (choice 1) than (choice 2)
- If I (action 1) then I will / can (action 2)

Answers:

Q: Do you like getting up in the morning?

A: Definitely not! I'm much more of a night owl. My body's natural circadian rhythm seems to be slightly delayed compared to other people. I would rather stay up later and consequently wake up later the following day, but unfortunately the modern workday isn't structured like that. I need to be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for an 8am sharp start to my day every morning, which means I have to summon all my willpower to get out of bed.

Q: What do you usually do in the morning?

A: On a typical day, I get up around 06:30. My alarm is set for 06:00, but often I struggle to get out of bed on the first try. My tendency is to hit the snooze button 2 or 3 times before I pluck up the courage to get out of bed and tackle my day. After getting out of bed, I jump into the shower and get dressed. Then, I get the coffee brewing and, after at least one cup, I'm ready to face the day head-on. One cup is the minimum I need to avoid being cranky in the morning, and two cups is the sweet spot for balancing alertness and becoming dependent on caffeine. Then, if I still have time, I kneel on my yoga mat and meditate for 10-15 minutes. This really helps me zero-in on the tasks I need to prioritise that day.

Q: What did you do in the morning when you were little? Why?

A: As a child, my morning routine revolved around preparation for school. This meant getting dressed, followed by eating a breakfast of eggs, toast, and a glass of milk, and finally making my way to school. In between those steps, I also helped my parents with various chores, like packing the dishes away, hanging up the laundry and sweeping the kitchen. Mostly mundane things, really.

Q: Are there are any differences between what you do in the morning now and what you did in the past?

A: The biggest difference between then and now would be the fact that when I was little, my sister and I had little-to-no autonomy in our morning routines. Our time was not our own, and we simply prepared for the day ahead. As an adult, I still spend my morning getting things in order for the day, but now I'm also able to do things that I want to do, like meditating or enjoying an energising cup of coffee.



Topic: Snacks (2022.9)

Questions

What snacks do you like to eat?

Did you often eat snacks when you were young?

When do you usually eat snacks now?

Do you think it is healthy for you to eat snacks?

Advice

- Since we are talking about facts and habits, we will mostly use the present simple and present continuous tenses in these questions (except for Q2, which requires the past tense).
- Q2 is a good place to use *used to* / *would* when talking about past actions or habits.
- Q4 does not necessarily have a clear yes or no answer. You don't have to be eating 100% healthy snacks or eating 100% unhealthy snacks, you can be somewhere in between the two. For example, if you are eating more healthily now, you can talk about the unhealthy snacks you replaced with healthier options, and why you switched to the healthier snack.

Vocabulary and Sentence

- I'm a sucker for + noun (usually with an adjective before the noun as well)
- Trying my hand at + continuous tense verb
- Afternoon slump
- Afternoon crash
- Insatiable
- Kryptonite
- Contraband
- Peckish
- Grazing
- Better for my wallet
- Adding up
- So far, so good
- Here and there
- Hunger pangs
- Clued-up

Answers:

Q: What snacks do you like to eat?



A: If you asked me that a year ago, I would have said I was a sucker for pastries and baked treats! I had a minor health scare earlier this year though, so I've made a concerted effort to cut down on sugar and swap out processed foods for nuts, berries and seeds. I'm essentially sticking to a whole foods diet as far as possible, but I have also been trying my hand at baking muffins, making homemade granola bars and making my own trail mixes. That being said, I can't escape the fact that I have a sweet tooth, so I also pack a piece of dark chocolate with my lunch. I save it for the mid-afternoon when I start to crash a bit, and it really helps me get through the afternoon slump. On Mondays, I bring two pieces of chocolate because, well, it's Monday! Bringing my own snacks to work is also helping me save quite a few pennies every month, and those savings are starting to add up. Overall, it's better for my body and for my wallet. So far, so good I would say!

Q: Did you often eat snacks when you were young?

A: Yes, I'm afraid I have to admit that, when I was growing up, I had a sweet tooth with a mind of its own. I didn't just experience cravings for sweet foods, I also had an insatiable appetite for anything with a satisfying texture to chew. Crisps, doughnuts, and cookies were my kryptonite – I could eat an entire box of Oreos in one sitting! Fortunately, though, my parents were quite stern about eating junk food, so my siblings and I were only allowed to have sweet treats at the weekend. On special occasions, like birthdays, we were allowed to indulge in the cake or whatever granny made for us that day. In hindsight, I think my parents were very reasonable and fair with us getting sweets, but that didn't stop of us from trying to sneak our contraband candy home with us after school.

Q: When do you usually eat snacks now?

A: What I do these days is divide my nuts, berries and seeds into servings and pre-pack each serving into a Tupperware that I bring with me to work. Then, at work, I can nibble here and there without taking a full-on break to eat. I still take my mandated lunch break, of course, but I've found that grazing like this throughout keeps my blood sugar balanced and avoid hunger pangs.

Q: Do you think it is healthy for you to eat snacks?

A: Well, the snacks that I eat nowadays are definitely healthier than those I used to eat. I'm not very clued-up on the science of whether snacking between meals is *actually* healthy, but I'm not experiencing any adverse effects. The way I think about it is, I can avoid the temptation of buying unhealthy snacks when I get peckish at work, by bringing some healthy snacks with me from home.

Topic: Geography (2022.9)



Questions

Do you like geography?

Have you ever studied geography at school?

Are you good at reading a map?

Would you visit a country because of its geographical location?

Advice

- Q1 and Q3 will use the present simple tense because you are referring to facts and preferences. If you don't like geography, you can explain the reasons, but be careful not to use your answer for Q2 here – for example, if you chose history as a subject instead of geography. In that case, rather talk about geography in general – mountains, rivers, landforms etc.
- In Q3, if you aren't good at reading maps, you could tell an amusing story about a time you got lost trying to read a map. It's also possible that you don't really know much about maps because you use GPS devices like Baidu Maps. In that case, you can talk about how easy it is to use modern navigation apps.
- Notice that Q4 requires you to use the future tense forms. It's also a nice opportunity to talk about your travel bucket list and dream destinations.

Vocabulary and Sentences

- Gets me going
- Awestruck
- Vying
- Loath / Loathed
- Discerning
- Down the rabbit hole
- Came to be
- Take it at face value
- Albeit
- Begrudgingly
- Kitted-out
- Renowned
- To have your bases covered / To cover your bases
- I would + simple tense verb
- If I were able to + simple tense verb
- If I could + simple tense verb
- If were + continuous tense verb



Answers:

Q: Do you like geography?

A: That's a tricky one to answer, I'd have to say yes and no. As much as I find the world captivating and exciting, I can't say that studying rocks and landforms gets me going. Don't get me wrong, I love travelling and I'm often awestruck by the sheer scale of the imposing mountain ranges where I go hiking. But these days, there are so many potential interests and hobbies vying for your attention, one has to be quite discerning with their time. Otherwise, you'll fall down the rabbit hole of novelties and starting new pursuits, without ever mastering any of them. So, while I do appreciate the landscape around me at face value, I don't spend my time learning about how the landscape came to be, or how the geography of the area might change in the future.

Q: Have you ever studied geography at school?

A: Yes, albeit begrudgingly. We took geography for two years in middle school as a compulsory subject. As I mentioned, I'm not into studying geographical processes, so I loathed the subject. That being said, our geography classes were miles ahead of the way my parents learned geography. They only had one dimensional pictures, often in black and white, with a big world map on the wall. Our geography classroom, on the other hand, was kitted-out with technology and we had a passionate teacher who made all the difference. We had a huge globe in the classroom, lots of old and current world maps and of course an interactive whiteboard. Our teacher immersed us in activities that made us aware of our world, and, in hindsight, that was probably a big influence on my appreciation of the natural world.

Q: Are you good at reading a map?

A: At school, the atlas was my go-to study aid, and I took great pleasure in tracing imaginary journeys across the world. So, it was a logical transition towards reading maps. It wasn't without its problems though. I was good at giving people directions using a map, but I always had to overcome a basic initial hurdle when using one myself. That hurdle was orientating myself – which way was North in the world? Once I have a cross reference, like street names of intersecting roads, I'm good to go. It's hard to imagine using an old-fashioned paper map these days, now that we have apps like Apple or Baidu Maps. But I do know how to use both, so I've got both my bases covered.

Q: Would you visit a country because of its geographical location?

A: Geography would definitely influence my bucket list for travelling. If I wanted to go skiing, I'd look for the countries with good, high slopes and sufficient snowfall. Beaches on the Greek islands would be perfect for lazing around in the sun, but not if I was keen to try surfing! I love trying out different cuisines, so that would also play a part in choosing the locations I travel to. Certain geographic regions are renowned for different things – chocolates from Belgium, cheese from



France and pizza from Italy. So, depending on what kind of experience I'd like to have, it would determine where I would travel to.

Topic: Technology (2022.9)

Questions:

What technology do you more often use, computers or cell phones?

What electronic devices have you bought recently?

Is there any technology you want to buy?

Is technology important in your life?

Advice

- Remember that a laptop counts as a computer. It's possible that you use lots of technology in general, but don't go off-topic in Q1. It's specifically asking you to talk about computers and cell phones. It's likely that you use both devices very often, so it's OK to say that you use them equally.
- Q1 and Q4 will primarily use the present simple tense to explain your usage of technology and your opinion towards technology in general. You can also give anecdotes about how technology has been impactful in your life.
- Q2 will mostly use the past simple tense, but you can also use the present perfect simple tense to talk about a past action that is relevant now. For example: I have just bought a new smartwatch, which is now an indispensable gadget for my trail running expeditions.

Vocabulary

- Cost a small fortune
- In the mood
- Burned out
- Bulky
- The outside world
- Step cadence
- Worth every penny
- Dark side
- On the daily
- On the move
- Handy



- To keep your / a finger on the pulse
- Out and about
- Pinpoint
- To get the chills / Gives me the chills
- Hammer away / Hammering away
- Present perfect simple: I have just bought + noun
- Past simple: I just bought + noun

Answers:

Q: What technology do you more often use, computers or cell phones?

A: It's hard to say whether I use my computer or my cell phone more often. I generally don't use my cell phone at work, but I do use my computer for presentations, research, analysing spreadsheets, video calls, and emails. At home, I use my laptop to watch movies or series if I'm still in the mood and not too burned out after work. It's great for keeping in touch with family and friends via Facebook and other social media. But I also use my cell phone a lot, especially when I'm on the move. It has most of the capabilities of my laptop, so it's a handy way of keeping my finger on the pulse. So, I'd say it's about an even split between my phone and my computer.

Q: What electronic devices have you bought recently?

A: The latest electronic device I added to my collection is my smartwatch. It cost a small fortune, but it's perfect for those times when I don't want to carry anything extra, like when I'm going for a run or if I'm on a hike somewhere rural. In those cases, I still need to have contact to the outside world for emergencies. Running is my passion and my smartwatch tracks health metrics like my heart rate, calories burned and even my step cadence. It gives me peace of mind knowing there's fall detection capability as well, should I meet with an accident. So, my smartwatch was worth every penny.

Q: Is there any technology you want to buy?

A: I have to take public transport to work on the daily, and I like to read when I'm out and about, so my next purchase is definitely going to be an e-reader, like a Kindle. I'm an avid reader and have been known to take half a dozen books at a time out of the public library. I like to jump between books, depending on my mood. So, you can imagine how bulky my bag is with all those books! A Kindle will take up much less space and I will have access to a vast collection of digital books, so it's a must-have gadget for anyone who reads a lot.

Q: Is technology important in your life?

A: I can't even imagine my life without technology! I'm not just talking about technology that we consider essential, like smart phones and computers. Imagine a life without microwaves, washing



machines, medical equipment and GPS. For perspective, when my father was young and visited the dentist, the dentist used a mechanical hand drill. Just thinking about that machine gives me the chills! It made me reflect on how I was able to have an x-ray machine pinpoint exactly what was causing my toothache, without sitting in agony while the dentist hammers away at my teeth. People often talk about the good old days, but I'm sure they find life easier now. And it's all thanks to technology.

Topic: Housework and Cooking (2022.9)

Questions:

Do you do some cooking / help your family cook at home now?

Did you do some house cleaning where you were young?

Do you have breakfast at home every day?

Do you want to learn how to cook well?

Advice

- If you don't cook at home, you can explain why not (you don't know how / never learned / don't have time) and describe what you do instead. Maybe your partner or parents cook, or you buy takeaways and pre-made meals.
- This is a great question to use expressive vocabulary to describe your favourite foods, smells and cooking routines.
- This question will most use the present simple tense because we are describing facts and daily activities in Q1, Q3 and Q4.
- Q2 is a good place to use *used to* / *would* because it refers to the past.

Vocabulary

- Chip in
- First-rate
- Take the lead
- Out of this world
- To badger someone
- Run-of-the-mill
- Nanna
- Pull your weight / Pull our weight
- Unheard of
- Woe betide



- Spick and span
- Hunger pangs
- Grouchy / A grouch
- Pull out all the stops
- Cook up a storm
- Whip up

Answers:

Q: Do you do some cooking / help your family cook at home now?

A: When I'm at home, the whole family congregates in the kitchen and chips in with the cooking responsibilities. My grandmother is a first-rate cook and she takes the lead in the kitchen. I don't know how she does it, but she can turn a run-of-the-mill dish into something out of this world! None of us can resist the tantalising aroma of whatever dish she's preparing. Actually, I feel a bit sorry for her sometimes – we all have different favourites, and we badger her to make our own special requests. It's quite chaotic at times with so many people in the kitchen. My nanna expects us to help her, be it chopping garlic, peeling vegetables, frying onions, or simply passing her utensils. Over time, I've become quite an accomplished cook simply from helping prepare those meals at home.

Q: Did you do some house cleaning where you were young?

A: Growing up in a big family, we were all expected to pull our weight when it came to cleaning the house. It started with the bedroom. Leaving a bed unmade was unheard of, almost a crime! So, making your own bed was the first chore of the day. Everything in the house had its place and woe betide the child who put anything in the wrong place! Our other daily chore was washing, drying and packing away dishes after meals. It was no use trying to do a half-job, as my mother always checked them and she wouldn't let us out of the kitchen until everything was spick and span.

Q: Do you have breakfast at home every day?

A: I'd love to say that I have breakfast at home daily, but the truth of the matter is I'm always running late in the mornings. In fact, I sometimes don't have breakfast at all. It all depends on whether I can keep to my schedule. If I'm running late, I'll grab a piece of fruit on my way out and suffer the consequence of hunger pangs all morning. One thing I always make time for is a cup of coffee. Without it, I'm a bit of a grouch to my colleagues and I don't feel fully awake. I love the weekends though. That is when I have breakfast at home and pull out all the stops for a 5-star breakfast. I start off with fruit or orange juice, followed by some cereal. Then I cook up a storm – fried eggs, tomato, toast or even an omelette with smoked salmon. Then I sit back and enjoy!



Q: Do you want to learn how to cook well?

A: I'd love to learn to cook well. There's something very special about breaking bread with family and friends, and it's even more special if you have prepared the meal yourself. These days, so many people seem to sustain themselves with take outs, pre-made meals and frozen foods, but there's no good excuse for not eating well. The simplest salad accompanied by a fresh loaf of bread can be a gourmet meal in and of itself. All you need are the right ingredients, and these days one can find a wide variety of fresh food. I sometimes tell myself I don't have the time to learn to cook well, but that's not entirely true. There are so many YouTube channels and social media pages demonstrating how to whip up delicious meals, there's really no excuse for anyone who wants to learn – myself included!

Topic: Weather (2022.9)

Questions:

What's the weather like where you live?

Do you prefer cold or hot weather?

Do you prefer dry or wet weather?

Are you in the habit of checking the weather forecast? When and how often?

Advice

- This topic mostly requires verbs to be in the simple present tense because it relates to facts.
- This topic provides great opportunities to use expressive adjectives and demonstrate a large vocabulary to describe the weather and how it makes you feel.
- In Q2 and Q3, after choosing your preferred weather, you can explain why you like it and also why you dislike the opposite. For example, if you prefer hot weather (because you can go outside and be in the sun) you can also describe how you dislike cold weather (because you can't go outside for walks or relax in the sunshine).

Vocabulary

- Gusts
- Sweltering
- Record-shattering



- Tail-end
- Bitterly cold
- Below zero
- Outdoorsy
- Damp / dampness
- Soul-destroying
- Swing past
- Beat the traffic
- To be religious about something

Answers:

Q: What's the weather like where you live?

A: In Shanghai, we experience four distinct seasons over the year. A typical summer is hot and humid, while winter is bitterly cold with icy gusts of wind blowing most of the time. Since we're in a subtropical climate zone, we seldom get any snow, but it does get below zero. Autumn and spring are generally pleasant, though I would say the air has a prevailing dampness throughout the year, which can be soul-destroying for people who aren't used to living with constant humidity.

Q: Do you prefer cold or hot weather?

A: Actually, my ideal would be the middle ground between the two, but if I had to choose one extreme, it would be cold weather without a doubt. It's much easier to get warm than it is to cool down. You may have seen on the news that we're on the tail-end of the most unbearable heatwave that has been spreading throughout coastal China. It's subsiding now, fortunately, but it was swelteringly hot with temperatures of just under 41 degrees Celsius during the peak. Heat is bad enough on its own, but with the overbearing humidity as well, it was impossible to get anything done. I barely made it through the heat, so I would always choose very cold over very hot weather.

Q: Do you prefer dry or wet weather?

A: It's got to be dry weather for me, because I'm quite an outdoorsy person. Shanghai is already too humid for my liking, but I was born here and my whole life is set up in this city, so I would never leave. One does get used to it – eventually. Well, at least enough to grin and bear it without feeling totally defeated by the oppressive humidity. At times it's even felt a bit like living inside a sauna, which I really can't stand. At least with dry weather, you can breathe deeply and easily.

Q: Are you in the habit of checking the weather forecast? When and how often?



A: Generally, yes, as I need to know what to wear on any given day, especially because I often go out after work to beat the traffic, or I swing past the gym on my way home. I normally check the forecast on my weather app while drinking my morning brew. Other times, I might catch a segment of my colleagues' conversations about the weather, so I get updated about the weather that way. I wouldn't say I'm religious about checking the weather every day, though.

Topic: Public Transport (2022.9)

Questions:

What kind of public transportation do you usually take?

When do you usually take public transportation - in your everyday life or when you are travelling?

Do most people prefer public transportation in your country?

Did you take public transportation when you were a kid?

Advice

- In Q1, if you don't use public transport, you can explain how you travel and get to work instead.
- In Q2, you can describe your daily commute or how you travel during holidays. If you used to use public transport, you could describe some of your past experiences using public transport and give reasons why you don't use public transport anymore.
- In Q3, you can simply give an anecdotal perspective of how you, your friends or your colleagues use public transport, rather than trying to remember statistics about public transport usage (although that would be a nice feature to add to your answer!)

Vocabulary

- Twofold
- Bugged down
- Run the gauntlet
- For ages
- Peace of mind
- Hustle and bustle
- Take a breather
- Squashed like sardines
- Look favourably on...
- Out of necessity
- Posse



- Maraud
- Odds and ends

Answers:

Q: What kind of public transportation do you usually take?

A: These days I travel almost exclusively by train or subway. The reason for choosing trains and the subway over buses is twofold – reliability and comfort. The metro follows a timetable and, because the high-speed rail network is kept up well in China, you can count on the trains to get you from A to B quickly, without getting bogged down in traffic on the highway. Although buses are a bit cheaper, you run the gauntlet of getting stuck in traffic for ages if there is a lane closure due to an accident or roadworks. So, with the metro, you get a bit more peace of mind and that makes the whole journey less worrisome.

Q: When do you usually take public transportation - in your everyday life or when you are travelling?

A: I use public transport for my day-to-day travel as well as for travelling domestically during holidays, when I like to retreat to the countryside and take a breather from the hustle and bustle of Shanghai. First prize is to catch the 06:15 train because there's a window of opportunity around that time to get a seat on the train, as opposed to standing. The station fills up exponentially for the 06:30 train and you can end up being squashed like sardines if you don't arrive earlier. On the way back, I catch the 18:30 train, unless I'm heading out for drinks or to gym, in which case I catch one of the late trains.

Q: Do most people prefer public transportation in your country?

A: Well, it's hard to say if people actually *prefer* public transport, or if it's simply out of necessity due to the population density of large cities. Anecdotally, I'd say that the younger generations look favourably on public transport in general, while the older, more affluent families might be more inclined to travel in a private car, which is a bit of a status symbol. There are just so many people living in such a small area, I figure it's only a tiny minority that has the luxury of having a preference between public transport and private transport.

Q: Did you take public transportation when you were a kid?

A: No, not unless I was travelling with my parents to visit family or on a weekend getaway. Our vehicle of choice was the bicycle – cheap to buy, free to use and easy to look after. Growing up, we had a posse of five and we used to maraud down to the park on weekends or to pick up odds and ends for our parents at the shops in our neighbourhood. So, it was only once I enrolled at university that I began using public transport.



Topic: Social Media (2022.9)

Questions:

Do you or your friends like using social media?

Do you think you or your friends use too much social media?

Do you want to work in social media? Why?

What's the most popular social media in China? Why?

Advice:

- For Q4, this is an opportunity to talk about travelling to see buildings in other cities or countries. For example, you could talk about visiting the Eiffel Tower in Paris, as it would count as an old building!
- For Q2, you could go into depth about the different sides of the argument. If you aren't sure about how to do that, make sure to check out the Last Minute English IELTS Argument Booklet (available now), which has debate ideas and answers on 20 common IELTS topics.

Vocabulary:

- Heaps of old buildings
- Gothic architecture
- Victorian housing
- Unsightly
- Futuristic
- Springing up
- Stick out like a sore thumb
- Structurally sound
- Classic architecture
- Breaking the bank
- A goldmine of economic activity
- A certain romance and visual appeal
- They do suffer in comparison to + other option
- Broadband internet access
- All the modern conveniences that we expect
- To peer into the distant future
- Gladiators
- Death and glory



Answers:

Q: Have you ever seen old buildings in your city?

A: Yes, there are heaps of old buildings in my city. You can hardly walk down the street without bumping into some kind of Gothic architecture or Victorian housing! The bad thing really is that there are lots of quite unsightly futuristic buildings springing up all over the place – they stick out like a sore thumb amongst the traditional architecture. It really needs better planning from the local authorities.

Q: Do you think we should preserve old buildings in cities?

A: I do think so, yes, as long as they are structurally sound. You wouldn't want old buildings that are falling apart being preserved just because they are old – but if there are examples of classic architecture that can be maintained without breaking the bank, we should 100% try to preserve them. They can also be drivers of tourism. Imagine if the Parisian government had decided to tear down the Notre Dame cathedral, for example – they would have missed out on a goldmine of economic activity.

Q: Would you prefer to live in an old or a new building?

A: I think I'd probably prefer to live in a new building, on the whole. Old buildings do have a certain romance and visual appeal, but practically speaking, they do suffer in comparison to newer buildings. I'm talking about things like broadband internet access, rewiring work and things like that. A new building is more likely to have planned for all the modern conveniences that we expect, whereas the architect of an older building wouldn't have been able to peer into the distant future to predict such necessities.

Q: Are there any old buildings you would like to see in the future?

A: I would love to visit Rome to see the Colosseum. It's a huge stadium that was used for spectacular events with gladiators 2000 years ago during the Roman Empire, and certain parts of it are still standing today. People always talk about what a strong feeling the place has, as though it remembers all the death and glory that took place there. So that would be something amazing to see.

Topic: Writing (2022.9)



Questions:

Do you write a lot?

What do you like to write? Why?

Do you think the things you write would change?

Do you prefer typing or handwriting when you are writing?

Advice:

- Remember that writing also includes writing at work. It's not specifically referring to writing in a journal, writing a novel, writing songs etc. If you are a student or researcher, you could be writing a lot of reports or your thesis / dissertation. If you are a secretary, you could be writing lots of meeting minutes or doing research for your boss etc.
- Be careful not to use your Q2 answer in Q1. In Q1, stick to talking about the *frequency* or *volume* of your writing. In Q2, you should expand on *what* you write.
- In Q3, you can't be 100% sure that your writing won't change in the future, so you can give a best guess or say how your writing *could* / *might* change. For example, you might start writing poetry, you might start writing a research paper, you might start writing a cooking blog on a website etc.

Vocabulary:

- Angst
- Crush
- To wind someone up
- To get someone / something = to understand someone / something
- Run of the mill
- Per se
- Jot down
- Nagging at me
- Stumbling block
- Comes to mind
- To come and go
- Life goes on
- I can't see myself = it's not likely that I would + action / verb
- To give it a bash = to try something
- Hands down
- At the click of a button

Answers:



Q: Do you write a lot?

A: I used to write a lot in my teenage years, but now, less so. I kept a diary into which I would pour all my teenage angst. Did my crush also fancy me? Why did my sister wind me up constantly? Why didn't my parents get me? It was things like that. These days, most of the writing I do is work related, so it isn't much volume-wise. I'm currently doing an online course so, although I wouldn't call it writing per se, I do take a substantial number of notes. Overall, I wouldn't say I write a lot in one sitting, but I do write something every day.

Q: What do you like to write? Why?

A: At work, it's exclusively run of the mill things like email correspondence, reports, minutes of meetings and my never-ending to-do list. In my daily journal, I keep track of thoughts that pop into my mind throughout the day, and I jot down any nuisances or reminders that are nagging at me. The first stumbling block was simply cultivating the discipline to write every day and then, deciding what to write. It's become progressively easier to keep up the habit, and I've found that I really enjoy keeping a journal. So, these days I basically just write whatever comes to mind.

Q: Do you think the things you write would change?

A: I would say yes and no. On the one hand, the subject matter would change because life is not always predictable from day to day. Circumstances change, so my interests, problems and aspirations would evolve with time. The ones I had when I was younger might be resolved or become less relevant as I mature. Life goes on and people come and go. But on the other hand, I can't see myself deciding to pick up poetry or song writing! I gave that a bash when I was a teenager, and it just didn't gel with me. So, in that sense, I will still be writing the same kind of things in my journal in the future.

Q: Do you prefer typing or handwriting when you are writing?

A: Actually, I enjoy both typing and handwriting. In the work environment, typing wins hands down. I can still recall the days of electric typewriters and all the headaches they caused. Typing documents on a computer makes life so much easier. One can move text around and do research at the click of a button – it's just so easy. But for journaling, I prefer handwriting. It somehow feels more personal. Those crossed-out sentences, tear stains and coffee spills give it a feeling of a work in progress, which I prefer for writing in my journal.



Topic: Puzzles (2022.9)

Questions

Did you do puzzles in your childhood?

When do you do puzzles? During your trip or when you feel bored?

Do you prefer doing word puzzles or number puzzles? Which is more difficult for you?

Do you think it is good for old people to do puzzles?

Advice

- Remember that there are many different kinds of puzzles out there besides jigsaw puzzles – number puzzles, crosswords, riddles, paradoxes etc.
- In Q2, if you don't do enjoy puzzles, you could explain why not and what you do instead, like reading books or listening to podcasts. Alternatively, you could explain when you *would* do puzzles *if you did* do puzzles, in a hypothetical situation.

Vocabulary and Sentences

- Ubiquitous
- To pass the time / To kill the time
- If memory serves
- Spatial awareness
- Head start
- Therapeutic
- To die of boredom
- Voracious
- A cold sweat
- Any day of the week
- Perplexing
- A win-win situation
- In my books
- Cognitive decline
- To die of boredom

Answers:

Q: Did you do puzzles in your childhood?



A: Well, I grew up before TVs and smartphones were ubiquitous, so I did loads of puzzles to pass the time. If memory serves, my first puzzle was a crossword. Then I moved onto sudoku and jigsaw puzzles, before starting to do geometrical puzzles where you have to build certain shapes. These really helped me develop my hand-eye coordination and my spatial awareness as a child, and I'm convinced they gave me a head start in mathematics during primary school.

Q: When do you do puzzles? During a trip or when you feel bored?

A: Nowadays I do them to kill time while waiting for something. One often comes across unfinished crossword puzzles in aeroplanes or waiting rooms, and that's usually when I do them. These days we have access to so many puzzles on our cell phones that it's easy to find something to keep your mind occupied. Come to think of it, I also do puzzles on my phone when I'm feeling stressed. Solving an unrelated puzzle on my phone is actually quite therapeutic and stops me from getting flustered during stressful times. They're a bit like a baby's pacifier, I guess. But otherwise, I mostly do them so that I don't die of boredom.

Q: Do you prefer doing word puzzles or number puzzles? Which is more difficult for you?

A: Being a voracious reader, I would choose word puzzles over number puzzles any day of the week. I find great satisfaction in finding the word that embodies the exact meaning I want to convey, or triumphantly solving a perplexing riddle. I sometimes enjoy doing number puzzles, but most of them bring me out in a cold sweat because I find them so much harder. And trust me, that's something you do not want to see! So, no number puzzles for me, thank you very much!

Q: Do you think it is good for old people to do puzzles?

A: I've heard that some of the best ways for old people to delay memory loss and cognitive decline are doing puzzles and learning a new language. I guess, of the two, doing puzzles would be more accessible to most people, and also provide better opportunities for practice because they require a shorter time commitment. It's a sign of the times that many old people are relegated to the sidelines. They're no longer part of an extended family and are often sent to care centres or old age homes. So doing puzzles provides an activity which not only gives the person something to do, but also helps improve short term memory, which is a win-win in my books.

Topic: Singing (2022.9)

Questions

Do you like singing? Why?

Have you ever learned how to sing?



Who do you want to sing for?

Do you think singing can bring happiness to people?

Advice

- For Q1, if you don't like singing, you should explain why you don't like to sing. For example: you don't think you have a good voice, you're too shy, you tried a few times and it went badly etc. Be careful not to use your answer for Q2 here though. Even if you don't like singing, you could still appreciate singing in general (meaning that you appreciate hearing people sing) so you could talk about how hearing singing makes you happy or feel inspired.
- Q3 can be a serious or a silly situation. For example, it's perfectly okay to talk about singing for an audience at a concert, singing a lullaby to your newborn baby, singing to your pets, or even singing for yourself while you are in the shower. If you don't sing at all, talk about a hypothetical situation in which you are singing for other people. If you need ideas, imagine that you are your favourite singer, or a member of your favourite band, and describe the audience you would be singing for.

Vocabulary and Sentences

- If I were a singer, I would be singing + genre at the + theatre / venue / music concert
- Lullaby
- Belting out + song / genre
- Bangers
- Wannabe
- Antics
- It takes me back to + a happy period of your life
- Pent-up
- Couldn't be further from the truth
- To change your tune
- Music to my ears
- The big time
- Flocking
- In the palm of my hand
- To be / get revved up

Answers:

Q: Do you like singing? Why?

A: Since I was a child, I've always loved singing and being an entertainer. Growing up, I remember belting out pop bangers in front of my bathroom mirror using a wooden spoon as the microphone. While my days of entertaining crowds with my wannabe superstar antics are over, I have to admit



that I still love singing along with my favourite tunes in the shower or on the way to work. It takes me back to my carefree days as a child and I enjoy reminiscing about those days.

Q: Have you ever learned how to sing?

A: Well, I have taken a few formal singing lessons, but I never ended up learning to sing properly. In my mind's eye, I'm a popstar with chart-topping hits and thousands of followers. But that couldn't be further from the truth! In reality, my singing abilities are, to be honest, non-existent. During my first singing lesson, my teacher said, "I could teach a piano leg to sing!" Well, after a few lessons with me, she quickly changed her tune! It was incredibly frustrating for me to hear the perfect song in my head, only to come out of my mouth unrecognisable. So, I can only image how awful it was for my poor singing teacher! The moment I told her I was leaving must have been music to her ears.

Q: Who do you want to sing for?

A: Well, if I could sing, I'd go for the big time and perform for crowds in iconic venues like Madison Square Garden in New York and the Mercedes-Benz Arena in Shanghai. Initially, I would have to build up my following by performing at bars and clubs downtown. But, sooner or later, people would be flocking to hear me perform. In this alternate reality, I'd be singing for everyone. But, for now, I'll just continue singing for myself.

Q: Do you think singing can bring happiness to people?

A: Yes, without a doubt. My grandmother used to sing while cooking or cleaning the house, which created a light and cheerful atmosphere at home. It made her – and everyone around her – joyful and easy-going. She was my role model at the time, so that's probably a big reason why I started singing. I imagine that for professional singers and musicians, it's even more uplifting to sing, because they are following their passion and living the dream. So, it's easy to see that singing can make people happy.

Topic: Social Media (2022.9)

Questions

Do you or your friends like social media?

Do you think you or your friends use too much social media?

Do you want to work in social media? Why?



What's the most popular social media in China? Why?

Advice

- In Q1, you can talk about the things that you like to use social media for. Some ideas are: chatting with friends and colleagues, dating, or sharing pictures and videos. If you like to watch videos, talk about the kinds of videos you watch – cooking lessons, language lessons, influencer content, reviews, guides and tutorials, lessons for musical instruments, learning new skills etc.
- All of these questions will use the present simple tense, but you can also use the past tense and the present simple perfect tense to talk about when you started using social media. For example: I started using social 5 years ago / I have been using social media since 2017.

Vocabulary and Sentences

- A love-hate relationship
- Time-sink
- To be hooked
- A double-edged sword
- I have to admit + something you are ashamed of / embarrassed about
- State of limbo
- Craving
- Novelty
- To reap the rewards
- To be in two minds about something
- To make it in life / To have made it in life
- To bear in mind
- One side of the story
- Easier said than done
- All-in-one
- Prevalent

Answers:

Q: Do you or your friends like social media?

A: Honestly, it's a bit of a love-hate relationship for me. On the one hand, I like being able to stay in touch with friends, making payments on WeChat and being entertained on social media. There is so much content out there – cooking videos, tutorials, talented musicians and, of course, an infinite supply of memes. But on the other hand, social media can be such a time-sink. Once you start watching, and the algorithm hooks you, a few hours can pass before you know it. We know these apps are designed to be addictive, yet we use them anyway, and that makes me feel a bit



powerless. Most of my friends feel the same way I do about social media being a double-edged sword.

Q: Do you think you or your friends use too much social media?

A: I have to admit, we probably do use social media too much. I've read research about the psychology of addictive apps, and it's pretty disconcerting. For example, the infinite scrolling and swiping on video apps keeps the brain in a state of limbo, always unsatisfied and craving the next video. Constantly seeking novelty like that is very damaging for the brain, because there is no effort required to reap the dopamine rewards. You can end up in a really vicious cycle of dependence on social media.

Q: Do you want to work in social media? Why?

A: No, definitely not. As I'm sure you can tell, I'm in two minds about whether it's possible to use social media in a healthy way. I've personally felt the worst impacts of social media by comparing myself to others and feeling inadequate, or that I haven't quite made it in life. It's important to bear in mind that social media only shows one side of the story. You don't get to see the dark side because social media is, essentially, just a highlights reel of someone's life. So, I wouldn't want to work in that environment because I'd feel as though I'm contributing to those problems.

Q: What's the most popular social media channel in China? Why?

A: That would be WeChat, for sure. It's an indispensable part of daily life in China. In fact, I can't even think of a person who doesn't use WeChat. We use the app for keeping friends in the loop, communicating at work, ordering groceries, and even hailing a taxi. It's also a payment gateway, so it's very handy for sending or receiving money. Having so many features means it's almost an all-in-one app, which would explain why it's the most prevalent social media app in China.

Topic: Advertisement (2022.5)

Questions

Are you more interested in watching TV advertisements or internet advertisements?

What kinds of advertisements do you dislike?

Do you share advertisements with others?

Do you want to work in advertising in the future?



Advice

- Advertising is a very specific topic, with its own vocabulary. If you are experienced in this area, make sure to use plenty of high-level vocabulary. If you are not an advertising expert, check out the Last Minute English course Advanced English Vocabulary, which features a whole section about advertising vocabulary!

Vocabulary and Sentences

- Specifically tailored to individual users
- Creepy
- Much broader target market
- Production values
- Flog their wares
- Fairly infrequently
- Intellectual challenge
- Qualitative and quantitative research
- Catchy slogans and jingles

Answers:

Q: Are you more interested in watching TV advertisements or internet advertisements?

A: Well, I'm not really interested in either to be honest, but if I had to choose, I'd say I prefer TV advertisements. These days, internet adverts are specifically tailored to individual users, so I'll often see ads popping up based on my Google searches from a few hours previously. It's creepy! I prefer TV adverts which have a much broader target market – I feel less spied on that way. Plus, the production values on TV adverts are usually much higher than internet ads.

Q: What kinds of advertisements do you dislike?

A: Most of them, to be honest! I can't understand the people who don't change channel when an advert comes on. I think life's too short to sit around watching 3-4 minutes of people trying to flog their wares! But to focus on one type of advertisement in particular, I'd say it'd be gambling adverts – they always make gambling look so fun, but as we all know, it's extremely addictive and damaging to the people who do it.

Q: Do you share advertisements with others?

A: Only if they are absolutely hilarious – otherwise, why would I? If I laugh out loud at an advert, I'll consider sending it to someone, but that happens fairly infrequently. The only other time I



would consider sharing an advertisement would be if I knew for a fact that the other person had been searching for that exact product or service, and I would be saving them time and energy by bringing their search to a close. But again, that very rarely happens.

Q: Do you want to work in advertising in the future?

A: I do think it would be an interesting intellectual challenge. You have to understand your target market extremely well to be able to work effectively in advertising, and that takes all kinds of qualitative and quantitative research. Then there's the creative aspect – coming up with catchy slogans and jingles can't be easy, but I bet it would be fun. I'm not sure I ever will work in advertising, but who knows!

Topic: Evening (2022.5)

Questions

Do you prefer the morning or the evening?

What do you usually do in the evening?

What did you do in the evening when you were young?

Are there any differences between what you do in the evening now and what you did in the past?

Advice

- For Q1, make sure to give a full answer with 1-2 reasons explaining your choice. Don't just say, 'Morning'! Remember, 1-word or even 1-sentence answers are not a good idea in the IELTS test.
- Be careful of the tenses in Q3 and Q4. Q3 will be focused on past habits, using phrases like, 'I would', and 'I used to', while Q4 is a mix of past and present tense.

Vocabulary and Sentences

- A morning person
- Attack the day
- My caffeine hit
- Sluggish
- Lethargic
- Early to bed, early to rise
- Wind down



- Get an early night
- Something + required my attention
- Stress myself out

Answers:

Q: Do you prefer the morning or the evening?

A: I generally prefer the morning – I’m much more of a morning person in general. I find that I’m able to attack the day pretty well in the morning, as long as I’ve had my caffeine hit with a strong cup of coffee. Whereas in the evening, I get quite sluggish and lethargic, because my brain starts slowing down. That’s why I’m usually an, ‘early to bed, early to rise’ sort of person – I find that pattern works well for me.

Q: What do you usually do in the evening?

A: Generally, I just like to wind down in the evening. I usually watch an hour or so of TV, often the latest episode of whatever show I’m streaming at the moment, and then try to get an early night if possible. I’ll sometimes go out and have dinner with friends, but generally I do my socializing at the weekend rather than on weeknights.

Q: What did you do in the evening when you were young?

A: When I was young, it was homework, homework, homework! I used to get given mountains of homework to do, particularly in high school, so there wasn’t much time for anything else. I would occasionally go to the cinema with my friends, and I would always while away an hour or so playing video games, but nothing much beyond that.

Q: Are there any differences between what you do in the evening now and what you did in the past?

A: The difference is more in the content rather than the pattern. Back when I was growing up, it was usually homework that required my attention, whereas now, it’s work and other paperwork that I have to take care of. And whereas before I would usually stress myself out playing video games, these days I treat myself to a relaxing hour of television before bed.

Topic: Books (2022.5)

Questions



Do you often read books?

Are your reading habits now different to before?

Have you ever read a novel that has been adapted into a film?

Which do you prefer – reading books or watching movies?

Advice

- There is a lot of specific vocabulary that you could bring out related to books and literature. And Q3 is also an opportunity to mention some movie-related vocabulary as well. If you would like to boost your vocabulary, check out the Advanced English Vocabulary course from Last Minute English.
- Be careful of Q2, as it has a more complicated tense requirement – you'll be talking about the differences between the past and the present, so make sure to use the right tense in the right place.

Vocabulary and Sentences

- Those people who constantly have their nose in a book
- Carve out periods of the day
- It's never top of my priority list
- I always end up bumping it
- Squirrel away
- Devour books
- I very rarely put time aside for reading
- The one that immediately springs to mind is + title of book/movie
- The film adaptation
- A trilogy
- The source material
- Stretched extremely thin
- Critically panned
- In a single sitting

Answers:

Q: Do you often read books?

A: Not as often as I should, to be honest. I wish I were one of those people who constantly have their nose in a book, but I find it really difficult to carve out periods of the day to read. It's never top of my priority list, and so I always end up bumping it for something more urgent. It's a shame, because there's nothing like getting lost in a good book.



Q: Are your reading habits now different to before?

A: Yes, very much so. I used to read all the time when I was growing up. I would squirrel away a book under my bed and read it when my parents thought I was sleeping. And back then, I would devour books in a couple of days or less! Whereas these days, I very rarely put time aside for reading, even though I'd like to.

Q: Have you ever read a novel that has been adapted into a film?

A: Oh of course, loads of them. The one that immediately springs to mind is The Hobbit, which is a fantasy book set in the Lord of the Rings universe. I read it when I was about 10, and absolutely fell in love with it. I was, however, extremely disappointed by the film adaptation. It was made into a trilogy, which meant the source material was stretched extremely thin, and it ended up being critically panned as a result. Such a letdown!

Q: Which do you prefer – reading books or watching movies?

A: These days, I'd have to say movies, purely because they are more time-efficient. You can start and finish a movie in 2 hours or less, whereas books steal tens of hours from your life. There are advantages to books though – you can read them whenever and wherever you have time, and you don't have to finish them in a single sitting. But it's still movies, for me.

Topic: Boring Things (2022.5)

Questions:

What kind of things are boring to you?

What will you do when you feel bored?

What was the most boring thing you did when you were young?

Do you think school is boring?

Advice

- Q3 is a good opportunity to use the past tense for common habits – things like, 'we would listen to the teacher' or 'we used to hate doing homework'.
- Q4 is an opportunity to give a 'both sides of the argument' type answer. For instance, you could say that certain subjects were boring for certain people, but not for others. This shows that you are a deeper thinker, which is one way to impress the examiner.



Vocabulary

- Monotonous
- Emotional involvement
- Even the slightest bit bored
- My brain's ability to endure boredom
- A vicious cycle
- Perhaps the most + adjective + individual I've ever had the misfortune of meeting
- Drone on
- Mental torture
- Riveting
- As dull as dishwater

Answers:

Q: What kind of things are boring to you?

A: Anything that is too monotonous or lacks any kind of emotional involvement is boring to me. An example is shopping – I find it really boring going around all the different clothes shops that all look the same and trying on clothes that all feel and look the same. And I don't really care about clothes – so I don't have any emotional involvement in the process!

Q: What will you do when you feel bored?

A: I have a really bad habit of getting my phone out and reading news articles whenever I'm even the slightest bit bored. It got to the extent that when I would arrive at the elevator in my building, if there was any kind of wait, even 20 seconds or less, I'd get the phone out. And I'm not really reading the news in a deep way – it's just a way of distracting my brain from the boredom, which means my brain's ability to endure boredom reduces, becoming kind of a vicious cycle! So, not a good habit!

Q: What was the most boring thing you did when you were young?

A: I always remember French class being extremely boring. It wasn't because the language itself is dull – it's actually quite cool – but we had a teacher for 2 years who was perhaps the most tedious individual I've ever had the misfortune of meeting! He would drone on about verb endings and within about 5 minutes, the whole class would be nodding off. Those classes lasted for about an hour, but I kid you not, they felt like 4-5 hours of mental torture!

Q: Do you think school is boring?



A: That's a really general question – it completely depends on the subject, the teacher and the student. For instance, I always hated art class because I didn't have any talent for it, but some classmates found it riveting. On the other hand, history class for me was fantastic, because I found the teachers and the content inspiring – but my classmates thought it was as dull as dishwater.

Topic: Collecting Things (2022.5)

Questions:

Do you collect things?

Have you kept anything from your childhood?

Do you usually keep old things for a long time?

Where do you usually keep the things you need?

Advice

- For Q1, you could mention any type of thing that you collect. Examples could be shoes, cars, photos, books, stamps, and many others as well.
- For Q2, you can choose one thing that you've kept and talk about it in depth, or you can mention several things in more of a list. Either way is perfectly acceptable, as long as your answer is at least 3 sentences long.
- Q4 is a very wide question, so it's good to focus in on one example, such as a phone. That way, you can talk in a more simple and fluent way to answer.

Vocabulary

- A minimalist
- Physical possessions
- Keep something to the bare minimum
- Clog up
- A load of old clutter
- Mementos
- Scrapbook
- Emotional resonance
- A deceased relative
- Get rid of it on a whim
- Keep something close at hand
- I might need it at a moment's notice
- Far greater intervals



Answers:

Q: Do you collect things?

A: No, not really, to be honest. I'm much more of a minimalist, so I try to keep my physical possessions to the bare minimum and have lots of empty space in my apartment. I imagine that having a collection of anything would clog up the space in my apartment with a load of old clutter, so I try to avoid that as much as possible.

Q: Have you kept anything from your childhood?

A: Yes, I've kept a few mementos from my childhood. I have a scrapbook that I made when I was 8, about all the activities that I did one long summer holiday. Looking back, it's amazing to see the different things that my parents did with me. We visited a castle, went to the beach, climbed a mountain, watched a football match, and all kinds of other things as well. What a great summer – and I remember it all quite clearly thanks to the scrapbook.

Q: Do you usually keep old things for a long time?

A: It depends what it is, really. If it's an item with a lot of emotional resonance for me, like a picture of a deceased relative, then I'm much more likely to keep it. On the other hand, if it's something with no emotional value, like a plate, then I would be far more likely to get rid of it on a whim.

Q: Where do you usually keep the things you need?

A: Well, this is quite a broad question – but generally, I try to keep the things I need close at hand so I can easily access them at the appropriate time. For example, I always keep my phone in my pocket because I know that I might need it at a moment's notice. Things like my passport, on the other hand, are necessary at far greater intervals, often months at a time, so I keep it safe in a drawer.

Topic: Computers (2022.5)

Questions:

In what situations do you use a computer?

When was the first time you used a computer?



What would your life be like without computers?

In what conditions would it be difficult for you to use a computer?

Advice

- For computers, you could mention desktops, laptops, or games consoles (e.g. PlayStation). Phones and tablets wouldn't count as computers for these questions.
- For Q3, it is a conditional (imagined) situation, so make sure to use words like 'would, could' rather than 'will, can'.
- Q4 is quite a challenging one, so make sure to think of a situation beforehand. You could choose just a single situation or condition and talk about it.
- Some examples:
- A power cut
- You lose your computer
- Your parents restrict your access
- You are in an exam

Vocabulary

- A digital element
- Fully disconnect
- Instantly hooked
- First exposure
- Word processing
- Be thrust into something/somewhere
- A shock to the system
- Inane
- Tranquillity
- A power outage
- Solar-powered devices

Answers:

Q: In what situations do you use a computer?

A: All kinds of situations, really. I work with a computer so I'm pretty much constantly sitting in front of my laptop the whole day. And then when I go home, I'm in charge of sorting out anything with a digital element to it – so researching and booking flights online, ordering takeout, and a huge range of other responsibilities. I almost never fully disconnect!

Q: When was the first time you used a computer?



A: That's a tough one – I've been using them as long as I can remember. I guess the first time was when I visited my cousin and played on his PlayStation 3. It was my first exposure to a games console, and I was pretty much instantly hooked! I then had to start doing basic things like word processing and internet research in my IT class at school, so that was my first experience of desktops.

Q: What would your life be like without computers?

A: It would be extremely different, let me tell you! Basically, my whole university degree and my job are based off of computers, so to suddenly be thrust into a world without computers would be quite a shock to the system. I imagine I'd spend a lot more time travelling between places doing inane things that would previously have been done online, like researching in books at the library rather than quickly Googling something. Having said that, I think there would be more tranquillity without computers constantly demanding our attention.

Q: In what conditions would it be difficult for you to use a computer?

A: Well, a lot of situations, I expect! But to pick out just one, I'd say, if there were a power outage, and my laptop battery was already fully drained, it would obviously be difficult to use it. The same goes for my phone and other devices – they all require regular access to mains electricity, so until we get solar-powered devices, a power outage will always be a bit of a challenge.

Topic: Meeting Places (2022.5)

Questions:

What is your favourite place to meet your friends?

What are some suitable places to meet your friends?

Are there any differences between your favourite meetings places in your childhood and now?

Why are some meeting places better than others?

Advice

- Questions 1 and 2 are pretty similar, so I suggest choosing one place for Q1 and another place for Q2, and describing each one in detail. The mistake to avoid would be giving the same place/answer for Q1 and again for Q2.



- Question 4 is also, to some degree, connected to Q1 and 2, so make sure to give a more general answer for Q4, talking about the characteristics that make a good meeting place, not specific meeting places themselves.
- Question 3 is a mix of the past and present tense, so make sure to practice several times using the right choice of tense for your verbs.

Vocabulary

- They lend themselves to + something
- A no-brainer
- A kaleidoscope of different options
- Cater to someone's needs
- Stretch your legs
- On the say-so of my parents
- Go anywhere my heart desires
- Spur-of-the-moment
- Din
- You're in for a rude awakening

Answers:

Q: What is your favourite place to meet your friends?

A: For me, it's an old-fashioned English pub. Pubs are like bars, but much quieter and with lots of access to seating, so they lend themselves to having a nice chat with your friends. Pubs are also free to get into, which is great, and if you go to a gastropub, you're able to order a delicious meal while you sit and chat. Obviously, they aren't suitable for everyone – underage kids usually aren't allowed in – but for the right person, they are a no-brainer.

Q: What are some suitable places to meet your friends?

A: Other than a pub, another great place to meet your friends is in a park. The great thing about a good park is that there are a kaleidoscope of different activity options – they range from playing tennis or football to just sitting on the grass and having a picnic. They basically cater to almost everyone's needs, and give you a chance to stretch your legs and take in some fresh air in the process. As long as the weather is good, they're a great option.

Q: Are there any differences between your favourite meetings places in your childhood and now?

A: Well, one obvious difference is that now, as an adult, I have a lot more freedom to go where I want, when I want. When I was a kid, I was only allowed out on the say-so of my parents, whereas today, I can go anywhere my heart desires. So, for instance, if my friends and I want to go to a



theme park or go on a spur-of-the-moment weekend trip abroad, I don't have to ask for permission – I just go!

Q: Why are some meeting places better than others?

A: Well, I think there are certain characteristics that a good meeting place needs to have. For instance, a loud place where you can't hear other people talking over the din of the place is not going to be a great meeting place. A good meeting place should also be easy to locate and shouldn't be confused with other places – if your meeting place has the same name as another place 3km away, you're in for a rude awakening!

Topic: Old Buildings (2022.5)

Questions:

Have you ever seen old buildings in your city?

Do you think we should preserve old buildings in cities?

Would you prefer to live in an old or a new building?

Are there any old buildings you would like to see in the future?

Advice:

- For Q4, this is an opportunity to talk about travelling to see buildings in other cities or countries. For example, you could talk about visiting the Eiffel Tower in Paris, as it would count as an old building!
- For Q2, you could go into depth about the different sides of the argument. If you aren't sure about how to do that, make sure to check out the Last Minute English IELTS Argument Booklet (available now), which has debate ideas and answers on 20 common IELTS topics.

Vocabulary:

- Heaps of old buildings
- Gothic architecture
- Victorian housing
- Unsightly
- Futuristic
- Springing up
- Stick out like a sore thumb



- Structurally sound
- Classic architecture
- Breaking the bank
- A goldmine of economic activity
- A certain romance and visual appeal
- They do suffer in comparison to + other option
- Broadband internet access
- All the modern conveniences that we expect
- To peer into the distant future
- Gladiators
- Death and glory

Answers:

Q: Have you ever seen old buildings in your city?

A: Yes, there are heaps of old buildings in my city. You can hardly walk down the street without bumping into some kind of Gothic architecture or Victorian housing! The bad thing really is that there are lots of quite unsightly futuristic buildings springing up all over the place – they stick out like a sore thumb amongst the traditional architecture. It really needs better planning from the local authorities.

Q: Do you think we should preserve old buildings in cities?

A: I do think so, yes, as long as they are structurally sound. You wouldn't want old buildings that are falling apart being preserved just because they are old – but if there are examples of classic architecture that can be maintained without breaking the bank, we should 100% try to preserve them. They can also be drivers of tourism. Imagine if the Parisian government had decided to tear down the Notre Dame cathedral, for example – they would have missed out on a goldmine of economic activity.

Q: Would you prefer to live in an old or a new building?

A: I think I'd probably prefer to live in a new building, on the whole. Old buildings do have a certain romance and visual appeal, but practically speaking, they do suffer in comparison to newer buildings. I'm talking about things like broadband internet access, rewiring work and things like that. A new building is more likely to have planned for all the modern conveniences that we expect, whereas the architect of an older building wouldn't have been able to peer into the distant future to predict such necessities.

Q: Are there any old buildings you would like to see in the future?



A: I would love to visit Rome to see the Colosseum. It's a huge stadium that was used for spectacular events with gladiators 2000 years ago during the Roman Empire, and certain parts of it are still standing today. People always talk about what a strong feeling the place has, as though it remembers all the death and glory that took place there. So that would be something amazing to see.

Topic: Sitting Down (2022.5)

Questions:

What is your favourite place to sit?

Do you feel sleepy when you are sitting down?

Do you always sit down for a long time?

When you were a kid, did you usually sit on the floor?

Advice

- This seems like a fairly straight forward topic, but it's important to practice your answers before the test, because it can be difficult to think about what to say. In general, if the meaning of the question is very easy to understand, it can be quite hard to think of things to say!
- Make sure to answer Q4 in the past tense, as it is a question about your childhood.

Vocabulary

- Fuzzy
- Staining
- Reclinable
- Grabbed a quick 40 winks
- Worn out
- Mentally engaging
- Stuffy
- Nod off
- A standing desk
- Posture
- Lumbar region
- Burn more calories
- Ramrod-straight



Answers:

Q: What is your favourite place to sit?

A: I have a lovely armchair in my house which is my favorite place to sit. It's obviously extremely comfortable, and it has these nice wide arms so I can put a cup of tea or coffee there without worrying about it spilling and staining the carpet. The chair is also reclinable, so there have been times when I've pushed it back and grabbed a quick 40 winks on it after feeling pretty worn out.

Q: Do you feel sleepy when you are sitting down?

A: Yeah, sometimes. It depends on a few factors though. If I'm in a room with a nice breeze and I'm doing something mentally engaging, then not really. But if I'm in a stuffy room doing something tedious, then I do certainly have a tendency to nod off.

Q: Do you always sit down for a long time?

A: I try not to. I have a standing desk at home, so when I'm working or studying, I alternate between standing and sitting. I've been told that it isn't good to sit for too long because it can ruin your posture – but standing in the same spot isn't great either – you put too much pressure on the lumbar region of your back. You do burn more calories standing up though, so that's good.

Q: When you were a kid, did you usually sit on the floor?

A: Yes, I think so – I must admit that my memories of being a kid are a bit fuzzy now. But in the photos I've seen of myself at that age, I'm always rolling around on the floor or squatting down to draw something or read a book. But I remember that when I was eating dinner, my mum always made me sit at the kitchen table with a ramrod-straight back!

Topic: Doing Sports (2022.5)

Questions

What sports do you like?

Where did you learn how to do that sport?

Did you play sports when you were young?

Do you think students need more exercise?



Advice

- In Q1, try to focus on a specific sport, because then Q2 will make more sense. If you only talk in general in Q1, your answer will be more difficult to create for Q2.
- Q4 here is partly about sports, but mostly about health and physical fitness. It's an opportunity to bring in some high-level vocabulary about those topics, which you can find in the Last Minute English course Advanced English Vocabulary.

Vocabulary and Sentences

- Team sports
- Individual sports
- My preference is for the former
- Camaraderie
- Social animals
- Our national sport
- A kick-around
- Do drills
- Fair weather
- Cardiovascular capacity
- Obesity
- Sedentary lifestyles
- Diabetes
- Vigorous exercise

Answers:

Q: What sports do you like?

A: I like a mix of sports to be honest. I play some team sports like football, and some individual sports like cross-country running, but my preference is for the former. There's a lot more camaraderie in a sports team than you get doing something by yourself. Humans are social animals, and I believe in exercising that instinct as much and as often as possible. And that's why my favorite sport would have to be football.

Q: Where did you learn how to do that sport?

A: I learned when I was growing up. I'm from the UK and football is our national sport, almost our national religion, so it's quite odd if you don't learn to play football growing up. I used to have a kick-around every night after school with my brother, and I played in an organized team twice a week. I would also do drills myself in the garden to develop the basic skills necessary for any footballer. It was great!



Q: Did you play sports when you were young?

A: Yes, as I mentioned, I played football quite often, but I also played a few other sports, including cricket. That is more of a summer sport in my country, because you need fair weather for it, and for most of the year, the UK is chilly and damp. I also swam regularly, but that was more to build up my cardiovascular capacity rather than for any great love of swimming.

Q: Do you think students need more exercise?

A: Absolutely – obesity is at dangerous levels all around the world, and a big part of the reason is the sedentary lifestyles that many students lead. Obesity can lead to all kinds of health complications in later life, including diabetes, so it's essential that students are encouraged, or even forced, to do vigorous exercise multiple times per week. It's good for your mental health and physical health, so why wouldn't you exercise more?

Topic: Talents (2022.5)

Questions:

Do you have a talent or something you are good at?

Did you master that talent recently, or when you were younger?

Do you think your talent can be useful for your future work?

Does anyone in your family have the same talent?

Advice

- All four of these questions are linked, so it's important to choose a talent you can talk about for each question.
- Make sure not to answer questions 2-4 when answering Q1, because then you'll struggle to have anything to talk about. Instead, in Q1, just describe what exactly the talent is, not where it came from or who else has it.
- Be careful of the mix of past and present tense in Q2 – that can be quite difficult.
- Any kind of talent is acceptable here – it could be musical, artist, technological, linguistic, or social. For example, your talent could be that you are a good listener – that would be a social skill.



Vocabulary

- I'm not really one to blow my own trumpet
- A huge honour
- I know what I'm doing when it comes to + area
- I never took it that seriously
- I saw it as a chore
- Something clicked, and I really threw myself into + action
- My ability really skyrocketed
- To secure some part-time work
- I'm hoping to avoid falling into that trap
- It must be in our DNA
- We have found different outlets for that + skill

Answers:

Q: Do you have a talent or something you are good at?

A: Well, I'm not really one to blow my own trumpet normally, but as you did ask, I am a pretty good guitar player. I usually play classical guitar and I've learned a bunch of really difficult songs, including Cavatina by John Williams. I have actually recently been invited to perform at my friend's wedding, which is a huge honour, and I guess shows that I know what I'm doing when it comes to guitar!

Q: Did you master that talent recently, or when you were younger?

A: I started learning when I was young, but I never took it that seriously. It was always something that my parents pushed me to do, but I saw it mostly as a chore. But suddenly, when I was 16, something clicked, and I really threw myself into improving and getting as good as possible. And I'd say that my ability really skyrocketed from there.

Q: Do you think your talent can be useful for your future work?

A: Well, possibly, but I don't see myself as a professional musician. However, it would be interesting to secure some part-time work doing it, to be able to showcase my talent. But of course, the danger is that when you get paid to do something, you lose your passion for it and it becomes just a job, so I'm hoping to avoid falling into that trap.

Q: Does anyone in your family have the same talent?

A: My mum is a great singer with a beautiful voice, but I'm the only one who can play guitar. I suppose the musical talent must have come from her – it must be in our DNA – but we have found



different outlets for that musicality. But the strange thing is that none of my siblings can sing in tune or play a single note!

Topic: Watches (2022.5)

Questions:

Do you wear a watch?

Why do some people wear expensive watches?

Have you ever received a watch as a gift?

Do you think it's important to wear a watch?

Advice

- Don't be afraid to answer 'no' if that is your real answer for Q1. You don't need to always answer in the positive. But if you do answer 'no', make sure to explain why you don't wear a watch – don't just give a 1-word answer.
- The same rule applies to Q3 & Q4 – you can say 'no', but give more details. Never give a 1-word or 1-sentence answer for IELTS Part 1
- This topic is an opportunity to use some high-level vocabulary about new technology (wearable devices in particular).

Vocabulary:

- Wearable devices
- Tracking people's health and physical activity
- Get on the bandwagon
- Value for money
- A conversation starter
- A status symbol
- High-flying overachievers
- Ostentatious
- Peacocking
- Flashy
- Understated
- My personal colour scheme
- A little frisson of excitement
- Aesthetic
- Purchasing power



Answers:

Q: Do you wear a watch?

A: I actually wear an Apple Watch, which I bought last month. I haven't figured out all the functions yet, but I read that wearable devices are becoming increasingly important when it comes to tracking people's health and physical activity, so I thought – why not get on the bandwagon and buy one! It was pretty expensive, to be honest, and I'm not yet sure if it's going to be value for money, but it's certainly a conversation starter with my friends!

Q: Why do some people wear expensive watches?

A: I think it's a status symbol as much as anything. People like that always want others to think they're successful, high-flying overachievers, but it's not always easy to make others think that! So, they buy expensive cars, ostentatious jewellery and overpriced watches to try to influence how they are perceived by others. They are essentially peacocking.

Q: Have you ever received a watch as a gift?

A: I have done, actually, yeah. It was a few years ago, and my girlfriend bought me a Calvin Klein watch for my birthday. It was exactly my style – not too flashy, more of a classic appearance, quite understated, and it matched my personal colour scheme as well. I only wear it for special occasions, but I do feel a little frisson of excitement still when I put it on.

Q: Do you think it's important to wear a watch?

A: Not really, no. I see watches as having two main functions. The first is practical – it tells the time. But we all carry smartphones now, which do exactly the same job while also providing all kinds of other conveniences. And the other function is aesthetic – watches can look cool. But that really depends on the purchasing power you have and your own personal sense of style – they aren't for everyone. So, I wouldn't say that wearing a watch is especially important.

Topic: Art (2022.1)

Questions:

Do you like drawing?

Do you like to go to art galleries?

Do you enjoy learning artistic things?



Did you learn to draw when you were a child?

Advice:

- For Q3, “artistic things” is a pretty broad word and it could be talking about a range of different areas including music and dance. However, it’s safest to stick to forms of art like painting and drawing as that is the topic under discussion.
- Again, a lot of these questions could be answered in 1-2 words – but you must resist the urge to do so! Each Part 1 question should be answered in 3-4 sentences.

Vocabulary:

- A natural talent for drawing
- Helps me to unwind
- I don’t have any ideas above my station
- Something I do for its own sake
- Overwhelming
- Shoved
- A leisurely pace
- A blank canvas
- Sculpting
- Challenging
- Rewarding
- To be brutally honest
- My passion for drawing flowered

Answers:

Q: Do you like drawing?

A: Yes, I love drawing. I can’t claim to be much of an artist – I don’t think I have a natural talent for drawing – but it’s something that I find really relaxes me and helps me to unwind if I’ve had a stressful day. I’ll usually just make my own copies of other people’s paintings or photos, nothing too creative - but that’s fine because I don’t have any ideas above my station – I’m not hoping to be a professional painter! It’s just something I do for its own sake.

Q: Do you like to go to art galleries?

A: Well, I like to go to art galleries if they aren’t crowded. I find it quite overwhelming when there are crowds of tourists in a place like the Louvre in Paris, and you can hardly take any time to stand and admire the work before you start getting shoved and moved along by the next person in line.



My ideal gallery experience would be at a much more leisurely pace, so that I could properly enjoy the paintings!

Q: Do you enjoy learning artistic things?

A: Yes, particularly new ways of translating the ideas I have in my head into something I can add to a blank canvas. I would love to learn how to paint with watercolours one day, although I haven't yet had a chance to do so. And sculpting also looks like something really challenging but also rewarding, so I might give that a try one day!

Q: Did you learn to draw when you were a child?

A: Well, it depends what you mean by learn. I did take art classes in school, but they were basically useless and, to be brutally honest, almost killed my enthusiasm for drawing. But once I graduated, I found that I didn't need a teacher guiding me to be able to draw simple things, and my passion for drawing flowered from there. So really, I learned much more as an adult than as a child.

Topic: Cars (2022.1)

Questions:

Did you enjoy traveling by car when you were a kid?

What kinds of cars do you like?

Do you prefer to be the driver or the passenger?

What do you usually do if there is a traffic jam?

Advice:

- For Q1, unlike the other 3 questions, you will be answering mostly in the past simple tense, so make sure to pay close attention to that as you are speaking.
- For Q2, you can either name a style of car (like an SUV or Sedan), or a particular car company (e.g. Ford, Tesla, Ferrari). Or, like me, you can do a mix of both!

Vocabulary:

- Carsickness
- Coincidentally



- learn my lesson
- stagger
- the hard shoulder of the motorway
- nauseous
- sleek
- zero-emissions
- a big selling point
- SUV
- Sedan
- city driving
- alert
- to be in the driving seat
- on the verge of nodding off
- get them out of the way
- hands-free

Answers:

Q: Did you enjoy traveling by car when you were a kid?

A: Not really, no. I suffered quite badly from carsickness when I was a kid, and it was usually brought on by reading in the car, which coincidentally was one of my big hobbies. It took me a long time to learn my lesson, and I remember many occasions in which I had to stagger out of the car on the hard shoulder of the motorway because I was feeling so nauseous. So, all in all, not my favorite activity as a kid!

Q: What kinds of cars do you like?

A: I'm a big fan of electric cars, and in particular, the whole Tesla range. I love how sleek the designs are, and of course, the fact that they are all zero-emissions cars is a big selling point as well. I've also never been a big fan of SUVs and other huge cars like that. I prefer something a little more modest, like a Sedan, when I'm doing city driving.

Q: Do you prefer to be the driver or the passenger?

A: Well, it depends on how alert I'm feeling and who the other person in the car is. I generally do like to be in the driving seat in all things – not just cars! And I'm not a great passenger, because I get really anxious if I don't have full confidence in the ability of the person driving. But of course, if it's late at night and I'm on the verge of nodding off, I'll always suggest that someone more awake drives, for the sake of safety.

Q: What do you usually do if there is a traffic jam?



A: Well, to be honest, the first thing I usually do is to get really annoyed – I hate being stuck in traffic. But then my next step is to put on an interesting podcast so that I can distract myself from the frustration of crawling along the highway at 5 miles per hour. If I have any calls to make, I also try to get them out of the way – hands-free, of course!

Topic: Cinemas (2022.1)

Questions:

Did you usually go to the cinema when you were a kid?

Do you usually go to the cinema with your friends?

Do you still like watching the movies which you liked when you were a kid?

Do you prefer watching movies at home or at the cinema?

Advice:

- This is also a good opportunity to bring in some movie and entertainment vocabulary. If you don't know many words related to movies and want to add extra high-level vocabulary, make sure to check out our *Advanced Vocabulary Booklet* – ask one of our staff for more information.
- Be careful of the difference between questions 1 and 2.
- Question 1 = your habit when you were a kid – answer in the past tense
- Question 2 = your habit now – answer in the present tense. In particular, the question is asking about 'who' you go with – and most people will be able to answer this with an 'it depends' kind of structure.
- The basic meaning of question 3 is whether your taste in movies has changed as you've gotten older. But you can also focus on a specific movie to talk about.

Vocabulary:

- fresh popcorn
- thrilling
- the same frequency
- date night
- splash out
- luxurious
- high-end
- put your feet up
- reclining



- sophisticated
- wouldn't touch with a 10-foot bargepole
- stand the test of time
- the all-time classics
- get a kick out of
- hands down
- for my money
- IMAX

Answers:

Q: Did you usually go to the cinema when you were a kid?

A: Yes, as often as I could! I loved the cinema as a kid, and to be completely honest, I still do to this day. There's something about the smell of fresh popcorn and the size of the screen and the great sound system that's really thrilling. I remember my parents and my uncle taking me to the cinema about once a month when I was growing up, and these days, I go with about the same frequency.

Q: Do you usually go to the cinema with your friends?

A: Sometimes, but these days I more often go with my girlfriend. We have regular date nights twice a month, where we forget about studies and work and just focus on having fun together, and the cinema is one of the hobbies that we have in common. We quite often splash out on the more luxurious, high-end cinemas where you can put your feet up in a reclinable chair and get food delivered as you watch the movie. It's a whole new level of luxury – and I fully recommend it!

Q: Do you still like watching the movies which you liked when you were a kid?

A: Well, it depends on the movie really. My taste in movies is definitely more sophisticated now, and there are certainly some movies that I enjoyed back then that I wouldn't touch with a 10-foot bargepole nowadays. But having said that, there are certain movies that really stand the test of time, the all-time classics. I'm thinking of things like the classic Disney movies, The Lion King, Aladdin, things like that, as well as movies like Jurassic Park, which I enjoyed as a kid and still get a kick out of today.

Q: Do you prefer watching movies at home or at the cinema?

A: For me, it's the cinema, hands down. There's just no comparison between the two. When you're at home, you're much more easily distracted, and you can pause the movie and lose track of what's happening– but in the cinema, you're forced to stay focused the whole time, and for my money, that discipline makes for a much deeper emotional experience than you get at home. And of course, there's the option of watching a movie in IMAX for an amazing picture, or in 4D where the chair moves you around with the action. So, for me, the cinema is the clear winner every time.



Topic: Daily Routine (2022.1)

Questions:

What is your daily routine?

Have you ever changed your daily routine?

Do you think it is important to have a daily routine for your studies?

What part of your day do you like best?

Advice:

- For Q1, you can look at the whole day, or just choose a part of the day. For example, I chose to focus on my morning routine.
- For Q3, if you are working and not studying, you can talk about your past when you were studying, or you can talk about people in general and whether a routine can help them.

Vocabulary:

- My alarm goes off at + time
- A really strong espresso
- Meditate
- Make the most of the day
- In flux
- Ready for anything
- Catch you off guard
- Willpower
- Prefer the structure of an organised group class
- Dictate their own schedule
- A really nice glow
- A bit of peace and quiet
- Chaotic

Answers:

Q: What is your daily routine?

A: Well for me, every day is different, but I do try to keep a good morning routine. So, on a good day, my alarm goes off at about 6am, and I get out of bed and have a really strong espresso. Then I



meditate for 15 minutes, have a shower and some breakfast, and then leave the house to go to my first class. That routine really helps me make the most of the day. But to be honest, I'm not exactly disciplined, so I probably only do that 2-3 times per week!

Q: Have you ever changed your daily routine?

A: Well, to be honest it changes most days, depending on my schedule of classes and meetings. As a company owner, everything is constantly in flux, so you can't get used to the patterns of a normal working or studying day. You have to be ready for anything, so that nothing catches you off guard.

Q: Do you think it is important to have a daily routine for your studies?

A: Yes, for sure, I think it's crucial. You have to develop a really strong habit of studying at a particular time or in a particular situation, and that way, you start studying almost without thinking about it. If you constantly rely on willpower for your studies, it becomes extremely difficult- that's why many students prefer the structure of an organised group class rather than dictating their own schedule.

Q: What part of your day do you like best?

A: I think my favorite part of the day is the early morning when the sun has just come up. It gives everything a really nice glow and I love the feeling of no-one else in the house being awake – it's nice to have a bit of peace and quiet. Later in the day, the house becomes a bit chaotic so it's nice to have that initial moment of quiet.

Topic: Dreams (2022.1)

Questions:

Do you often remember your dreams?

Do you share your dreams with others?

Do you want to make your dreams come true?

Do you think dreams have special meanings?

Advice:



- For question 3 (making your dreams come true), you can answer it in 2 ways. Firstly, you could think about your real sleeping dreams coming true. That would be things like being able to fly, or to be embarrassed in a public place!
- Alternatively, you can think about your dreams as your targets or goals in your life. Things like living abroad, becoming rich, finding the perfect wife/husband.
- Make sure to make your choice clear when you are answering – check my answer for how to signal your choice.
- For question 2, if you do share your dreams, choose a person that you share them with and explain what you share and why you share with that person. Don't just give a short answer of 'yes, I share my dreams'.

Vocabulary:

- a blank slate
- terrified
- emotionally devastated
- exceptionally dull
- hilarious
- worth someone's while
- bore the pants off someone
- unleashed
- we're all in the same boat
- superstitious
- fortune telling
- palm-reading
- retain
- discard
- the cold light of day

Answers:

Q: Do you often remember your dreams?

A: Most of the time, I wake up in the morning with absolutely no memory of any of my dreams – my mind is like a blank slate. But sometimes, if I've had a nightmare and it's woken me up, the sensation of being terrified or emotionally devastated will follow me through the day. Sometimes I don't even remember why I'm sad or scared – I just am!

Q: Do you share your dreams with others?

A: As a general rule, I don't share my dreams, not because I'm an especially private person, but because mostly people find listening to the dreams of others exceptionally dull! I'll usually only share my dreams if there is something relevant to that person, such as a hilarious story that



happened in the dream. That way, you can make it worth the person's while to listen to the dream, and not bore the pants off them.

Q: Do you want to make your dreams come true?

A: Well, it depends if you mean my actual dreams, or my goals. My actual dreams- definitely not! I don't want zombies and other monsters unleashed on the real world. But I certainly would like my goals to come true – I think we're all in the same boat there. I'd like to be rich, happy, successful, healthy and good-looking, of course! Who wouldn't?

Q: Do you think dreams have special meanings?

A: Well, not really, no. I'm not a particularly superstitious person, so I don't have a lot of time for things like fortune telling, palm-reading and so forth. Instead, I imagine that my dreams are just my brain's way of processing what's happened during the day – deciding what memories to retain and what to discard. And of course, sometimes those memories can be scary, and that's when I have nightmares. But I don't think they have any real significance in the cold light of day.

Topic: Emails (2022.1)

Questions:

Do you often send emails?

When would you send emails to others?

Is sending emails popular in your country?

Do you think sending emails will be more or less popular in the future?

Advice:

- Be careful of using your answer for question 2 (when you send emails) too early in question 1 (do you send emails). These two questions are very close, so we have to keep our answers separate to make sure we have enough to say for each question.
- Instead, in question 1, focus on how often you send the emails – for example, do you send them every day? Once a week? Very rarely? And you can also mention if this frequency has always been the same, or if it has changed.



Vocabulary:

- tend to opt for
- my go-to
- your best bet
- in business circles
- wade through
- email threads
- work messaging app
- forward-thinking
- keep track of something
- multiple parties
- market share

Answers:

Q: Do you often send emails?

A: Well, to be honest, not that often these days. I used to send probably 20 emails a day, but these days I tend to opt for other forms of communication, like WhatsApp or WeChat, as my go-to, rather than choosing email. I'd say I probably only send 2 or 3 emails a week these days, which is a huge drop from how it was only 5 years ago.

Q: When would you send emails to others?

A: I'll mostly send emails either in very formal situations when a long, accurate message is required, or if I don't have that person's WhatsApp or WeChat contact. I find that people check their email inbox far less than they do their social media accounts, so if you want a quick answer, email is usually not your best bet. But it's good as a first step if you don't have another means of contacting that person.

Q: Is sending emails popular in your country?

A: It used to be, for sure. But as I said, these days, the vast majority of people, when they talk to their friends and family, use communication apps rather than email. Having said that, email is still definitely popular in business circles, although the inconvenience of having to wade through long email threads isn't ideal!

Q: Do you think sending emails will be more or less popular in the future?

A: I actually think it will be much less popular, because even now, we can see that work messaging apps like Slack are becoming increasingly popular and common amongst forward-thinking companies. It's much easier to keep track of a long conversation between multiple parties on Slack



than it is in an email conversation thread, and it has a number of other useful functions as well, so I fully expect it, and other apps like it, to take a lot more of email's market share in the future.

Topic: Lost and Found (2022.1)

Questions:

Have you ever lost anything?

What would you do if you found something lost by others?

Would you post on social media if you lost something?

When you find things lost by others, do you report it to the police?

Advice:

- Be careful of how similar Q2 & Q4 are. Q2 is asking you in general what your response would be – so it's good to avoid mentioning reporting the item to the police, so you don't use your answer for Q4.
- For example, for Q2, you could talk about putting up posters or giving the item to a local shop or business next to where you found it.
- Q3 seems like it's similar to Q2 and Q4, but it's actually the opposite situation – for Q3, you have lost something. Whereas Q2 & Q4 are talking about when someone else has lost something. Make sure to not get confused by this point.

Vocabulary:

- Security measure
- Immediate vicinity
- First port of call
- Passing the buck
- Information desk
- Get home safe and sound
- Virtually impossible to track down
- Good Samaritans
- Motivated by self-interest
- Worth someone's while
- Hassle

Answers:



Q: Have you ever lost anything?

A: Not really, to be honest. I'm very careful with my valuables, and I always remember a trick that my dad taught me, which was always to look around at your seat after you stand up. The idea is that that way, you can make sure that nothing has slipped out of your pocket. It's a great little security measure and I can't tell you the number of times that I've found something that way that otherwise would have been lost.

Q: What would you do if you found something lost by others?

A: Well, the first thing I would do would be to look around in my immediate vicinity to see if anyone was looking for something. They would obviously be my first port of call. But assuming that I couldn't see anyone, I would probably look around for a suitable place to drop off the item, essentially passing the buck to someone else. I'm thinking places like an information desk in a mall or the customer service area in a supermarket. I'd leave the item with them and just hope that it got home safe and sound.

Q: Would you post on social media if you lost something?

A: Well, it depends on the item. If I lost \$5, I certainly wouldn't post about it – it would be virtually impossible to track down, and anyone who found it probably wouldn't come forward anyway. But for a more valuable item like a phone or musical instrument, I would certainly post on social media and offer some kind of reward for anyone who could find the item and return it. I think the reward is an important detail because you can assume that most people are not just Good Samaritans – they are motivated by self-interest – and so offering a reward would make it worth their while.

Q: When you find things lost by others, do you report it to the police?

A: I wouldn't usually, no, because it would be quite a hassle to go through all the paperwork and procedures for someone else's item. I would only do that if it were something of huge value, like, obviously a child or a pet or potentially a musical instrument. Anything else, I would probably just leave with the nearest reliable-looking shop owner.

Topic: Memory (2022.1)

Questions:

Are you good at memorizing things?

Have you ever forgotten something important?



Why do some people have good memories while other don't?

Why do many people rely on cell phones to remember things?

Advice:

- Be careful of the difference in meaning between 'remember' and 'memorize'.
- Remember = have a memory (clear or unclear) of something that happened. For example, "I remember his name – he is called Paul", or, "Do you remember where we parked the car?" Remember is used on a daily basis and is a very common word.
- Memorize = preparing for a test or other important event. You take a limited, specific set of knowledge and try to put it perfectly into your memory so you can use it in an event. Examples of what we could memorize = Dates for a history test; The periodic table in chemistry; A speech we will give; The words to a song

Vocabulary:

- Improvising
- A blessing and a curse
- Lousy
- Slip-ups
- A foolproof system
- Bucketload
- Genetics
- An innate ability
- That ability has to be nurtured
- Reach your full potential
- Scatter-brained
- Time-sensitive
- Set a reminder
- Receive a notification

Answers:

Q: Are you good at memorizing things?

A: Not really, no. I'm actually quite good at improvising the details of things that most people memorize, like the lines of a play or words to a song, so I don't often need to memorize. In fact, being good at improvising is kind of a blessing and a curse – it has gotten me out of some potentially difficult situations, but it also means that I know that I don't need to memorize things, which in turn has made me lazy. So, in summary, no, I'm pretty lousy at memorizing.



Q: Have you ever forgotten something important?

A: Oh, sure, all the time! I'm constantly forgetting people's birthdays, forgetting about meetings, and all sorts of other slip-ups. I try to avoid forgetting important things by noting them down in my calendar, but it's definitely not a foolproof system. I've still forgotten a bucketload of important things that I later noticed had been entered into my calendar.

Q: Why do some people have good memories while others don't?

A: I think it's a combination of practice and genetics. Some people are born with an innate ability to remember things well, but like with any natural talent, that ability has to be nurtured. If you don't practice remembering things, you won't reach your full potential, and that probably happens to more people than we expect!

Q: Why do many people rely on cell phones to remember things?

A: Well, if like me, you're a bit scatter-brained, a cell phone can be a great way of reducing the number of times you have to apologize for forgetting something important! A cell phone, once you've entered that information, never forgets it, unless of course you delete it by mistake. The information will always be in there waiting for you to notice it, and if it's something time-sensitive, you can set a reminder and receive a notification at the appropriate time to help you remember.

Topic: Mirrors (2022.1)

Questions:

Do you like looking at yourself in the mirror?

Have you ever bought a mirror?

Do you usually carry a mirror with you?

Would you use mirrors to decorate your room?

Advice:

- Remember when answering these questions that a mirror can be a portable, pocket mirror carried in a bag, or a full-length mirror on the wall of a house. You can take time mentioning both situations when answering these questions.



Vocabulary:

- reflection
- a bad hair day
- brutal
- bring myself down
- portable
- pocket mirror
- vain
- full-length mirror
- selfie function
- at sixes and sevens
- a big splodge of something

Answers:

Q: Do you like looking at yourself in the mirror?

A: Well, it depends! I don't mind it if I've already done my hair and got nice clothes on – but if I've just gotten out of bed or I'm having a bad hair day, the reflection can be pretty brutal! There are times when I actively avoid looking in the mirror because I don't want to bring myself down.

Q: Have you ever bought a mirror?

A: Yeah, I've bought a few mirrors actually – although I should say, all of them were mirrors for my apartment rather than portable, pocket mirrors to carry around with me. I'm not so vain that I need to carry a mirror at all times! I bought a full-length mirror last year and now it's there in my apartment helping me to get ready every morning.

Q: Do you usually carry a mirror with you?

A: Well, as I just mentioned, I'm not someone who would ordinarily carry a pocket mirror around with me – but I suppose, in a sense, our phones perform the same function, and I never leave the house without my phone – so you could argue that I always carry a mirror with me! But I should stress that I very rarely use that selfie function on the camera to check my appearance.

Q: Would you use mirrors to decorate your room?

A: Well, it's an interesting question – to decorate my room, perhaps not, but a mirror is something quite important and functional, so I've always made sure to install at least one mirror in the room. Otherwise, I'd end up leaving the house with my hair at sixes and sevens or with a big splodge of something on my face!



Topic: Mobile Phone (2022.1)

Questions:

What was your first mobile phone?

Do you often use your mobile phone for texting or for calls?

Will you buy a new phone in the future?

How has your mobile phone changed your life?

Advice:

- For Q1, you can give the name of the company and a brief description of when you had the first phone and what kind of phone it was. It's a good chance to make a comparison with modern phones.
- Q4 (changed your life) is a very flexible question, so you can choose any area to talk about that you think can help you display your best English. For instance, you could talk about how it's helped you improve your music or photography skills, if those are areas you know lots of English vocabulary for.

Vocabulary:

- Sophisticated
- Hit the market
- Functionality
- Time is off the essence
- Consider their response
- Social faux pas
- Trade in
- For better or worse
- As a species
- Burying our heads in screens
- The cat's out of the bag
- Can't fathom

Answers:

Q: What was your first mobile phone?



A: My first mobile phone was, I think, a Nokia, and I got it when I was about 15 years old. It wasn't anywhere near as sophisticated as an iPhone – but that was back in the days before iPhones hit the market. I remember thinking that I would never need any functionality beyond calling and texting – how wrong I was!

Q: Do you often use your mobile phone for texting or for calls?

A: I occasionally call people on my phone, but usually I'll do everything through either WeChat or WhatsApp. Unless time is off the essence and you absolutely have to make a call, it's much easier to handle everything through messages back and forth, because then people have a moment to consider their response. And as for an old-fashioned text – I honestly can't recall the last time I sent one.

Q: Will you buy a new phone in the future?

A: Yeah for sure, these days it's a real social faux pas to not update your phone at least once every 3-4 years. No-one nowadays is carrying around a brick from the 1990s. And with 5G becoming increasingly common, I think the time to trade in and upgrade will be arriving in the next year or two. My bank account won't thank me though!

Q: How has your mobile phone changed your life?

A: Well, the biggest thing it's done is to give me a distraction every time I'm bored – for better or worse! Sometimes I think that, as a species, we could do with dealing with a bit more boredom and not burying our heads in screens every other minute. But that cat's out of the bag now. Of course, a phone does make a lot of things more convenient – most of all, I would say, traveling somewhere new. I can't fathom how we were able to survive only using paper maps back in the day!

Topic: Sports Programs (2022.1)

Questions:

Do you usually watch sports programs on TV?

Do you watch live sports?

Who do you like to watch sports games with?

What kinds of games do you expect to watch in the future?



Advice:

- Be careful of the difference between questions 1 and 2 – they are very close in meaning. To avoid having to repeat the same answer, you could consider talking about two different sports in the two answers.
- Alternatively, you could make Q2 about whether you watch live or, maybe because of time differences, you watch replays later.
- Q4 could be about the future of sports, or your own particular future – how you handle it depends on you. For instance, maybe you want to quit watching sports because it's a waste of time – then your future would be without sports!

Vocabulary:

- A sports nut
- Highlights
- Spoilers
- The thrill of uncertainty
- Pastimes
- All-encompassing
- Chisel
- Plays havoc
- Once in a blue moon
- Trash talk
- Worth the admission fee
- e-sports

Answers:

Q: Do you usually watch sports programs on TV?

A: Yeah, I'm a sports nut so I'm always watching some sport or other on TV. My personal favorite is the NBA, and I try to watch the highlights of all the big games whenever I have a free minute. I always actively avoid spoilers so that I can feel the thrill of uncertainty while I'm watching the game – it's one of my biggest pastimes.

Q: Do you watch live sports?

A: Not much, to be honest. I'd love to be able to, but my job is pretty all-encompassing, so I find it hard to chisel out enough time to watch 10-minute highlight packages, never mind a full game of an hour or more! Plus, the sports that I enjoy usually are played abroad, so the time difference really plays havoc with my desire to watch the games live.



Q: Who do you like to watch sports games with?

A: Me and my friends usually watch the games together, but if they aren't around, I'm perfectly content watching games by myself. Given how busy we are all are, it's once in a blue moon that all my friends can get together to watch a game, but the trash talk is great when we are able to. That atmosphere amongst our group is worth the admission fee by itself!

Q: What kinds of games do you expect to watch in the future?

A: Well, I'm expecting e-sports to become even more popular than they already are, but I'm not sure if I'll watch them – I would rather play the video games myself than watch someone else play them. And the emergence of new sports that are worth watching is not something that happens very often, so I fully expect to still be watching football and basketball 20 years from now.

Topic: Street Market (2022.1)

Questions:

What do people usually buy in street markets?

Do you prefer to shop in malls or in street markets?

When was the last time you went to a street market?

Are there many street markets in your country?

Advice:

- For Q3 – don't make the mistake of just answering 'when' you went – try to add some details to avoid the answer being too short. For example, what did you buy? How was the crowd at the market?
- An important piece of vocabulary – an individual 'shop' in a street market is called a 'stall'. You can use this word several times for this topic.

Vocabulary:

- Artisanal products
- Organic products
- Handcrafted soaps



- Locally brewed craft beer
- Mass produce
- Restrictive
- Faceless corporations
- Street market stall
- Chucking it down with rain
- Pick up a few bargains
- Blue cheese
- Freshly-baked pastries
- Grinning like the Cheshire cat
- Instagrammable

Answers:

Q: What do people usually buy in street markets?

A: I think it probably depends based on the location of the street market, but in my area, people generally think of street markets as a great opportunity to buy artisanal or organic products from small, local producers. I'm thinking of things like handcrafted soaps or locally brewed craft beer. It's the kind of thing that you don't get in big supermarkets because the producers don't mass produce them, so street markets are the place to go.

Q: Do you prefer to shop in malls or in street markets?

A: I personally really like street markets, as long as the weather is good. A mall, to me, is a bit restrictive – I like to be able to see the sky when I shop. And I also like to feel like I have a personal relationship with the person who is selling the products, which is something that you just don't get with the faceless corporations who run the shops in malls. A street market stall, on the other hand, does give you the chance to look the seller in the eye when you're buying.

Q: When was the last time you went to a street market?

A: I went last week, actually. It was chucking it down with rain so there was hardly anyone at the market, and I was able to pick up a few bargains as a result. I bought some nice blue cheese and a few freshly-baked pastries at a big discount, so I came away grinning like the Cheshire cat.

Q: Are there many street markets in your country?

A: Yes, as a country we are increasingly interested in buying from local producers, and a street market is just the opportunity for that. These days, you can find street markets in all the major cities, and even towns have them at the weekends. The things that people sell are very



Instagrammable so they are usually pretty popular with influencers and their followers, which is helping the markets make a profit.

Topic: Taking Photos (2022.1)

Questions:

Do you like taking photos?

Do you like taking selfies?

What is your favorite family photo?

Do you want to improve your picture taking skills?

Advice:

- Q1 (photos) and Q2 (selfies) are pretty close to each other – so for Q1, try to avoid talking about selfies.
- Instead, talk about photos in general. Then in Q2, you can focus more on talking about selfies in particular.
- 3 of these questions could be considered closed or “yes/no” questions, but avoid answering them with 1-2 words. You must always give at least 3 sentences in your answer.
- If you are struggling to think of what to say, a good way to get more ideas is ask yourself the question, ‘Why?’ That will usually give you some new ideas.

Vocabulary:

- I don't really have the eye for it
- The composition of a photo
- The Rule of Thirds
- Demotivated
- Catching myself at a bad angle
- Consigned to the trash
- Well-lit
- Well-staged
- It captured a really nice moment
- Magic pill
- Landscape photography
- Wildlife photography
- Learn it from scratch



Answers:

Q: Do you like taking photos?

A: To be honest, not really! I like looking at great photos, but I don't really have the eye for it myself – most of my photos come out looking like they were taken by mistake! I know some people follow certain rules or guidelines about the composition of a photo, things like the Rule of Thirds, but to be honest, I'm too lazy and demotivated to learn about all that.

Q: Do you like taking selfies?

A: I don't mind appearing in selfies but I hate being the person that holds the phone to take them. It's because I always end up catching myself at a bad angle because I'm concentrating on the background, the other people in the photo and so on. So, any selfie that I take myself always gets immediately consigned to the trash!

Q: What is your favorite family photo?

A: There's one family photo that I really like, which was taken on a family holiday to France a few years ago. The photo has my whole family there, and it's really well-lit and well-staged, so everyone looks really good in it. It captured a really nice moment on an excellent trip, so I like to go back from time to time to look at it.

Q: Do you want to improve your picture taking skills?

A: Well, I should, really! But I don't want to. If I had unlimited time and could take a magic pill to make me good at something like landscape photography, or even wildlife photography, that would be great – but I certainly don't have time to learn it from scratch. So, overall, I'm not really interested in improving my photography skills.

Topic: Time Management (2022.1)

Questions:

How do you plan your time in a day?

Is it easy to manage time?

When do you find it hard to allocate time?

Do you like being busy?



Advice:

- For Q3, you have two choices. Firstly, you can talk about the situations in which it's hard to organise or allocate time, such as in an exam period.
- Secondly, you could do as I have done, and talk about specific activities that are hard to allocate time to. Examples could be exercising, meditating, cooking, calling parents, or other activities that we know we should do but that often get ignored.
- For Q4, to make a complete answer, make sure to mention 'why' you either like or don't like being busy. Avoid a one-sentence answer.

Vocabulary:

- Uninspiring
- Immovable
- Unmissable
- Structured
- Easier said than done
- Occupation
- A fixed class schedule
- A piece of cake
- A bit of a nightmare
- The press of a button away from...
- Panic mode
- Postponing
- Untold long-term damage
- Swamped
- Busyness
- Idleness
- Idle hands are the devil's playthings
- Wrap up
- Switch off

Answers:

Q: How do you plan your time in a day?

A: My approach is pretty uninspiring to be honest. I usually have several immovable events in my schedule each day, and I just try to get everything else done around those events. For example, if I have an unmissable meeting around lunchtime, I'll make sure to eat before or after the meeting. I probably should be more structured in my time allocation, but it's definitely easier said than done.



Q: Is it easy to manage time?

A: I think it depends on two things – your personality and your occupation. If you're a very disciplined student with a fixed class schedule, managing your time should be a piece of cake. However, if you're like me, a naturally disorganised small business owner with a range of hobbies, managing time can be a bit of a nightmare!

Q: When do you find it hard to allocate time?

A: Well, it's hard to allocate time when I'm trying to fit something important but non-urgent into my schedule. For example, it's really hard to allocate time to something like cooking healthy food when I'm just the press of a button away from having food delivered to my house. Very often, my brain will go into panic mode when I have a lot of work to do, and make poor, short-sighted decisions like postponing calling my parents or not going to the gym. It might help me in the short-term, but untold long-term damage is also being done.

Q: Do you like being busy?

A: Well, what I like is being fairly busy, so that my brain is kept active, but not to the point where I feel completely swamped and start to get stressed. It's not healthy for anyone to suffer the extremes of either busyness or idleness – it's with good reason that people say, 'Idle hands are the devil's playthings.' I like to be able to wrap up everything I need to do in a particular day and be able to switch off when work is done, not have my job follow me home. So, in summary, somewhere between busy and idle is perfect for me.

Topic: TV Programs (2022.1)

Questions:

What kinds of TV programs do you usually watch?

Do you think children today watch too much television?

What is the impact of watching TV on kids?

What kinds of TV shows would you like to see broadcast more?

Advice:

- Be careful to keep your answers to Q2 and Q3 separate, because those two questions could be quite close in meaning. Remember that the word 'impact' can be a positive word



as well as a negative word, so you could talk about the disadvantages and advantages of TV in these two questions.

- For Q4, you can either talk about the genres of TV show (e.g. comedies, dramas, horrors) or you can give one example of a specific TV show and say you'd like to see more like that.

Vocabulary:

- Picky
- Open-ended shows
- Soaps
- A sense of artistic integrity
- Limited miniseries
- Binge
- In and of itself
- Overuse
- Overexposure
- A mature audience
- Emotionally traumatized
- Streaming services
- An existing cinematic universe
- That's all well and good
- Subtle, well-crafted dramas
- Trials and tribulations
-

Answers:

Q: What kinds of TV programs do you usually watch?

A: I am very picky when it comes to TV shows. I only watch shows that I consider to be very high-quality and worth my time. I also don't like watching open-ended shows like soaps, where you could be stuck watching it for the next 5 years or more. I like my shows to have a sense of artistic integrity with a clear story running through the beginning, middle and end. That's why I think some of my favorite shows are limited miniseries that only have a single season. That way, you can be sure that the writers have figured everything out in advance.

Q: Do you think children today watch too much television?

A: Not really, no. I think that kids these days are far more likely to binge on video games and social media than traditional TV. That's bad in and of itself, because there are big dangers that come with the overuse of and overexposure to social media and video games. However, as far as I can see, kids today aren't really watching too much TV.



Q: What is the impact of watching TV on kids?

A: It depends on what they're watching. For example, a kid watching a show with a lot of violence that's intended for a mature audience might be emotionally traumatized. However, the same kid watching a nature documentary could be inspired to learn more about the natural world. So, it's kind of hard to say about the impact in general!

Q: What kinds of TV shows would you like to see broadcast more?

A: I'd like to see more high-quality dramas based on original stories. I feel like, particularly with the rise of streaming services like Disney+, every new show is in some way tied into an existing cinematic universe. I'm talking things like Star Wars and Marvel. That's all well and good for a certain type of viewer, but for me personally, I don't have much interest in that kind of programming. Instead, I enjoy subtle, well-crafted dramas about the trials and tribulations of normal people.

Topic: Websites (2022.1)

Questions:

What kind of websites do you usually visit?

Are there any changes on the websites you usually visit?

What is your favorite website?

What kinds of websites are popular in your country?

Advice:

- For Q2, you can think about it in two ways: Firstly, does the website change its branding and general appearance.
- Secondly, is there regularly new content on that website (e.g. videos, articles).
- Both of those count as 'changes', but we should be specific about which one we are talking about.
- Be careful of questions 1 and 3 – they are relatively similar to each other. Try to avoid mentioning your specific favorite website in question 1, as then you'll still be able to talk about it for question 3.
- For question 4, it's almost too wide of a question to answer easily – so you can follow my example and first say 'lots of websites!' Then choose one in particular to talk about.



Vocabulary:

- Intellectual
- Finance
- Philosophy
- Brainless
- Current affairs
- Pertinent
- Branding
- Newsfeed
- Shifting to accommodate something
- Algorithm
- Load up
- Binge-watching
- That certainly would be up there
- Mortgage advice

Answers:

Q: What kind of websites do you usually visit?

A: I'd like my answer to this to be something really impressive and intellectual, like websites about finance or philosophy. But the truth of the matter is that the websites I visit most are websites to watch funny videos or to read about sports! Pretty brainless, non-challenging stuff! Obviously, I do also browse current affairs and do research on pertinent things in my life, but the majority of the websites I visit are ones that I enjoy!

Q: Are there any changes on the websites you usually visit?

A: Well, that's an interesting question – it depends what you mean by changes. If you mean that the whole look of the website, the branding and appearance, if that's changed, then no, not really. But of course, on websites like YouTube, there is new content being published every minute of the day, so my newsfeed is constantly shifting to accommodate new videos and the algorithm then suggests them to me. That happens every time I visit the website.

Q: What is your favorite website?

A: Well, that's a tough one, but in terms of the largest amount of enjoyable time that I've spent on an individual website, it would probably be Netflix. Every time I load up Netflix, I end up binge-watching at least a couple of hours of TV, and very much enjoying it as well. So that certainly would be up there in my list of favorite websites!



Q: What kinds of websites are popular in your country?

A: All kinds! They say that there's something on the internet for everyone, regardless of your particular tastes. But one that I've recently become aware of that is very popular with a wide range of people in my country is the website 'Money Saving Expert'. As the name suggests, it's all about the different ways you can save money – from insurance deals to mortgage advice. It's really very useful, and I would recommend it to anyone living in the UK.

Topic: Science (2021.9)

Questions:

Do you like science?

When did you start to learn about science?

Which science subject do you find interesting?

What kinds of interesting things you have done with science?

Advice:

- Make sure to learn all the correct names and pronunciation of the different branches of natural science – biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, biochemistry, microbiology, geology. You can use these several times in this topic.
- For question 4, make sure to choose one answer in advance – it's hard to think of an interesting thing you've done in science in the middle of a test. You should choose something that is easy to describe, and prepare some specific vocabulary. In my example, I've chosen an activity that is easy to describe but in which I can add words like 'otter' and 'natural habitat.'

Answers:

Q: Do you like science?

A: Yes, I really like science actually. My parents tell me that I've always had a scientific mind – I would constantly ask them how things worked when I was growing up, to the point of making them kind of annoyed! And then I loved taking biology, physics and chemistry classes in high school – I always looked forward to those classes every week.



Q: When did you start to learn about science?

A: Well, I would ask my parents lots of questions when I was growing up, so in a way, that was my introduction into the world of science – but in terms of formal education, it was in science class in primary school. I remember my teachers would show us very simple experiments and then have us repeat the experiment – and I loved every minute of it.

Q: Which science subject do you find interesting?

A: Well, I like them all in their own way, but if I had to choose, I'd probably say chemistry. I feel like it's the foundation of basically everything that happens in the world. You're looking at things on an atomic level, so I feel like it's the deepest area of science. And it really adds to your understanding when you're doing something like studying animals in biology because you know what is happening inside of those animals in a chemical sense.

Q: What kinds of interesting things you have done with science?

A: Well, one of my earliest memories from school was a science field trip. We went to a nature reserve where otters lived, and had to do research to learn all about the natural habitat and behaviour of the otters by reading different signs and asking the scientists there. It was really interactive and a great way of learning!





Part 2 & 3

Topic: A problem you had while shopping online or in a store (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a problem you had while shopping online or in a store. You should say:

When it happened

What you bought

What problem you had

And explain how you felt about the experience

Advice

- You should use a variety of grammar tenses to describe your past experience shopping online or offline: past simple, past continuous and, ideally, the past perfect as well.
- Expressive language can be used here to talk about your feelings after the event (infuriating, depressed, disappointed, desponded etc.)

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Probably the worst shopping experience I've ever had was during + event
- It dawned on me
- I may as well + simple tense verb
- To get something out of the way
- Out and about
- Housewarming
- Packed to the brim
- Running errands
- More or less
- Dizzily
- The time was ripe for + continuous tense verb
- The time was ripe to + simple tense verb
- Trade-off
- Plethora
- Disaster struck
- Rung up
- Discrepancy
- Bite the bullet
- Cut your / my losses



- It left a bitter taste in my mouth
- Burned a hole in your / my wallet
- Disingenuous

Answer:

Probably the worst shopping experience I've ever had was during the Singles' Day celebration a few years back.

It happened in pre-lockdown times, so all the physical stores were still open back then. I was running errands and it dawned on me that I may as well get all the shopping out of the way while I was already out and about. I had a housewarming and an important anniversary coming up and, since Singles' Day is more or less the Chinese equivalent of Black Friday, the time was ripe for gift shopping. So, I popped into a few stores and, of course, the queues were dizzyingly long, but I reasoned that the discounts were worth the trade-off of waiting a bit longer in each store. I had my trolley packed to the brim with household staples, a few small appliances for the housewarming, and a plethora of decadent pastries to indulge in.

Disaster struck when I was trying to pay. I waited for what felt like an eternity in the queue and, when the cashier had rung up all my items, I realised that there was a sizable discrepancy between the prices at the till and the prices on the shelves. The cashier was unsympathetic, so my options were to either go back and take a picture of the shelf prices, or to bite the bullet and pay the price at the till. Given the angry-looking mob behind me in the queue, I decided to cut my losses and I opted for the latter.

So, I left the store with a bitter taste in my mouth. I had burned such a deep hole in my wallet and I felt the whole experience at the store was very disingenuous. Needless to say, I never went back to that store again.

Part 3 Questions:

- What kind of customer service do you think is good?
- What are the differences between shopping online and in-store?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Cornerstone
- Port of call
- Geared towards
- Devolve
- Petty
- Tit-for-tat
- At the end of the day
- Above and beyond



- To follow up / To follow up with
- At hand
- To set something apart from something else
- Clear to the naked eye
- Immediately apparent
- To have an avenue of recourse
- To foot the bill
- Infuriating
- Pros and cons

Answer

Q: What kind of customer service do you think is good?

A: In my experience, the cornerstone of good customer service is empathy. The first port of call is to acknowledge the problem and validate the customer's experience. Thereafter, the entire experience must be geared towards a satisfactory resolution of the problem. In other words, it shouldn't devolve into a petty tit-for-tat, because that benefits no one at the end of the day.

In some cases, customer service can go above and beyond the basic expectations, like when customer service agents take your number and follow up with updates on the issue at hand. Even if there hasn't been any progress on the issue yet, getting an update can be comforting and for me, it's what sets good customer service apart from outstanding customer service.

Q: What are the differences between shopping online and in-store?

A: Some differences are clear to the naked eye, namely the fact that when shopping online your shopping is delivered to you, rather than you collecting the shopping in a physical store.

Other differences are not immediately apparent. For example, what happens if you need to return something? In a physical store, you can simply take the defective product back to the store with your receipt or invoice – assuming the product has some sort of a guarantee or warranty. But when shopping online, you might not always have an avenue of recourse like that. You may have to foot the bill of the courier to collect the product, or you might only be able to interact with an AI chat bot instead of speaking to a real human – which can be infuriating. So, there are pros and cons to shopping online and offline.



Topic: A time you saw lots of plastic waste (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a time when you saw a lot of plastic waste (e.g. in a park, on the beach). You should say:

When and where you saw the plastic waste

Why there was a lot of plastic waste

What you did after you saw it

And explain what your thoughts were about it

Advice

- You should use a variety of grammar tenses to describe your past experience shopping online or offline: past simple, past continuous and, ideally, the past perfect as well.
- This question is a good opportunity to use language of location e.g. just above, just North of, beside / alongside / along the, towards, at the end of etc. but don't spend lots of time describing the exact location. Only describe what is necessary to make your answer clear.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Velocity
- Exacerbated
- Severe drought
- Dwindling
- Laid bare
- When something makes your stomach turn
- Staying true
- To avoid something like the plague
- In the first place

Answer:

The largest amount of plastic waste I've ever seen is in the Yangtze River, just before it merges with the East China Sea in Shanghai.

I walk or cycle along the river on my way to work every day, and there is a particularly sharp bend in the river channel that has been known to collect waste. I suspect that the river isn't flowing at a high enough velocity to carry the waste all the way around the bend. I've noticed an unusually



high amount of waste there in the past year or so, but the problem has been exacerbated in recent months because there is a severe drought in China at the moment. Many of the rivers are dwindling, so all the plastic that we don't normally see is being laid bare on the channel floor.

My initial reaction was shock – where did all of this rubbish come from? Seeing a mountain of plastic made my stomach turn, so I resolved to making a conscious effort to minimise my personal use of plastic. No matter how small, every little bit of waste adds up eventually and, so far, I've been staying true to my commitment of avoiding plastic like the plague.

After reflecting on plastic waste in the Yangtze, and my own contributions to it, I wonder what the regulations are regarding dumping plastic waste in the river. If I remember correctly, there is a large filter before the river meets the sea, and the authorities are aware of the pollution problems in the city, but I still think that there shouldn't be so much plastic there in the first place.

Part 3 Questions:

- Why do people like to use plastic products?
- How can we reduce our use of plastic?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Dirt cheap
- Of old
- Corrode
- Leech
- Synthetic
- Moulded
- Paradigm shift
- Radical
- Envisage
- Profit-driven
- Two-pronged

Answers

Q: Why do people like to use plastic products?

A: I'd say it's a combination of cost and convenience. Plastic is dirt cheap to produce and it lasts an eternity, so it makes sense that the use cases of plastic are endless, from the packaging of products to the production of products made of plastic.

In many cases, plastic is the perfect material, like underground water pipes. Unlike the lead water pipes of old, plastic water pipes don't corrode or leech heavy metals into the drinking water supply. In terms of packaging, plastic is fantastic because it's synthetic and can be moulded into



any shape or form, so it's easy to wrap your products in a cheap manner that won't be degraded during shipping.

Q: How can we reduce our use of plastic?

A: In my opinion, a two-pronged solution is needed to drastically reduce the use of plastic. On the consumer's side, people who care about the environment need to put their money where their mouth is and avoid plastic packets and products by reusing old plastic products and choosing alternatives, like brown paper bags.

On the other end of the product lifecycle, companies need a radical paradigm shift in how they envisage new product designs and the way they are packaged. It is absolutely possible to use alternative materials to plastic, and to stop producing single-use products. Personally, I think we might need government intervention on that last part, however, because companies tend to be profit-driven.

Topic: A popular place for sports (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a popular place for sports that you've been to (e.g. a stadium). You should say:

Where is it

When you went there

What you did there

And how you feel about the place

Advice

- A sports place could be any kind of sports arena – a football stadium, a basketball court, a baseball pitch, a martial arts event, the Olympics, a high school sports where you went to support your children etc.
- The topic does not specifically mention that you were a spectator, so you could also talk about a sports event that you played in. Just note that Q4 is asking you how you felt about the *place*, not the game / match, so you must describe how you felt about the location and the atmosphere, rather than describing the sports game / match itself.



Vocabulary & Sentences

- 30-odd = approximately 30
- Mapping out
- Fanatic
- Serendipitous
- Ferocious
- To beeline towards something / To make a beeline
- To set in motion
- The moment of truth
- An electric atmosphere
- 50-something = approximately 50
- I / we couldn't contain myself / ourselves
- To be taken aback
- A nail-biter
- A close call
- Clinched

Answer:

The sporting grounds that I remember most vividly is Liverpool's football stadium, Anfield. Located 30-odd miles west of Manchester, Anfield is the home of the famous Liverpool Football Club.

Let me give you some background to the story first. In early 2012, I went on a sightseeing expedition across mainland Europe and the UK with my best mate from university. We had just crossed the Channel and were mapping out our itinerary. Since both of us are football fanatics, it was quite serendipitous that one of the world's most ferocious sporting rivalries was occurring during our stay in the UK – the FA Cup match between Liverpool and Manchester United.

So, naturally, we made a beeline straight for a ticketing booth and we set everything in motion to watch the game the following weekend.

Finally, the moment of truth arrived, and we headed over to the stadium. The atmosphere was electric. 50-something thousand fans streamed into the enormous stadium, and we couldn't contain ourselves. We were taken aback by how streamlined and painless the whole process was, despite there being so many people. The facilities were immaculate and the staff very obliging. It seemed as if every blade of grass had been individually nurtured on the pitch! The game was a nail-biter, so the stadium was constantly roaring in excitement and agony at every close call. Eventually, Liverpool clinched another goal to win the game 2-1, and the stadium erupted into euphoria. So, Anfield will forever hold a special place in my heart.

Part 3 Questions:

- What are the benefits of sports for children?
- Is it necessary to build public sports spaces?



Vocabulary & Sentences

- Like herding cats
- To lead an active lifestyle
- Proponent of + activity / lifestyle / diet / habit / routine
- Instil
- To reap the benefits of + activity / lifestyle / diet
- Cardiovascular
- Hone
- Hand-eye coordination
- I'm in favour of + action / option / decision
- Attributes
- A health nut
- A gym rat
- It's worth every penny
- A win-win situation
- Ever-green

Answers

Q: What are the benefits of sports for children?

A: As a parent myself, I'm a huge proponent of encouraging children to play sports from a young age. Of course, the most obvious positive point is that it helps children to lead an active lifestyle and it lets them reap the health benefits associated with regular cardiovascular exercise.

In general, kids have lots of energy and love to run around, but getting them to run around in a *coordinated* manner – like in a team sport – can be like trying to herd cats. So, having your children play sports from a young age helps to instil a mindset of cooperation with their team members, as well as develop their muscles and hone their hand-eye coordination. Those are must-have attributes for children, and sports is the perfect way to develop those attributes.

Q: Is it necessary to build public sports spaces?

A: For sure. As a health nut and a gym rat, I may be a bit biased in my answer though! There are countless proven benefits to daily exercise, so I'm in favour of building as many sports grounds as possible in cities and towns. Some facilities, such as sports fields, can only be built by the local municipality or sponsored by a donor, due to their cost.

It's worth every penny though, because it directly promotes a healthy lifestyle and creates a spirit of cooperation as well as social cohesion within the community. I figure that's a win-win situation because the citizens get access to a venue for their training, while the sponsors or the municipality get an ever-green advertising space by having their branding printed all over the facility.



Topic: A time you made a decision to wait for something (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a time you made a decision to wait for something. You should say:

When it happened

What you waited for

Why you made the decision

And explain how you felt about the decision

Advice

- Notice that the topic specifically mentions a time that you **made a decision** to wait. In other words, this must be an occasion where you had two options – wait or leave – and you decided to wait. So, this can't be a time when you waited to receive a prize at school, for example, because you didn't have a choice in that case.
- All four questions will require the past tense, but you can also mix in the present perfect simple tense as well e.g. I have been grateful for that decision ever since.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- To let an opportunity pass me by
- First come, first served
- At the crack of dawn
- Slog
- I'd heard horror stories about + past event
- Throwing in the towel
- To stick it out to the end
- A once in a lifetime opportunity
- To make a call / To make the right call
- When the going gets tough

Answer:

A time I waited was during the ticketing stage of the 2006 FIFA World Cup, hosted by Germany.



Tickets for the World Cup are sold on a first come, first served basis, so I woke up at the crack of dawn to stand in line at the ticket office. The queue was a few hundred metres long and it snaked all the way around the block.

It's been a lifelong dream of mine to attend a FIFA World Cup and, since I had enough money in my savings account, I was not going to let this opportunity pass me by. I knew it would be a miserable slog to get tickets because I'd heard horror stories about waiting for half a day in some places to buy tickets. It was a particularly icy morning and at several points throughout the day, I considered throwing in the towel and leaving. But this was a once in a lifetime chance, so I forced myself to stick it out to the end.

And how joyful I feel to have made that decision! That World Cup was an exhilarating tournament and it's one of my most cherished memories. I would have regretted leaving the queue for the rest of my life, so today, it also serves as a reminder to persevere when the going gets tough. In hindsight, I feel so relieved and grateful that I made the right call on that fateful day.

Part 3 Questions

- Why do some people like a slow-paced life?
- Are people less patient now than in the past? Why?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Subscribe to + noun / trend / lifestyle / opinion
- Hustle culture
- Fast-forwarding
- Sick and tired of + something you don't like
- Getting sucked into + trend / lifestyle / culture
- Fad
- Conscious intent
- Breakneck speed
- On your own terms
- Predicated on
- Bombarded
- The be-all and end-all
- Deriving / To derive
- On the lookout for + noun
- Novelty
- Instant gratification

Answers

Q: Why do some people like a slow-paced life?



A: Some people don't want to subscribe to the fast-paced "hustle culture" of the modern world anymore. They're sick and tired of fast-forwarding through their life, chasing promotions, getting sucked into the current trends or fads, and waiting for the next big thing to happen.

Living a slow-paced life, with conscious intent, is the antidote to the living life at breakneck speed. By slowing things down, you reduce stress, find peace, and live life on your own terms, which can be a far more rewarding and fulfilling way to live.

Q: Are people less patient now than in the past? Why?

A: Yes, I'm afraid so. If you look around and observe the modern world, everything is predicated on consuming more and achieving more. People want new things all the time because they're bombarded with ads and a social media culture that conveys social status as the be-all and end-all of deriving meaning in the world.

This has always existed in human societies, at least to some extent, but I think that technology and social media have trained people to be less patient because they're always ready to show us the next notification, the next image, the next video, the next product, so on and so forth. In other words, technology leaves us constantly on the lookout for the next novelty, which reduces our attention span and makes us less patient because we're so used to getting instant gratification.

Topic: A home of someone you know (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe the home of someone you know well and that you visit often. You should say:

Whose home it is

How often you go there

What it is like

And explain how you feel about the home

Advice

- Q1 is straightforward and doesn't require long answers. Briefly state whose home it is and remember to say how you know that person, because you must choose someone that you know well and visit often. A quick way to do this is to use the present perfect simple: I have known Greg for 20 years / we have been friends since kindergarten.



- Q2 is also straightforward and doesn't require a long answer. If you keep your answers for Q1 and Q2 concise, you will have more time to describe the house in detail during Q3 and Q4.
- In Q3, you can talk about what you do at the house, but remember to specifically relate it to the actual question – what is the house like? For example, if the house has lots of activities, like a pool table, a swimming pool, a games room etc. you can talk about the parties hosted at this house because it's the perfect venue, and how you always have a blast when you go to these parties.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Someone's place = someone's house
- Watering hole
- Few and far between
- Off the beaten track
- Treacherous
- Off the grid
- Borehole
- Eccentric
- Souvenir
- Trinket
- Psychedelic
- Nook and cranny
- To pass up an opportunity
- To park off
- To laugh your head off
- Rejuvenated

Answer:

Let me tell you about my friend Gregory's house, and why I love going there.

Greg is my oldest friend, and I've been hanging out at his place just about every weekend since meeting him in kindergarten. His house is pretty much the watering hole for our friend group, where we start our weekends. There have been occasions when we didn't gather at his house, but those were few and far between.

Now, let me paint you a picture of the house. It's located on the outskirts of my town, quite off the beaten track. You have to drive down a treacherous gravel road to reach his property, but trust me, it's absolutely worth the effort. His house overlooks a pristine valley, almost completely untouched by human activity. The house itself is one of those eco-cabins, made from local timber with a corrugated iron roof. It's completely off the grid – he has solar panels for electricity, gas for cooking and a borehole for pumping water up to the house. Inside the house, Greg has an eccentric collection of souvenirs, trinkets and psychedelic art from his days of travelling. Every



nook and cranny is filled with some curious item from a faraway culture. Every time I go there, I can't shake the feeling that there is still something I haven't seen.

Well, there are two main reasons I'll never pass up an opportunity to visit Greg's place. Firstly, it's the perfect spot for a quick getaway from the hustle and bustle of my town. His plot really is surreal. Secondly, Greg is simply a great host. We like to park off on his veranda and watch the sunset while he tells outrageous travel stories, and we laugh our heads off. We always come home feeling rejuvenated and in good spirits, so, Greg's house is where you'll find me most weekends.

Part 3 Questions

- Is it better to live in the city or in the countryside?
- What safety risks are there in residential buildings in cities?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Hands-down
- In close proximity to + a person / a place
- Hordes
- Disparity
- Not as prevalent as + comparison / other object
- Astronomical
- Bang for your buck
- Structural deficiency
- Population density
- To go up in flames / Went up in flames
- Pandemonium
- Mass damper
- Counterbalance

Answers

Q: Is it better to live in the city or in the countryside?

A: For me, the countryside wins hands-down. For many people, the tranquillity of the countryside, as well being in close proximity to nature, are simply more important than having easy access to dozens of stores and services in the city. There's a much stronger sense of belonging and community in the countryside, which just can't be found in a city with hordes of people on the streets.

In the countryside, there's significantly less crime as well – probably because the disparity between social classes is not as prevalent as it is in the city. You also get much better bang for your buck by moving out of the city. Inflation and rent are both growing astronomically downtown, so I wouldn't trade my countryside lifestyle for those city prices again.



Q: What safety risks are there in residential buildings in cities?

A: Safety risks that come to mind are apartment fires and structural deficiencies in the building itself. Cities in China have a very high population density, so if an apartment block went up in flames, it could be catastrophic. The building would be damaged, people would lose their possessions and, of course, there would be a tragic loss of life.

The other risk is structural. Those kinds of safety hazards could either be caused by human negligence, such as cutting corners on the building regulations, or by an unforeseen circumstance, like an unusually powerful earthquake. Modern buildings are built with mass dampers to counterbalance the sway of the building, but the trembling can still cause pandemonium among the population. So, I'd say those are the major safety hazards in cities.

Topic: A difficult thing you did and succeeded at (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a difficult thing you did and succeeded at. You should say:

What it was

How you overcame the difficulties

Whether you got help

And explain how you felt after you succeeded

Advice

- Q1 is a very broad topic. You could talk about being accepted into a prestigious university, graduating with a degree from university, landing your first job after graduating, moving to a new city or country, passing a very selective exam, learning a musical instrument or language, overcoming an injury etc.
- Q2 is a good place to talk about your behaviour and strategy while you were doing the difficult thing. You can mention what made this thing so difficult, but remember to focus on the ways that you overcame these difficulties. Some ideas are: staying disciplined and having a study routine, simply persevering through the hard times, visualising the end result to keep yourself motivated, forming a study group, taking extra classes or private tutoring etc. If you worked or studied with other people, you can mention them here, but be careful not to use your answer for Q3 here.



- In Q3, you could reference your supervisor at university or work, your parents, your friends or study buddies, a role model or mentor that guided you etc.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Stringent
- Rigour
- Toiling away
- The small hours
- What got me through was + actions or beliefs that helped you succeed
- Grit
- To go flat-out
- To hit rock bottom / To have hit rock bottom
- To make it / To have made it
- Blood, sweat and tears
- Euphoria / Euphoric
- To feel butterflies in your stomach
- The real deal

Answer:

I'd like to tell you how I got my engineering degree, which is, by far, the most difficult thing I've ever accomplished.

I was fortunate enough to study at a prestigious university with very stringent entrance requirements. This university has a high standing in academia, and their engineering programme is infamous for its academic rigour. After a full day of lectures, tutorials and practicals, we spent almost every night in the design lab toiling away well into the small hours. What got me through the degree was a combination of discipline, grit, and luck. As the curriculum was so huge, the only option was to bury yourself in your books and go flat-out until everything was done.

Thankfully, I joined a group of like-minded peers who also wanted to excel in their studies. We formed a study group and we worked very well together throughout the degree. Seeing other people grafting away was a powerful motivation to keep pushing forward, especially when our spirits hit rock bottom during exam time. In hindsight, I'm not sure I would have made it without this group!

Graduation day was a surreal experience. There was an electrical current running through the air in the grand hall and a sea of proud, smiling faces. To finally receive the degree certificate, after four years of blood, sweat and tears, was a moment of euphoria. I remember feeling as though I were living in a dream, but when my name was called and I felt the butterflies in my stomach, I knew it was the real deal. So, that was the difficult accomplishment that I'll never forget.



Part 3 Questions:

- Should people set goals for themselves?
- Are successful people often lonely?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- To hit a target / Hitting targets / Having targets to hit
- Flow state
- Crunch time
- Stifle
- To reach the top / To make it to the top / To have made it to the top
- To drift away from + a person or group of people
- To put something on the back burner

Answer

Q: Should people set goals for themselves?

A: I would say this depends on the person. Some people are naturally goal-oriented, so they're motivated by having targets to hit and being able to tick off the tasks on their to-do lists.

Personally, I fall into this category – I get into a flow state when it's crunch time and I'm always working towards my long-term goals.

That isn't the case for everyone, though. Goals can be restrictive or downright demotivating for some because they can stifle creativity and actually hinder your progress. It is good to develop your skills, move forward in life and give your best, but setting goals isn't always the right way to do that for everyone.

Q: Are successful people often lonely?

A: Wow, that's an interesting question! I can imagine people being lonely once they reach the top, because they don't have many peers or equals anymore. In some ways, once they've climbed the career ladder all the way to the top, they have to invent new goals or aspirations to work towards.

Something else to consider is what sacrifices they had to have made to reach the top. Perhaps their family life suffered, they may have drifted away from their friends, or they may have put their hobbies and passion projects on the back burner. Everybody says they want to be successful, but perhaps they haven't considered all the implications of getting there – one of which could be loneliness.



Topic: A fashionable person (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a person who likes to dress fashionably / well. You should say:

Who he/she is

What job he/she does

What kind of clothes he/she wears

And explain why he/she likes fashion

Advice

- This could be a person you know personally, like a friend, family member or colleague, or someone you don't know, like a celebrity, a musician, a politician, an actor, a social media influencer etc.
- Q1 and Q2 can be relatively brief answers, which means you can describe the person's style in lots of detail in Q3.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- To have a good eye for something
- Euphemism / Euphemistic
- To have your hands full
- Over and above
- Timeless
- Blouse
- Striking
- Haute couture
- Innate
- To strut your stuff
- Gown
- Regal
- Fashionista

Answer:

Let me tell you all about my mom, because she has a great eye for fashion.

In euphemistic terms, my mom is a 'home executive' but in layman's terms, she's a stay-at-home mom. Don't be fooled though, it's a full-time job, and she has her hands full from morning till late



at night. She taxis my younger siblings around, whips up scrumptious meals and keeps the books for my father's business. Over and above all that, she still manages to find time to be a fashionista.

Her fashion style tends towards timeless outfits, from tailored blouses and full-length skirts to striking summer dresses. She's quite traditional, so jeans and pants are a big no-no. I did see her a few times in the vegetable garden wearing overalls, and somehow, she even managed to make those look like haute couture! Never a slave to fashion, she has an innate understanding of what suits her and, despite her age, she can strut her stuff confidently around people half her age. For a night out, she always rises to the occasion, and you'll see her dressed to the nines in one of her regal evening gowns. It's a bit disappointing that none of her children have inherited her passion for fashion – myself included!

My mother grew up seeing fashion icons, celebrities and the English Monarchy all over the TV and on the front covers of magazines, so she was no doubt influenced strongly by those people. She often told us that first impressions are made almost instantly, and our attire should reflect the way we want to be perceived. So, that's where her love of fashion was born.

Part 3 Questions:

- Do you think online shopping will replace in-store shopping in the future? Why?
- Are older people as fashionable as young people? Why?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- On the up and up
- Unparalleled
- Rectify
- A bad buy
- Radius
- To be all roses
- Brick and mortar stores
- Vicinity
- There comes a time when + opinion
- To come across in a certain way (e.g. rude, obliging, friendly, unfriendly, intelligent, passive aggressive etc.)
- To keep up with something
- Cringe



Answer

Q: Do you think online shopping will replace in-store shopping in the future? Why?

A: Whilst I don't think online shopping will totally replace in-store shopping, it's certainly on the up-and-up. Firstly, there's the convenience factor. One can shop at any hour and browse any store that has an online presence. Online shopping gives you unparalleled selection of products to choose from.

Return policies make it easy to rectify bad buys without any fuss, and you can shop around to make sure you get the best bargain out there. If you live outside the delivery radius, online shopping might not be all roses, though, so you'd have to stick with the brick-and-mortar stores in your vicinity.

Q: Are older people as fashionable as young people? Why?

A: Generally speaking, I'd say not. Although there are some outfits that last the test of time, like jeans and a T-shirt, fashion is inherently about trends and fads. These come and go, so older people will tend to be a bit outdated in their sense of style.

On the other hand, though, there comes a time in life when people become more comfortable in themselves. They care less about what others think of them and they don't need to come across in specific ways anymore. By a certain age, most adults have developed their own sense of style and no longer feel inclined to keep up with the fashion landscape. That being said, though, older people can reinvent their style in a way that is age-appropriate, without looking cringe.

Topic: A childhood friend (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a friend from your childhood. You should say:

Who he/she is

Where and how you met each other

What you often did together

And explain what made you like him/her



Advice

- Q1 will use the present simple tense, while Q2 can use a variety of tenses to describe when and how you met. Here's an example using past simple, past continuous and present perfect simple: I met my friend while I was waiting in the queue, and we've been friends ever since that day.
- Q3 is a very broad topic and can talk about any activities you did together, whether they're exciting or not. Some ideas are: playing sports, listening to music, cooking, going on a road trip, starting a band, studying together etc.
- Q4 is an opportunity to describe your friend in detail – his/her personality, character and values, sense of humour, loyalty, companionship etc.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Quirky
- Foolhardy
- Once in a blue moon
- To get a dressing down
- Humungous
- To run for the hills
- Escapades
- To get up to no good
- Dye / Dyed
- Needless to say
- Take it or leave it

Answer:

Ronnie is one of those quirky, foolhardy individuals that you meet once in a blue moon.

I met Ronnie on my first day at primary school. I was very shy and rather scared of our new teacher, who seemed way too cold and stern to be teaching small children. Ronnie changed my apprehension pretty soon, though. He put a humungous spider in the teacher's lunch box, which sent her running for the hills! Of course, he got a dressing down from the headmaster, but he brightened the mood and that was the day we became great friends.

Ronnie made my day when he and his family moved into the house next door. It was the start of many escapades, like skateboarding down the middle of a very steep and dangerous road, slipping out at night after our curfew, and generally just getting up to no good. I think the most trouble we got into was the time we dyed his mom's prized white dog a bright, lime green. Needless to say, we were grounded for two months.

What I like most about Ronnie is his take it or leave it attitude. He's not at all phased by what other people think of him. Whilst he's a prankster of note, he is kind, genuine and a defender of the underdog. He relishes life and sees it as one great adventure. You'll never see him look before



he leaps. He's passionate about everything he does and is surprisingly knowledgeable as well. Ronnie is one of those rare people – a true legend and a lifelong friend.

Part 3 Questions:

- How important is childhood friendship to children?
- Do you think online communication through social media will replace face-to-face communication?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Social dynamics
- Give and take
- Emotional intelligence
- Social cues
- A sense of belonging
- Regulators
- Maturity
- To a large extent

Answer:

Q: How important is childhood friendship to children?

A: I think it's essential for children to have friends. Childhood friends are the introduction to learning how to be with people other than family. Through these friends, children learn social dynamics, trust, communication and how to give-and-take in social interactions. Socialising at a young age is the start of developing emotional intelligence and reading social cues.

There's also security in shared learning and experience, a sense of belonging, which is vital for children to find their place in the world. Childhood friendships also play a part in introducing the concept of consequences for bad behaviour like bullying, lying and stealing. In other words, young peers can be regulators of anti-social behaviour. Everyone benefits from having friends, but it's especially important for children because it guides their emotional maturity.

Q: Do you think online communication through social media will replace face-to-face communication?

A: To a large extent, I think it already has. I've witnessed the unthinkable – two friends 'chatting' to each other on social media whilst sitting opposite each other at a table! They had been sending each other memes, but in my day, that would be considered anti-social and rude.



Fortunately, there is still plenty of face-to-face interaction, like meeting people for coffee, getting together for a dinner party, or getting married. Though I would say that even these interactions tend to be experienced through the screen of a smartphone, while taking pictures and videos for a social media account.

Topic: A program that you like to watch (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a program you like to watch. You should say:

What it is

What it is about

Who you watch it with

Why you like to watch it

Advice

- This is quite a straightforward question, and you could talk about any kind of show that you watch. Some ideas are: cooking shows, travel shows, crime thrillers, historical dramas / period pieces, documentaries etc.
- If you don't watch many programs, you could talk about shows that you used to watch, sport matches that you follow, plays that you watch at the theatre, or shows that you watch every now and then. In these cases, you can say something like: I don't watch many TV shows these days, but I do like to watch live comedy at the restaurant near my apartment.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- To be hooked on something
- Derelict
- Run-down
- Eyesore
- Falling to pieces
- As is
- To be on the same page
- Fixer-upper
- Off the beaten track



- Raucous
- Formulaic
- One-dimensional
- Vicariously
- Couch potato
- To air an episode

Answer:

The TV series that has me hooked at the moment is a home improvement show called Dream House.

The show puts viewers in the shoes of an architect and a team of builders who will be renovating derelict and run-down homes. Most of the homes are eyesores that are falling to pieces, so they need rather extensive renovations. Viewers are given a tour of the building as is, and then guided through the vision for the home makeover. Finally, we see the final product after all the work is done.

I usually watch it with my siblings, and at times, it feels as though we're watching a sports match! We're never on the same page on how the architect should go about the makeover. My brother tends towards slick, modern architecture with all the latest bells and whistles, while my sister and I prefer the fixer-uppers that are usually off the beaten track. We get quite raucous as we argue about the best course of action for each property.

Although the series is pretty formulaic and one-dimensional, it allows me to indulge in a bit of wanderlust and imagination. I like to play the part of the architect and envision the homes after they are redone, whilst simultaneously enjoying my snacks and being a couch potato. I get to vicariously travel to different parts of the country as well, without any of the costs or headaches of taking leave to organise the trip. Watching the show with my siblings has also become a bit of a ritual, so we'll keep watching as long as new episodes are being aired.

Part 3 Questions:

- What's the benefit of letting kids watch animal videos rather than visiting zoos?
- Do teachers play videos in class in your country?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Once-in-a-lifetime event / opportunity
- Savanna
- Stalk
- Voice-over
- On-demand
- The ins and outs of something



- Etiquette
- To deal with something / To handle something
- Movie adaptation
- To bring something to life
- To can yourself laughing

Answers

Q: What's the benefit of letting kids watch animal videos rather than visiting zoos?

A: Watching animals on video is so much kinder than confining a wild animal to a cage. Of late, there have been numerous reports of animals kept in appalling circumstances. That aside, animal videos allow kids to see animals in their natural environment and witness once-in-a-life events they would never see in a zoo.

For example, seeing a lion stalk, chase and finally kill its prey in the African savanna would never be possible in a zoo. Another advantage is the voice-overs on videos. These are often extremely informative and allow kids to learn a great deal whilst enjoying the exciting visuals. Of course, videos are available on-demand as well, so that's another benefit over going to the zoo.

Q: Do teachers play videos in class in your country?

A: Whether teachers play videos in class depends very much on the subject. Every now and again, our business teacher used to show us the ins and outs of office etiquette. For example, how to interact with clients and colleagues, how to deal with problems in the workplace, and various management philosophies available to managers. Another example is English teachers, who sometimes show their students movie adaptations of famous novels, which is fantastic because they really bring the storyline to life.

My country's favourites are probably the video demonstrations of science experiments gone wrong. Of course, safety in the laboratory is a very serious matter, but it was hard not to can yourself laughing at some of the explosions and reactions in those videos. Physics and chemistry videos like these were the most common ones we saw at school.



Topic: A photo you took that you are proud of (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a photo you took that you are proud of. You should say:

When you took it

Where you took it

What is in the photo

And explain why you are proud of it

Advice

- Q1 and Q2 are straightforward, though you could give a bit of background information if it will make your answer more interesting and detailed.
- For Q3, it doesn't necessarily have to be a great photo in terms of colour, resolution or balance. It could be a perfectly timed photo of your pet doing something funny, a picture of a baby smiling, or a shot capturing a very strong emotion.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Multi-legged
- Span / Spanning
- Picturesque
- Streaking
- Glistening
- Tweak / Tweaking
- Exposure
- Aperture
- A fine line
- No easy feat
- Amateur
- To show something off



Answer:

I'd like to tell you about a photo I took in December last year.

At the end of last year, my family and I went on a multi-legged vacation spanning five countries across three continents. In December, we stopped in Cape Town, South Africa, for two weeks. Our tour group explored a suburb called Camps Bay, located on the western seaboard. Famous for its picturesque beach and beachfront promenade, it's the ideal location for seafood and sunset photo opportunities.

That's exactly where I took it. The picture is a wide angle shot of the Camps Bay beach, ocean and sky, taken moments after the sun dipped behind the horizon. In the top half of the picture, there are hues of pink, blue and orange streaking across the sky, while in the bottom half is the beach sand, white as snow. Separating the two halves is the ocean, glistening slightly in the final light of the day, and a wave crashing and spraying along the beach.

The reason I'm particularly proud of this shot is the balance. I took the picture on my smartphone using the pro mode, which means manually tweaking the exposure, aperture, shutter speed and light sensitivity. There's a fine line in photography for capturing the light as well as details in the shadows. It's no easy feat, especially on an everyday smartphone! I'm just an amateur photographer using my smartphone, so for me, this photo was a big achievement and something I'm actually quite proud to show off.

Part 3 Questions:

- Is taking photos the best way to remember something?
- Which is better, taking photos or keeping a diary?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Caveat
- Infinitely
- Verbatim
- To be swimming in something
- To be / get lost in the noise
- A pen and paper kind of person
- A once in a lifetime spectacle
- To capture the essence of + a situation, place, feeling or atmosphere
- A labour of love

Answers



Q: Is taking photos the best way to remember something?

A: No, I wouldn't say so. There are studies showing that physically writing something down, and repeating that information out loud, is the most effective way to remember something. Of course, there are caveats to this – taking a picture of an important document stores infinitely more information than writing that information down and then trying to memorise it verbatim.

I reckon that people take pictures because they want to come back to this information later, but they never end up doing that because they have so many pictures already! When a person is swimming in pictures, each one loses its significance, and the information gets lost in the noise. So, it's better to make a conscious effort to remember something, rather than unconsciously snapping away with your camera and assuming you will come back to it later.

Q: Which is better, taking photos or keeping a diary?

A: Personally, I'm a pen and paper kind of guy. These days, people seem to be experiencing everything through a screen. For example, during the broadcast of the Queen's memorial, a whole sea of people was viewing the procession through their smartphone. Of course, it's a once in a lifetime spectacle, so it's understandable that people want to try capture the essence of the moment. But, by doing that, they actually remove themselves from the moment, and then all they have left is the picture or video of the moment.

Conversely, keeping a diary feels far more personal. One can think of it as a labour of love – you physically have to invest your time and energy into the diary. That means it's a more conscious and deliberate collection of ideas, reflections and moments than a photo could ever be.



Topic: A time you missed an appointment (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a time you missed or forgot about an appointment. You should say:

What the appointment was for

Who you made it with

Why you forgot about it or missed it

And explain how you felt about the experience

Advice

- An appointment could be for a check-up at the doctor or dentist, a consultation with a nutritionist, a physio session, a consultation with a tax or financial advisor, consultation with a lawyer, a wedding planner etc.
- We don't make appointments to see our friends or colleagues, though, so don't talk about a time you forgot about a coffee date, missed a feedback session with your boss, or when you forgot about your anniversary.
- In Q2, you can expand on why you chose this particular person to make an appointment with. Perhaps they are a specialist in their field, they are highly recommended by your friends, or they were the cheapest / closest option at the time.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Word of mouth
- To pay through the nose
- To fork out for something
- Foreign concept
- Petty crime
- Bumper-to-bumper
- Naïve
- To figure something (note: it's not the same as *to figure something out*)
- Tail-end
- To stick it out
- Crawling along
- Ended up having to + an action or result that you wanted to avoid
- Mortified
- Profusely
- A wake-up call



Answer:

I'll take this opportunity to describe a time I missed an appointment to have new veneers fitted on my front teeth.

I scheduled this appointment with a specialist cosmetic dentist in the city where I had just started university. This particular dentist came highly recommended by word of mouth, so I knew I was going to pay through the nose for this consultation. My parents always used to say, "do it once and do it properly," so I reckoned that a good dentist was something worth forking out for.

So, this was my first time living in a big city, and the fast pace of city life was quite overwhelming. Queues and petty crime were foreign concepts to me, let alone the bumper-to-bumper traffic! Back home, everything happened at a snail's pace, but I hadn't yet realised that in the city, decisions were made in a split second and everything happened in fast forward. So, my appointment was booked for 3pm and I figured that an hour and a half was ample time to get to the dentist's rooms. That turned out to be a naïve assumption, though. I got stuck in my taxi during the tail-end of the lunchtime rush hour, and I couldn't get a train in time, so I just had to stick it out while crawling along the main road. By the time I got to the waiting room, I was already 25 minutes late and my appointment had been given to the next patient. I ended up having to postpone my appointment by another six weeks.

Obviously, I felt mortified to be so late and I apologised profusely. It was a valuable lesson though, and I guess I also feel grateful for missing that appointment, because it taught me to schedule my time properly.

Part 3 Questions:

- How do people who are busy remember things they need to do?
- Which is more important, a work-related appointment or an appointment with a friend? Why?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- On someone's behalf
- Synchronise / Sync
- With the tap of a button
- No reason not to do something
- Old-school
- Cumbersome
- To teach an old dog new tricks
- Dire
- To carry more weight (than something else / than the other option)
- To have a track record of doing something / To have a history of doing something
- To make it up to someone
- The lesser of two evils



Answers

Q: How do people who are busy remember things they need to do?

A: Well, one way is that they don't – because they have a personal assistant to remember things on their behalf. Jokes aside, though, these days I reckon most people use some kind of note-taking app, calendar or task management tool. It's so easy to sync your schedule across all your devices, there's no reason not to. With the tap of a button, you can see all your obligations for the coming day, week, month or even year.

Some people are old-school, though, and prefer the classic pen and paper. It's a bit more cumbersome to carry a notebook around with you, but I guess you can't always teach an old dog new tricks.

Q: Which is more important, a work-related appointment or an appointment with a friend? Why?

A: Wow, that's a tough one! My instinct is to say work-related appointments carry more weight than appointments with friends. The reason being, there can be dire consequences if you miss one too many work-related appointments. You could be suspended or even fired if you have a track record of doing things like that.

On the other hand, it's far more plausible that a friend would be understanding and try to accommodate changes to the plan. Of course, you'd need to make it up to your friend, but it's definitely the lesser of the two evils.



Topic: An object you find beautiful (2022.9)

Part 2 Question:

Describe an object you think is beautiful. You should say:

What it is

Where you saw it

What it looks like

And explain why you think it is beautiful

Advice

- For Q1, some ideas of beautiful objects are paintings, artworks, hand-sewn carpets, musical instruments, flowers or gardens, stars or clouds, a coastline or a park, an animal, a car, a piece of technology like a laptop or smartphone etc. This could be an object you own personally or something you have seen.
- Q2 can be a relatively short answer, unless you'd like to give a bit of background information to make your answer more interesting or detailed. Just be careful not to spend too much time here, as Q3 and Q4 are where you can use lots of descriptive and emotive language.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- To catch your eye / When something catches your eye
- Over the years
- Pliable
- Hues
- Earthy
- Weave / Woven
- Spanning / To span
- Zig-zag
- Artisan / Artisanal
- To be drawn to something
- Ingenuity
- Commonplace
- Beauty is in the eye of the beholder
- Eye-candy
- Craftsmanship
- Snooze



Answer:

The object that always catches my eye is the giant, hand-woven basket I purchased a few years back.

I see these baskets at the local street market near to where I live and, over the years, I've purchased a few which are now hanging on the wall in my lounge.

This particular basket is shaped like a colossal pumpkin, cut in half. It's made from dried grasses and reeds, with slivers of pliable bamboo that were bent and tied around a skeleton of thicker bamboo pieces. The colours are hues of earthy brown and green. Because of how it was woven, the different pieces of grass create zig-zag patterns and geometric patterns all around the basket. There is a handle spanning the open half of the basket and it's rigid enough for you to carry the basket with a person inside! Why would the basket be so big, you might ask. Well, remember that the artisan would have had to weave this basket from the inside-out!

What draws me to this object is the combination of function, aesthetics, and human ingenuity. To the untrained eye, this basket may appear commonplace, but it's actually a masterpiece in craftsmanship. It's a collector's item that may well end up in a museum one day. I guess that's why they say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Also, it's not just a piece of eye-candy on my wall. It's a great way to distract the children or let them have an afternoon snooze on a few giant cushions inside the basket. So, that basket is the object which comes to mind when I think of the word, "beautiful."

Part 3 Questions:

- Do you think there are more beautiful things now than in the past?
- Where do you think people come into contact with beautiful things?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Frankly
- Different strokes for different folks
- Architecture
- Carvings
- Exquisite
- Monotone
- Artefacts
- To be a sucker for something
- Sleek
- State-of-the-art
- Philosophical / Philosophy
- To come into contact with something
- To take a moment
- To take a step back



- Blossom / Blossoming
- Intricate
- Streaking
- Ubiquitous

Answers

Q: Do you think there are more beautiful things now than in the past?

A: Frankly no, I think that's too much of a generalisation. There are different strokes for different folks. There are many things from the past that are very beautiful, even to this day. Architecture is a case in point. Compare the detail in old temple carvings, exquisite chapel ceilings and windows, the carvings in ancient masonry with the monotone, concrete architecture of today. The fact that these artefacts are timeless and known across the globe makes them especially beautiful, in my books.

That being said, beauty is subjective, and many people may disagree with that perspective. I, for one, am a sucker for vintage cars, but many people prefer the sleek, state-of-the-art designs we see today.

Q: Where do you think people come into contact with beautiful things?

A: That's an interesting question. At a philosophical level, we come into contact with beautiful things day in and day out. All you have to do is take a moment to step back and observe where you are. Flowers blossoming on the trees, perfectly formed snowflakes landing on the window, intricate patterns streaking across grains of wood – beauty is ubiquitous.

To answer the question more directly, though, people can find beauty in art galleries and museums, parks and nature reserves and, of course, in other people. Beauty is not just about appearances – it's also about compassion and connection to other people. So, those are the places we can come into contact with beautiful things.

Topic: A special day out that didn't cost much (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a special day out that cost you little money. You should say:

When the day was



Where you went

How much you spent

And explain how you feel about the day

Advice

- An important thing to note here is that the day didn't have to be completely free. It can be a day when you spent little money, but not zero money. That makes the options much more flexible – for example, you might have spent some money on petrol driving to the location.
- This answer will likely include something about socializing with friends or something about spending time in nature, both of which are opportunities to bring in some high-level vocabulary. To improve your vocabulary with 500 high level words across more than 50 topics, you can check the Last Minute English course Advanced English Vocabulary.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- I'd like to talk about a time I had a special day out that cost very little money, which was when + details
- Our old familiar haunts
- Getting into shape
- A health scare
- Gentle exercise
- Just the ticket
- Botanical garden
- Drinking in the sights
- Stately home
- Primary residence
- Aristocracy
- Class division
- Manicured lawn
- Chomping down
- The main costs that we incurred were + cost details
- Negligible
- Raw materials
- A hipster coffee shop
- Fantastic value for money

Answer:



I'd like to talk about a time I had a special day out that cost very little money, which was when I visited a local country park with my friends.

It happened a few months ago. It was my friend Tom's birthday, and instead of just going to our old familiar haunts, we decided to do something new. Tom has been getting into shape recently after a health scare, so some gentle exercise and fresh air seemed like just the ticket. I had heard about Lymm country park from a friend who had visited, so we decided to give it a try.

The park has a beautiful botanical garden with exotic plants from all over the world. We spent an hour or so wandering around that garden, just drinking in the sights. And another attraction there is the stately home, which for centuries was the primary residence of various members of the aristocracy. These days, it's more of a museum that reflects on how life used to be when class division was more common and easily visible in society. We finished the afternoon by sitting on the manicured lawn and chomping down on a lovely picnic that we had prepared at home.

The main costs that we incurred were just the cost of petrol to drive there, which was negligible, and the raw materials we used to make the picnic – so all in all, we each paid about £3, or about \$4. Considering I would usually pay that kind of price for just a simple cup of coffee in a hipster coffee shop, it was fantastic value for money for a full day out.

Part 3 Questions:

- How do people spend their leisure time in your country?
- Is it true that only older people have time for leisure activities?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Physical exertion
- Body-building
- Personal advancement and wellness
- Sedentary lifestyles
- They aren't for everyone
- Splash the cash on + something expensive
- Their popularity has endured
- I think that's a bit of a misconception, to be honest
- Going on cruises and enjoying their golden years
- The world is your oyster
- A can-do attitude

Answer

Q: How do people spend their leisure time in your country?



A: Wow, that's a big question – it really does depend on the person. A lot of people build some kind of physical exertion into their leisure time, whether it's playing sports or body-building or doing Pilates. With the rise in social media channels focused on personal advancement and wellness, exercise has become more popular than ever, as people are concerned about their sedentary lifestyles.

And of course, there are the more chilled activities that people enjoy – things like going to the cinema, shopping, and eating out in restaurants. Again, they aren't for everyone, and not everyone has the ability to splash the cash on fancy restaurants and luxurious brands, but their popularity has endured for a reason.

Q: Is it true that only older people have time for leisure activities?

A: I think that's a bit of a misconception, to be honest. It's undeniable that retired people have more time on their hands, so that's why we see them going on cruises and enjoying their golden years.

But many working people do also have time for leisure activities – just less of it! If you finish work at 5.30pm and don't go to bed until 10 or 11, the world is, or perhaps, should be, your oyster. I do think that with better time-management and a can-do attitude, people could do a lot more with their evenings.

Topic: A time you were busy (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a time you were very busy. You should say:

When it happened

Where you were

What you did

And explain why you were busy

Advice

- This can be from any period of your life – it could be a long period, like in my answer, or as short as a day. Whatever period you choose, make sure to tell a story by giving the background and then a beginning, middle and end.



Vocabulary & Sentences

- Swamped
- When finals and deadlines were approaching
- A gap year
- Painfully aware
- Build up my savings
- A breeze
- Overwhelmed
- Burning the midnight oil
- Sleep deprived
- Completely snowed under
- Boost my war-chest
- Keep all the plates spinning
- A close-run thing
- Something + made my sacrifice worthwhile

Answer:

The time that I was busy that I'd like to talk about was when I was studying at university and working a part-time job at the same time. That busy period lasted for about 1 year, but I was particularly swamped towards the end of the year when finals and deadlines were approaching.

So firstly, let me give a little bit of background. I was in my final year of university, and I knew that I'd be taking a gap year after university to travel around the world. I was also painfully aware that traveling around the world isn't cheap, so I needed to find a way to build up my savings so that I could support myself on the trip. So, I decided to get a part-time job as a waiter in a restaurant.

At first, balancing my schedule to fit in classes, studying and working was relatively straightforward – in fact, the first few months were a breeze. But then, when the exam period hit at the end of the first semester, I started to find myself getting somewhat overwhelmed. I was working 20 hours per week at that time, and burning the midnight oil trying to meet essay deadlines, and I ended up fairly sleep deprived.

Things eased off a bit after that, but then the pressure started to build again as finals approached a few months later. There were moments when I was so busy that I didn't even have time to eat – that's how bad it got. I was just completely snowed under – and I foolishly agreed to increase my workload to 25 hours per week, trying to boost my holiday war-chest a bit more.

In the end, I just about managed to keep all the plates spinning and pass my exams, but it was a close-run thing. But I must say, the trip around the world the following year really made my sacrifice worthwhile! So, that was the time that I was extremely busy.

Part 3 Questions:



- What kind of pressure can people experience in their lives?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being busy?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- An upcoming deadline
- Quarterly results
- Up to scratch
- Pull an all-nighter
- Peer pressure
- Conform to certain norms and standards
- Squeeze in
- Dropping the ball
- A sense of purpose

Answers

Q: What kind of pressure can people experience in their lives?

A: Lots of different kinds of pressure, really. There's stress from work, if you've got an upcoming deadline or your quarterly results aren't up to scratch, things like that. Or if you are a student, it could be that finals are approaching and you feel like you have to pull all-nighters.

And then there can be less obvious pressure, like societal pressure and peer pressure. The people around you, sometimes even without intending to do so, can put pressure on you to conform to certain norms and standards. That's a very common type of pressure that people face.

Q: What are the advantages and disadvantages of being busy?

A: Well, the disadvantages are obvious – you might not have time to squeeze in the things you love doing, or even the things that you don't love but need to do, like exercising. Being overly busy can lead to you dropping the ball in a whole range of areas, and that's never ideal.

There are advantages, though, and I think the biggest one is that you feel a sense of purpose when you're busy. If you have nothing to do all day, it can be easy to drift into a kind of pointless, lazy existence, which can lead to depression. Busy people, on the other hand, don't have time for such things!

Topic: A quiet place you like (2022.5)



Part 2 Question:

Describe a quiet place that you like to go. You should say:

Where is it

How you know about it

How often you go there

And how you feel about the place

Advice

- This is a fairly straightforward question, because there is a lot of things you could talk about. You can discuss why the place is quiet, where the place is, what it looks like, why you like it, your story of finding it, or any other topic related to the place. It's a very flexible topic.
- There are a number of places you could choose here. Anywhere that you can justify as being quiet could be possible.
- Some choices:
 - A library
 - A forest
 - A quiet coffee shop
 - A park or garden
 - A quiet classroom in your university

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Stumbled across
- Since I discovered it, I've been going there + frequency
- Deep work
- The hustle and bustle of daily life
- Ambience
- Light conversation
- I suddenly had a brainwave
- Favorably inclined
- When I stepped foot in the door of + place
- An aura of seriousness and deep contemplation
- Hit me like a wave
- Rustle
- The library was populated largely by + type of person
- Play an authoritarian role
- A self-policing bunch



Answer:

The quiet place that I like to go to is my local library. It's somewhere that I only stumbled across recently, but since I discovered it, I've been going there several times per week.

Let me give a little bit of background first. I recently moved to a new city, and I had been looking for a quiet place to do some deep work and think clearly without the hustle and bustle of daily life getting in the way. I tried a few local coffee shops, but none of them had the right ambience – they all had a feeling of being a place for light conversation rather than deep concentration.

Then one day, I was wandering around the city center and I suddenly had a brainwave – what about the public library? I hadn't considered it before because my main experience of libraries previously had been being shushed by librarians while I was in school – so I couldn't say I was favorably inclined towards libraries in general.

But when I stepped foot in the door of the main public library in my city, I knew instantly that it was the right place for me – there was an aura of seriousness and deep contemplation that hit me like a wave. The only sound I could hear was the rustle of people turning the pages of books, and the scratch of pens on paper. The great thing was that the library was populated largely by postgraduate students, who all seemed very self-disciplined and motivated, unlike how my friends and I had been at school! So there was really no need for the librarians to play an authoritarian role – the library members were a self-policing bunch!

I've been going to the library 2-3 times per week since I found it, and every time it has been just as quiet as that first time. It's made a huge difference to my ability to study, and so I really enjoy going to that quiet place.

Part 3 Questions:

- Is it easy to find quiet places in your country?
- Why do old people prefer to live in quiet places?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Noise pollution
- A fairly typical pursuit
- Close to all the hustle and bustle
- Flee
- Quiet countryside pad
- Wind down
- Bastions of silence
- Shush
- Making a racket
- Murmur
- Whining and whirring



- The espresso machine
- Wouldn't change it for the world
- Live life at a slower pace
- Lower crime rates
- Population density
- Up to no good

Answers

Q: Is it easy to find quiet places in your country?

A: It's fairly easy, yes. We have a lot of countryside in the UK, and if you live in or near it, it's pretty easy to drive or cycle out into a place with almost no noise pollution at all. In fact, that is a fairly typical pursuit of richer people, who live downtown during the week in order to be close to all the hustle and bustle, and then flee to their quiet countryside pad for the weekend in order to wind down.

If you live permanently in the centre of the city, or a built-up area, then of course it's a lot harder to find a quiet place. But there are still bastions of silence in city centres. You could go to a library, where the librarians still heroically shush people making a racket, or indeed, anyone speaking above a murmur. And some coffee shops encourage a quieter atmosphere, although they would never achieve full silence, given the conversations and whining and whirring of the espresso machine.

Q: Why do old people prefer to live in quiet places?

A: Firstly, I'm not convinced that all older people prefer quiet places – I personally know several older people who love living in the city centre and wouldn't change it for the world! But in general, I think older people live life at a slower pace than the rest of us, and quieter places like suburbs or the countryside correspond to that lifestyle choice.

Another reason might be that quieter places, in general, have lower crime rates than busier places. That's purely due to the population density – the more people there are, the more likely you are to encounter someone who is up to no good. So, at least in theory, quieter places should be safer and more secure for older people.

Topic: Something that surprised you (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe something that surprised you. You should say:



What it is

How you found out about it

What you did

And explain whether it made you happy

Advice

- This is a chance to combine two questions into one answer. We will be combining “something that surprised you” and “an important event you celebrated.”
- To be able to combine the two questions, choose an important event that was a surprise. The best choice would be something like a surprise birthday party that your friends held for you.
- Remember to keep the introduction and conclusion sentences specific to the question you are answering, and then to make sure the middle section is answering both questions at the same time.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- I was gobsmacked when I found out
- Make a big fuss
- Getting their head down
- Keep things lowkey
- A big bash
- I bought it hook, line and sinker
- You could have knocked me over with a feather
- The look on my face was priceless
- Mind-blowing

Answer:

Something that really surprised me was when my friends threw me a surprise birthday party when I turned 21. It was a really important age but I hadn't considered having a party, so I was gobsmacked when I found out.

This all took place while I was at university. My birthday falls each year a few weeks before exam season starts, so usually I don't make a big fuss about it. Everyone is usually too busy getting their head down with their exam preparation, so I tend to keep things lowkey so as not to disturb everyone.

But because I was turning 21, my friends secretly planned a big bash in my honor. They told me that just my 3 housemates and I would go out together for a quiet dinner, and I bought it hook, line and sinker. So, when I turned up at the restaurant and there were over 50 people there,



including old friends from high school who had traveled from other cities to be there, you could have knocked me over with a feather! My friends later told me that the look on my face was priceless!

It was an important event for me because it was a reminder of how close a relationship I have with so many people, and for them to organize it all as a surprise was just mind-blowing!

So, that was the time that I was very surprised – the surprise birthday party held in my honor.

Part 2 Questions

- How do people express happiness in your culture?
- Is it good for people to be unhappy?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Beaming from ear to ear
- Physical contact
- A big bear hug
- A wedding gift
- Delighted
- Savour those moments
- Become inured to it
- End up taking happiness for granted
- Significant chunks of time

Answers

Q: How do people express happiness in your culture?

A: In a number of ways, really. The most obvious is by smiling – usually, if you see someone beaming from ear to ear, it means they're happy! And there's a lot of physical contact when people are happy – I'm talking things like giving your friend a big bear hug when you or they get good news.

People sometimes buy each other gifts as a display of love and happiness as well. For instance, when you go to a wedding, it's normal to buy the couple a wedding gift. That gift is kind of a statement that you are delighted for them and that you wish them happiness in their relationship.

Q: Is it good for people to be unhappy?

A: I think occasional moments of unhappiness can be quite beneficial actually. Being unhappy at times gives us more appreciation of the moments when we are happy, and helps us to savour



those moments fully. If you were constantly happy, you'd become inured to it and end up taking happiness for granted.

But naturally, you wouldn't wish long periods of unhappiness on anyone. People who suffer from depression can get really low for significant chunks of time, and that must be a really difficult thing to go through. So for me, unhappiness is like salt – you need a bit of it so that everything else tastes better, but too much can ruin the meal!

Advice

- This is a topic that focuses on personalities of different people. It's a great opportunity to bring in some high-level vocabulary about Personality, which you can find in the Last Minute English course Advanced English Vocabulary.

Topic: An Important Event (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe an important event you celebrated.

You should say:

What the event was

When it happened

Who attended the event

And explain how you felt about the event

Advice

- This is a chance to combine two questions into one answer. We will be combining "something that surprised you" and "an important event you celebrated."
- To be able to combine the two questions, choose an important event that was a surprise. The best choice would be something like a surprise birthday party that your friends held for you.
- Remember to keep the introduction and conclusion sentences specific to the question you are answering, and then to make sure the middle section is answering both questions at the same time.

Vocabulary & Sentences



- I was gobsmacked when I found out
- Make a big fuss
- Getting their head down
- Keep things lowkey
- A big bash
- I bought it hook, line and sinker
- You could have knocked me over with a feather
- The look on my face was priceless
- Mind-blowing

Answer:

An important event that I celebrated was my 21st birthday, when my friends threw me a surprise party. It was a really important age but I hadn't considered having a party, so I was gobsmacked when I found out.

This all took place while I was at university. My birthday falls each year a few weeks before exam season starts, so usually I don't make a big fuss about it. Everyone is usually too busy getting their head down with their exam preparation, so I tend to keep things lowkey so as not to disturb everyone.

But because I was turning 21, my friends secretly planned a big bash in my honor. They told me that just my 3 housemates and I would go out together for a quiet dinner, and I bought it hook, line and sinker. So, when I turned up at the restaurant and there were over 50 people there, including old friends from high school who had traveled from other cities to be there, you could have knocked me over with a feather! My friends later told me that the look on my face was priceless!

It was an important event for me because it was a reminder of how close a relationship I have with so many people, and for them to organize it all as a surprise was just mind-blowing!

So that was the important event that I celebrated – my 21st birthday.

Topic: Important River or Lake (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe an important river/lake in your country. You should say:

Where it is located

How big/long it is

What it looks like



And explain why it is important

Advice

- This is a fairly challenging question, because it requires some knowledge about rivers or lakes. If you don't have that information, you'll need to do some research.
- It can be a river/lake in your home country, or in the country you are living if you are currently abroad.
- You can make this answer easier by including some personal details such as a time that you visited the river/lake. Talking about that kind of trip is much easier and will help you fill the time.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- The river that I would like to talk about, which is important in the country where I live, is + river
- River + passes through + area/detail + before emptying into the + sea/ocean
- It's a historically important river, because + reason
- The birthplace of the early Chinese civilization
- Wrought havoc
- Led to the deaths of millions of people
- It has changed course
- At the behest of + someone
- I remember first visiting the + river + as part of a trip with + people
- It was a fascinating tale
- Talking everyone's ear off about + topic

Answer:

The river that I would like to talk about, which is important in the country where I live, is the Yellow River.

It's one of the most famous rivers in the world, and is the sixth-longest river in the world, measuring approximately 5500km. The Yellow River starts life in Qinghai province in the west of China, and passes through 9 provinces before emptying into the Bohai sea.

It's a historically important river, because it was the birthplace of the early Chinese civilization, and for a long time, it was the most prosperous area of China and, by extension, the world. It has also suffered terrible floods which have wrought havoc and led to the deaths of millions of people throughout history. The river is also out of the ordinary because it has significantly changed course multiple times during its history – sometimes due to natural causes, and other times at the behest of rival military factions.



I remember first visiting the Yellow River as part of a trip with my university class a few years ago. I hadn't been particularly interested in the river beforehand, but as part of the trip, the entire history of the river and its effect on China was explained – and it was a fascinating tale. I came back to university talking everyone's ear off about what we'd heard – I think most of my friends found it pretty tedious, to be honest!

So, that is the Yellow River, an important river in China.

Part 3 Questions

- How can rivers and lakes benefit local people?
- Are rivers and lakes good for transport?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Drinking water
- The prerequisites for life
- Tourism hubs
- A polluted waterway
- A leisurely dip in a clean lake
- Idyllic
- Generating electricity
- Artificial dams
- Harness hydroelectric power
- Turbines
- Large bodies of water
- Renewable energy sources
- A climate catastrophe
- Canoeist
- Commercial purposes
- Getting stranded
- Few and far between
- Smuggle
- Natural wonders

Answers

Q: How can rivers and lakes benefit local people?

A: They can benefit local people in a number of ways. Firstly, they can provide drinking water, which is one of the prerequisites for life – so, pretty important! Rivers and lakes can also be tourism hubs, as long as they are well-maintained. A polluted waterway is no-one's idea of a relaxing day out. But a leisurely dip in a clean lake could be an idyllic start to a day of leisure.



There's another way that certain lakes and rivers can provide a service to the local community, and that is through generating electricity. Artificial dams have been created in many countries around the world to harness hydroelectric power from the water falling through the power plant's turbines. That of course is limited to large bodies of water, not a little stream, but it is an important part of the world switching to renewable energy sources in order to avoid a climate catastrophe.

Q: Are rivers and lakes good for transport?

A: Well, it depends what you want to transport. If you are a canoeist trying to travel a few miles downriver, purely for enjoyment and exercise, then they can be useful! But rivers, in most cases, are not especially useful as transport links for commercial purposes. The water levels and flow of smaller rivers are unpredictable, meaning that boats would often not be able to travel for weeks at a time for fear of getting stranded. Larger rivers like the Mississippi are more dependable, but they are few and far between!

Lakes, again depending on the size and location, can be more useful for transport purposes. Large lakes that border countries, such as the Great Lakes in the northern United States and southern Canada, have been used for transporting goods for centuries. They were even used to smuggle alcohol into the United States during the prohibition era. They also provide means of transport for tourists who want to visit natural wonders like Niagara Falls.

Topic: A method/change that saves you time (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a method/change that helps you to save a lot of time. You should say:

What it is

How you implement it

How difficult it is

And explain how you feel about this method /change

Advice

- I have combined two questions into one answer here – the questions are 'A method that saves you time' and 'A time you were stuck in a traffic jam.'



- These make a good match as a combination because you can start talking about the time you were in a bad traffic jam, and how it helped you decide to make a change to your driving habits.
- Your change could be that you either take a new route to avoid traffic, or that you started using another form of transport, or that you leave at a new time – or possibly another change, if you are creative!
- As always, remember to make the first and last sentences specific to the question, and keep the middle part relevant to both questions.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Three main arteries come together
- A really bad bottleneck
- Squeeze through
- Things came to a head
- Chucking it down with rain
- A higher volume of cars on the road than usual
- Crawling along at about 5mph
- Ground to a halt
- Bumper to bumper
- I got a real dressing down
- Take the plunge
- the morning rush hour
- I'd heard horror stories
- Elbow to armpit
- It's saved me a whole load of stress and heartache

Answer:

The change that I made that allows me to save a whole heap of time is that I have started taking the subway to work instead of driving in the morning.

Let me give a bit of background first of all. I've been commuting to work for a number of years now, and I've always had some trouble with getting stuck in traffic. There's a particular part of the route where three main arteries come together to create a really bad bottleneck. Most of the time, I could squeeze through in a few minutes, but recently it had been getting really bad.

But things came to a head about 2 months ago, when I was stuck there for 3 hours! It was chucking it down with rain and so there was a higher volume of cars on the road than usual, and everyone was crawling along at about 5mph. Eventually we all ground to a halt when it became bumper to bumper at the bottleneck, and so I couldn't escape in any direction. It was awful – I was cold, wet, and grumpy!



My boss was furious when I turned up so late, and I got a real dressing down – even though it was completely out of my control. So, the following day, I decided to take the plunge and start taking the subway. I'd always been afraid of the morning rush hour on the subway, because I'd heard horror stories about being elbow to armpit in the crush of people.

But I was pleasantly surprised when I tried it – it was certainly busy, but not uncomfortably so. And the great thing is that I was able to arrive at work 20 minutes earlier than usual despite setting off 10 minutes later!

I've been doing the same every day since, and it's saved me a whole load of stress and heartache, as well as a lot of time!

So, that was the change I made – starting to take the subway to work instead of driving.

Part 3 Questions:

- What can people do to save time?
- Do people who manage time well become more successful?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Time killers
- Procrastination
- Scrolling endlessly through social media
- One sure-fire way
- Applied appropriately
- Automating tasks
- A prerequisite
- High level of intellect
- A healthy slice of luck
- Misjudge
- Cancel engagements
- In a timely manner
- Flakiness

Answers

Q: What can people do to save time?

A: Well, it depends what you're doing, of course, but one of the biggest time killers there is would be procrastination. Avoiding what you should be doing by scrolling endlessly through social media is one sure-fire way to waste a bunch of time, so people who can find ways to avoid procrastinating could certainly save time that way.



Technology, if applied appropriately, can be another great way of saving time. If you do repetitive, fairly predictable work with a computer, it should certainly be possible to find a way of automating those tasks so that they either happen automatically or a piece of software does them for you. That can leave you free to concentrate on more important matters!

Q: Do people who manage time well become more successful?

A: I think managing your time well is certainly a prerequisite to becoming successful, but it's not the only requirement, by any means. You also need to have a degree of self-confidence, a high level of intellect (at least in most cases!), a positive attitude to hard work, and a healthy slice of luck to become very successful.

But certainly, managing time well can help people to improve themselves. There's nothing worse than someone who constantly misjudges how much time they have for things and has to cancel engagements with others as a result of not completing their tasks in a timely manner. That's a great way to get a bad reputation for flakiness, in my view.

Topic: A time you were stuck in a traffic jam (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a time you were stuck in a traffic jam. You should say:

When it happened

Where you were stuck

What you did while waiting

And explain how you felt in the traffic jam

Advice

- I have combined two questions into one answer here – the questions are 'A method that saves you time' and 'A time you were stuck in a traffic jam.'
- These make a good match as a combination because you can start talking about the time you were in a bad traffic jam, and how it helped you decide to make a change to your driving habits.
- Your change could be that you either take a new route to avoid traffic, or that you started using another form of transport, or that you leave at a new time – or possibly another change, if you are creative!



- As always, remember to make the first and last sentences specific to the question, and keep the middle part relevant to both questions.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Three main arteries come together
- A really bad bottleneck
- Squeeze through
- Things came to a head
- Chucking it down with rain
- A higher volume of cars on the road than usual
- Crawling along at about 5mph
- Ground to a halt
- Bumper to bumper
- I got a real dressing down
- Take the plunge
- the morning rush hour
- I'd heard horror stories
- Elbow to armpit
- It's saved me a whole load of stress and heartache

Answer:

The time that I was stuck in a traffic jam was a few months ago, when I was commuting to work.

Let me give a bit of background first of all. I've been commuting to work for a number of years now, and I've always had some trouble with getting stuck in traffic. There's a particular part of the route where three main arteries come together to create a really bad bottleneck. Most of the time, I could squeeze through in a few minutes, but recently it had been getting really bad.

But things came to a head about 2 months ago, when I was stuck there for 3 hours! It was chucking it down with rain and so there was a higher volume of cars on the road than usual, and everyone was crawling along at about 5mph. Eventually we all ground to a halt when it became bumper to bumper at the bottleneck, and so I couldn't escape in any direction. It was awful – I was cold, wet, and grumpy!

My boss was furious when I turned up so late, and I got a real dressing down – even though it was completely out of my control. So, the following day, I decided to take the plunge and start taking the subway. I'd always been afraid of the morning rush hour on the subway, because I'd heard horror stories about being elbow to armpit in the crush of people.

But I was pleasantly surprised when I tried it – it was certainly busy, but not uncomfortably so. And the great thing is that I was able to arrive at work 20 minutes earlier than usual despite setting off 10 minutes later!



I've been doing the same every day since, and it's saved me a whole load of stress and heartache, as well as a lot of time!

So that was the time that I was stuck in a terrible traffic jam for hours – and hopefully, it will prove to be the last time!

Part 3 Questions:

- Can developing public transport infrastructure solve traffic jam issues?
- What other solutions are there to heavy traffic?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- A silver bullet
- Bereft
- Reduce congestion
- Bus network
- Subway system
- Commuters
- Change overnight
- Creatures of habit
- Ease traffic woes
- Carpooling
- Incentives
- The carpool lane
- Reduce the strain on public roads
- Draconian
- Registration plates
- Loopholes
- Out of action
- Every little helps

Answers

Q: Can developing public transport infrastructure solve traffic jam issues?

A: I think it can definitely help. It might not be a silver bullet, but if a city is basically bereft of any transport option other than driving, creating that infrastructure would logically reduce congestion on the roads, by giving people a second option. For instance, a city that previously relied on private vehicles for transportation but which then creates a bus network and subway system could reasonably expect at least 20-30% of its commuters to switch, meaning a reduction of 20-30% of cars on the road.



However, it isn't something that would change overnight. People are creatures of habit, and if you are used to sitting in the privacy of your own car every day, jamming yourself onto a crowded bus might be something of a shock to the system for many people. It would take time to get used to the new arrangement- but eventually, at least in theory, it should help to ease traffic woes.

Q: What other solutions are there to heavy traffic?

A: The most obvious one is to encourage carpooling. That's when several people travel to work or class together in one car, rather than everyone having their own car and traveling separately. It's certainly not as convenient and easy as traveling in your own car, which is why incentives like the carpool lane are often required, but it can certainly work to reduce the strain on public roads.

Another option, which I find a bit more draconian but which does exist around the world, is to reduce the number of days that people can take their cars out on the roads, based on their car's registration plates. That, in theory, forces people to use other forms of transportation, but there often seem to be loopholes, like a husband driving his wife's car instead on the day when his car is out of action. So I don't think it's a perfect solution, but every little helps, I guess!

Topic: A friend you like to talk with (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a friend you like to talk with. You should say:

Who he/she is

What you like to talk about

Why you like to talk with him/her

And explain how you feel about him/her

Advice

- I have combined two questions into one answer here – the questions are 'a friend you like to talk with' and 'a time you used your cell phone for something important'.
- The key to finding a good answer here is to choose a friend that you talk to using your cell phone. It could be a friend in a different city, or who you don't see too often in your own city. And to make the answer even better, you should have a close relationship with that friend, in the sense that your talks with them are important.
- As always, remember to make the first and last sentences specific to the question, and keep the middle part relevant to both questions.



- This is a good chance to use friendship-related vocabulary, which luckily enough is a topic in the Advanced Vocabulary Course from Last Minute English.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Settled down
- Messaging apps
- A good listener
- A shoulder to cry on
- Spilled all kinds of secrets
- Run it by + person + first
- An unpaid internship with a prestigious company
- All on the table
- Get my foot in the door
- Too good to turn down
- Dilemma
- Unequivocal
- Down the line

Answer

The friend that I like to talk with is my friend Tom.

Tom and I have been friends since high-school, but he lives in a different city to me as we went to different universities and both settled down in those cities, so we usually talk on the phone or through messaging apps.

I always think that a key quality of a friend is being a good listener, someone who is willing to be a shoulder to cry on, and Tom and I certainly fulfil that function for each other! We've spilled all kinds of secrets to each other talking over WhatsApp or WeChat, and basically any time I have an important life decision to make, I'll grab my phone and run it by Tom first.

One decision in particular that I remember discussing with him was whether I should apply for a master's degree or do an unpaid internship with a prestigious company that I really wanted to work for. I called Tom and explained my options to him, laying it all on the table, and he basically told me that the masters would still be there in a year or two years, but the chance to get my foot in the door with this company was too good to turn down.

After I hung up the phone, I immediately called up the company and said I'd take the position, and I still work there to this day! I know for a fact that, if I hadn't called Tom to discuss my dilemma with him, I wouldn't have made such a clear and unequivocal decision, and I might well have regretted it down the line.

So, the friend that I enjoy talking to, and discuss all my important matters with, is my friend Tom.



Topic: A popular person in your country (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a popular/well-known person in your country. You should say:

Who this person is

What he/she has done

Why he/she is popular

And explain how you feel about this person

Advice

- This is another opportunity to combine our answers in order to answer 2 questions. We will be answering the 'popular/well-known person in your country' and the 'invention that changed the world' questions by talking about Elon Musk.
- For your answer, if you choose to also combine these two questions, you could choose someone who has either invented or 'reinvented' a type of technology, who is still alive, and who is famous. They don't have to be popular, but most people should know who they are.
- It also doesn't need to be an invention of something physical. For instance, you could say that Jeff Bezos or Jack Ma invented new ways of selling things online. However, they must have done something that has had a big impact.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- One of the founders of + company name
- Had a successful exit
- Luxuriating
- Throw caution to the wind
- Meet with little success
- Feasible and economical for the mass market
- Lauded
- Groundbreaking
- State-of-the-art
- Pioneer
- Market capitalization
- On the back of that success



Answer:

The person that is well-known in my country who I have selected as my answer is Elon Musk. He is a serial entrepreneur who is famous for his work with Paypal, SpaceX and, most importantly, Tesla.

Let me give some background information to start with. When Elon Musk got involved with Tesla, he was already fairly famous as one of the founders of Paypal. That company had had a successful exit, and Musk made several hundred million dollars in that sale. But instead of luxuriating in that extreme wealth, he decided to throw caution to the wind and get involved with a small electric car startup called Tesla.

The special thing that Musk and Tesla did was to basically reinvent electric cars for the modern age. I remember reading that companies had tried in the early 20th Century to create an electric car, but had met with little success. So, it technically wasn't a completely new idea – but what Tesla and Musk have done is to make electric cars feasible and economical for the mass market. It's an incredible achievement, and one for which Musk is rightly lauded.

Everything about a Tesla – from its sleek physical appearance to its hyper functional interior – is groundbreaking and state-of-the-art. They have even pioneered a direct-to-customer sales strategy, cutting car salesmen out of the process- one mini-invention as part of a larger reinvention of the way cars are made and sold. And they are now available all around the world!

Tesla is now one of the most valuable companies in the world, based on its market capitalization, and Musk has become one of the most recognizable names and faces internationally on the back of that success.

So, the person who is extremely famous in my country, and around the world, is Elon Musk.

Part 3 Questions:

- What kinds of people are popular at work?
- Which is more important – keeping a good relationship with people, or telling them the truth?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Misanthropic
- Keep themselves to themselves
- Unnecessary drama
- Observe social niceties
- Wish others well
- Hold their team back
- More likely to be shunned by + someone
- Common societal conundrum
- Strike a balance
- Home truths
- A tidal wave of negativity



- Platitudes
- Tells it like it is
- Being cruel to be kind

Answers

Q: What kinds of people are popular at work?

A: Well, it depends on the workplace, but having good social skills is always a good place to start. People who are misanthropic, who keep themselves to themselves or who cause unnecessary drama at work are far less likely to be popular. Whereas people who engage in a positive manner with those around them, who observe social niceties, and who generally wish others well, are far more likely to be popular.

Another factor is being good at your job. If you perform well on a regular basis, so that your colleagues can rely on you, that can lead to popularity. Those who hold their team back are, on the contrary, more likely to be shunned by their colleagues.

Q: Which is more important – keeping a good relationship with people, or telling them the truth?

A: That's a great question, and I think everyone has their own interpretation of this common societal conundrum. But for me, you have to strike a balance. No-one likes the person who is constantly giving people 'home truths', because they feel judged and are likely to lose confidence. A tidal wave of negativity is never the best solution.

But then, the opposite is also true – someone who speaks only in platitudes, who never tells it like it is, a 'yes-man', essentially, is not a true friend. There are always times when you do have to tell a friend or relative some hard truths – it's called 'being cruel to be kind'. So really, it depends.

Topic: An invention that changed the world (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe an invention that has changed the world in a positive way. You should say:

What it is

What benefits it has brought

How it influences people of different ages

And explain how it changed people's lives



Advice

- This is another opportunity to combine our answers in order to answer 2 questions. We will be answering the 'popular/well-known person in your country' and the 'invention that changed the world' questions by talking about Elon Musk.
- For your answer, if you choose to also combine these two questions, you could choose someone who has either invented or 'reinvented' a type of technology, who is still alive, and who is famous. They don't have to be popular, but most people should know who they are.
- It also doesn't need to be an invention of something physical. For instance, you could say that Jeff Bezos or Jack Ma invented new ways of selling things online. However, they must have done something that has had a big impact.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- One of the founders of + company name
- Had a successful exit
- Luxuriating
- Throw caution to the wind
- Meet with little success
- Feasible and economical for the mass market
- Lauded
- Groundbreaking
- State-of-the-art
- Pioneer
- Market capitalization
- On the back of that success

Answer:

An invention, or perhaps it should technically be reinvention, that changed the world in a positive way was Elon Musk and Tesla's development of stylish, high-performing and yet affordable electric cars.

Let me give some background information to start with. When Elon Musk got involved with Tesla, he was already fairly famous as one of the founders of Paypal. That company had had a successful exit, and Musk made several hundred million dollars in that sale. But instead of luxuriating in that extreme wealth, he decided to throw caution to the wind and get involved with a small electric car startup called Tesla.

The special thing that Musk and Tesla did was to basically reinvent electric cars for the modern age. I remember reading that companies had tried in the early 20th Century to create an electric car, but had met with little success. So, it technically wasn't a completely new idea – but what



Tesla and Musk have done is to make electric cars feasible and economical for the mass market. It's an incredible achievement, and one for which Musk is rightly lauded.

Everything about a Tesla – from its sleek physical appearance to its hyper functional interior – is groundbreaking and state-of-the-art. They have even pioneered a direct-to-customer sales strategy, cutting car salesmen out of the process- one mini-invention as part of a larger reinvention of the way cars are made and sold. And they are now available all around the world!

Tesla is now one of the most valuable companies in the world, based on its market capitalization, and Musk has become one of the most recognizable names and faces internationally on the back of that success.

So, the invention that changed the world in a good way was Tesla's work on the electric car.

Part 3 Questions

- What are some inventions that have made life convenient in the home?
- Do you believe that AI will one day replace human teachers?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Modern appliances
- Dishwashers
- Tumble dryers
- Coffee grinders
- Smart speakers
- They are here to stay
- As time goes on
- Lighten their workload
- AI working in harmony with teachers
- Student-specific challenges
- Pre-set parameters
- Soft skills
- In the foreseeable future
- Interpersonal skill

Answers

Q: What are some inventions that have made life convenient in the home?

A: It depends how far back you look. If we are talking the past 100 years, there are dozens. All modern appliances are inventions – things like dishwashers, washing machines, tumble dryers, coffee grinders, everything really – they were all inventions that have made life easier and more convenient.



If we are talking the past decade or so, it becomes a bit harder – but the first thing that springs to mind is the appearance of so-called smart speakers, like Amazon’s Alexa. They aren’t all that useful yet, but they are gradually starting to become more popular for things like listening to music at home and setting reminders. And I’m fairly confident that they are here to stay, and will become more convenient as time goes on.

Q: Do you believe that AI will one day replace human teachers?

A: That’s very difficult to say. I believe there are certain tasks and responsibilities that AI could take from teachers, in order to lighten their workload. It’s more of a case of AI working in harmony with teachers, in order to provide students with the best of both worlds. You’d ideally want AI handling things like unnecessary paperwork, basic marking, and creating student-specific challenges within pre-set parameters.

That way, teachers could be left with more time to engage with students on a deeper level, finding ways to inspire them, and improving their social and soft skills. AI, at least in the foreseeable future, won’t be able to provide the interpersonal skill-building that human students will continue to need.

Topic: When you lost something (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe an occasion that you lost something. You should say:

What you lost

When and where you lost it

What you did to find it

And explain how you felt about it

Advice

- This topic can be as wide as you want, and you can use this to your advantage. If you choose an item that you feel comfortable talking about, you can spend 30-40% of your answer describing why losing it was such a shocking thing and why it is so important to you. For example, you could talk about the different things you need your phone for.



- The first thought you might have for this answer is losing something physical, but the word 'lose' is very flexible – but you could also talk about losing a competition or something abstract like 'love' or 'trust'.
- If you decide to talk about a physical thing, and are concerned about filling the two minutes, choose an item that contains several things. For example, your wallet could have cash, your bank cards, your ID, a photo of your family, your keys, and all kinds of other things. Use your imagination!

Vocabulary & Sentences

- The thing that I lost and which I'd like to talk about is + item
- It was quite a shock to the system
- It caused me quite a bit of heartache and hassle
- Commuting to work
- It seemed perfectly innocent
- Chock-a-block
- I had been pickpocketed
- In the pit of your stomach
- Vulnerable
- On the verge of + doing something
- A contactless payment-enabled card
- Swanning around
- On my dime
- Emergency hotline
- I wouldn't wish (something) on my worst enemy

Answer:

The thing that I lost and which I'd like to talk about is my wallet. It was quite a shock to the system to lose it, and it caused me quite a bit of heartache and hassle.

This all happened about 4 years ago. I was on the subway commuting to work, and I distinctly remember someone bumping into me. It seemed perfectly innocent and not at all noteworthy – it happens every day with everyone chock-a-block on the platforms and in the carriages of the subway. But a few minutes later, when I reached for my wallet to check how much cash I had, I realized the truth – I had been pickpocketed!

I remember having that horrible sensation you get in the pit of your stomach when you realize something bad has happened – I was patting my pockets and tearing my bag apart trying to find the wallet, but it was gone.

It was quite shocking because I'd never been the victim of a crime before that – and I haven't since – and I felt quite vulnerable as a result. I started looking around at my fellow passengers with



accusing eyes, wondering whether any of them were on the verge of attacking me or stealing my possessions. They weren't, of course, but it was a very unpleasant rest of the journey.

The worst part was that I had to get out of the subway system in order to get a signal on my phone so that I could call the bank and cancel my card. I had a contactless payment-enabled card in the wallet, and I was having horrible visions of the thief swanning around a mall tapping the card as he paid for whatever he wanted, all on my dime. Luckily, by the time I got through to the bank's emergency hotline, the pickpocket hadn't spent anything.

I was able to cancel the card, and I only lost about \$20 cash in the end, but the experience of losing the wallet was one that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

Part 3 Questions:

- What kind of things do people sometimes lose?
- Are rewards an effective way of finding things that are lost?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Other non-essential items
- Inexpensive and easily replaceable
- Appear on our emotional radar
- Traumatic
- Irreplaceable
- A hassle
- Cost a pretty penny
- Frantically
- Rifling through jacket pockets
- Justifies a financial outlay
- Putting people on alert
- A fool proof plan
- Tip the scales in your favour

Answers

Q: What kind of things do people sometimes lose?

A: I think the better question would be, what kind of things do people notice that they have lost? Because I'm convinced that we lose things all the time, things like socks and pencils and other non-essential items, but we just don't realise because they are inexpensive and easily replaceable. They hardly appear on our emotional radar.

The things that we both lose and immediately notice we have lost are much more important, and thus, potentially traumatic things. I'm talking wallets, phones, car keys, house keys, and the like.



Those things aren't quite irreplaceable, but they are a hassle to replace, and may cost a pretty penny to do so as well. There's always a panic when you realize, or at least think, that you've lost something important, and you go running around the house frantically lifting up sofa cushions and rifling through jacket pockets looking for the item. So those important items are certainly things that we sometimes lose.

Q: Are rewards an effective way of finding things that are lost?

A: I think they can be, certainly. If you've lost something like a musical instrument or laptop, or even a pet, in other words something that justifies a financial outlay, then offering a reward could be an effective way of putting people on alert so that your chances of having the item found increase.

It's certainly not a fool proof plan – if you've dropped your phone down the drain or in a river, a reward of a million dollars wouldn't bring it back – but it might tip the scales in your favour when it comes to the likelihood of finding whatever it is that you've lost. So, it's worth a try.

Topic: A family member you want to work with (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a family member who you want to work with in the future. You should say:

Who he/she is

Whether you have worked together before

What kind of work you would like to do with him/her

And explain how you feel about this family member

Advice

- This one is a relatively difficult question, but we can make it more manageable by dividing our answer into 3 parts. You can see that in my answer, I've divided it into 3 large paragraphs plus a short introduction and conclusion.
- The first part can be about who the family member is and your relationship with that person.
- The second part is why they would make a suitable choice to work with – for example, are they very hard working, experienced or smart?



- The third part is about what the work would be. A new company? That person joining you where you work? Or you joining them in their company? Or it could be all about working on a project outside of normal working hours.
- This answer allows us to display some of our high-level vocabulary about Family, which is one of the vocabulary topics in Last Minute English's course Advanced English Vocabulary.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- I'd say the family member that I would work with would be + person
- I've always looked up to him
- He always seemed very switched on
- Precluded
- We now live just down the road from each other
- Once a fortnight
- A very smart cookie
- A graphic design expert
- Coding
- Studious
- Take pride in your work
- Never take no for an answer
- Persistent
- Bring a lot to the table
- What I'd envisage would be + idea
- A biotech startup
- Skill/trait + would definitely come in handy

Answer:

Well, this is kind of a tough one, but I'd say the family member that I would work with would be my cousin Greg.

Let me explain my choice. Greg is a slightly older cousin on my mum's side. He is about 7 years older than me, and I've always looked up to him because he always seemed very switched on. When we were young, the age difference between us kind of precluded us having too close of a relationship – no 13-year-old wants a 6-year-old hanging out with them, for example. But as we've gotten older, we've grown closer together, particularly as we now live just down the road from each other. We hang out probably once a fortnight, and when we do, we mostly talk about business ideas that we've had.

I think Greg would be great to work with because he is a very smart cookie – he speaks 4 languages and is a graphic design expert. He also has some experience of working with app developers, although he doesn't know coding himself. He's very studious, takes pride in his work,



and has this great ability to never take no for an answer – he’s quite persistent! So, he would certainly bring a lot to the table in terms of working together.

And then the real question is, what would we do? Well, my background is in biology, so what I’d envisage would be some kind of a biotech startup. I would handle the scientific side of things – organizing research, testing, and that kind of thing. And Greg would be in charge of the business side – how do we present and market whatever it is that we’ve created. His graphic design skills and general enthusiasm would definitely come in handy for that!

So, the person who I would certainly consider working with in the future is my cousin Greg.

Part 3 Questions:

- What kinds of family businesses are common in your country?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working for family companies?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Convenience store
- Work shifts
- Mind the store
- Estate agents
- The business stays in the family for multiple generations
- An interview process
- Resort to a written application and sit-down interview
- Familiarity breeds contempt
- Blood relative
- A source of free labour

Answers

Q: What kinds of family businesses are common in your country?

A: Family businesses in my country are usually smaller than other types of companies. A typical family business, as far as I am aware, would be something like an independent convenience store that is run by a family, with mum and dad working there during the day, and the kids taking turns to work shifts and mind the store during the evening.

Another type of family business that is common is related to housing. Estate agents, who handle the buying and selling of property, are often family-run firms that have established themselves in a specific area and have a high level of knowledge and expertise about that area. When the founders of those companies, whose names are often used as the company name, get older and retire, they often pass the company onto their children to run. That way, the business stays in the family for multiple generations.



Q: What are the advantages and disadvantages of working for family companies?

A: Well, the obvious advantage is not having to go through an interview process! The business owners, at least in theory, know whether their children or other relatives would be suitable employees without the need to resort to a written application and sit-down interview. That way, things are, at least at first, easier and smoother for everyone.

The main disadvantage is that familiarity breeds contempt. A parent might treat their child differently, and in some cases show their child less respect, than they would to an employee who wasn't their blood relative. Family companies can also be less well-run in terms of accounting and other financial matters, and the parents might see their children as a source of free labour!

Topic: Helping a Child (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a time that you helped a child. You should say:

When it was

How you helped him/her

Why you helped him/her

And how you felt about it

Advice

- This is quite a specific topic, and it's not something to easily think of in the moment – so make sure you prepare beforehand.
- Some choices could be:
- Your younger family member (brother/sister/cousin/nephew/niece)
- A kid that was lost
- When you volunteered to teach someone
- When you tutored a younger kid
- Make sure to tell a story here – it should have a beginning, middle and end, and be interesting to listen to.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- The time that I helped a child which I'd like to talk about is when + details



- In the end, I actually helped, if I remember right, + number + children
- It all happened when I was + age
- I also had one eye on + secondary goal
- personal statement
- crisis of confidence
- At first, I thought, 'no way am I + undesired action'
- I had a change of heart
- It was actually a really satisfying thing to do
- a marked change in + area
- using first principles
- on a silver platter
- someone + started to buy into the process
- I + action + them for about + number + weeks, and, overall, had a blast

Answer:

The time that I helped a child which I'd like to talk about is when I volunteered one summer in high school to tutor some younger children who were having trouble studying. In the end, I actually helped, if I remember right, 5 or 6 children to improve their grades and have more confidence in studying.

It all happened when I was 16 years old. I was in high school and I remember thinking that I didn't have anything to do during the summer. I also had one eye on my university applications, so my mum suggested that I do some volunteering – partly because it would be helpful to people but mostly, to be completely honest, because it would look good on my personal statement!

I asked a few of my teachers for their suggestions about where and how to volunteer, and one of them mentioned a program that the high school ran each summer where older kids would tutor younger kids who were having trouble passing exams or crises of confidence. At first, I thought, 'no way am I staying in school during the summer', but after a few days, I had a change of heart and said I would do it.

It was actually a really satisfying thing to do – there was a marked change in the students' confidence between when they started and when they finished. I mostly tackled their English and Maths homework with them, and rather than telling them the answer, I tried to encourage them to work things out themselves, by using first principles. At first, they would moan that I wasn't giving them everything on a silver platter, but after a while, they all started to buy into the process and wanted to discover the answer for themselves.

I taught them for about 4 weeks, and overall, had a blast! So, that was the time I helped some children.

Part 3 Questions:

- What can schools do to develop students' awareness of the importance of volunteering?



- Who benefits more from volunteering – the people being helped, or the volunteers?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Comprehend
- Their actions can have hugely positive consequences
- Highlighting some case studies
- One idea + would certainly be a place to start.
- What's in it for them
- They aren't being financially compensated
- A great addition to a personal statement
- Stand out from the crowd
- The people in need should be prioritised
- It's a safe assumption that + something logical
- In dire financial or emotional straits
- A chance to 'find themselves'
- A brand-building exercise

Answer

Q: What can schools do to develop students' awareness of the importance of volunteering?

A: There are a number of things, I'd say. Firstly, showing what the results of volunteering can be in terms of the impact on the people being helped. It's important for the students to comprehend that their actions can have hugely positive consequences – they can change the lives of the people they are helping. So, highlighting some case studies of people helped by volunteers would certainly be a place to start.

Secondly, it's crucial to show students what's in it for them. They aren't being financially compensated, of course, but some significant volunteer work is a great addition to a personal statement in any university application. It can also give students some work experience to feature in their resume when they apply for their first job. In short, it can help those students stand out from the crowd.

Q: Who benefits more from volunteering – the people being helped, or the volunteers?

A: Well, that's a good question. In an ideal world, both sides would benefit but at the very least, I'd say the people in need should be prioritised. It's a safe assumption that people who volunteer are not in dire financial or emotional straits, so their needs certainly should be secondary to the needs of those they are helping.

But I think what quite often happens, particularly with younger generations, is that they see volunteering as a chance to 'find themselves' rather than a chance to give back to the community – and so they focus more on their own needs. Often, they selfie and Instagram their way through



the whole experience as more of a brand-building exercise! So, I think who benefits more depends on the case in question.

Topic: Something That Helps You Concentrate (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe something that can help you concentrate on work/study. You should say:

What it is

How it helps you concentrate

When you do it

And explain how you feel about it

Advice

- This is a relatively easy topic, because a lot of it will be in the present tense, not past tense. So, you have less chance of losing marks by missing the past tense. But if you do mention something from the past (e.g. when you started this activity) make sure you use the past tense.
- Try to choose one specific action, habit or activity to focus on. Your answer will become messy if you try to include several different habits.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- The thing that I do which helps me to concentrate is + action
- It's something that I've only recently taken to
- It's made a world of difference to + skill
- I had always heard people raving about + something good
- My brain would constantly be distracted by + something distracting
- I would struggle to immerse myself in my + important area
- For many years, I completely disregarded + method + as a concentration tool
- Calm your mind
- Drown out the noise of the world around you
- Long stretches of time
- I was able to lose myself in + important area
- Productivity
- I make a beeline for + useful tool
- It's been a real godsend



Answer

The thing that I do which helps me to concentrate is listening to classical music. It's something that I've only recently taken to, but it's made a world of difference to my concentration ability.

I had always heard people raving about how music helps them to concentrate, but for me, listening to my favourite music had always been a huge distraction while working. My brain would constantly be distracted by the lyrics and the melody, and I would struggle to immerse myself in my work or studies. So, for many years, I completely disregarded listening to music as a concentration tool.

The change came when I discovered a playlist on YouTube called 'classical concentration music'. Basically, it's a series of classical songs that are designed to calm your mind, drown out the noise of the world around you, and let you dive into the world of work for long stretches of time. I found that almost instantly, I was able to lose myself in my work – and that, of course, led to more productivity and better results.

I don't think all types of classical music would work for me – some classical music is extremely emotional and engaging – but the regular patterns and pitch of that particular playlist really lends itself to being gentle background music.

So, these days, I make a beeline for that playlist, and other, similar playlists, as soon as I start work. It's been a real godsend, so much so that now I find it difficult to concentrate without classical music!

Part 3 Questions:

- Why is it more difficult for children to concentrate nowadays?
- What kinds of jobs require high levels of concentration?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- The main reason would have to be + reason
- The ubiquity of electronic devices
- A battle for the eyeballs of users
- All kinds of bells and whistles
- Notification
- Put + electronic device + on airplane mode
- Extremely difficult to resist the allure of + something bad
- The slightest misstep could be fatal
- Sued for negligence or malpractice
- A double incentive
- Someone + whose mind wanders for 5 seconds



Answer

Q: Why is it more difficult for children to concentrate nowadays?

A: Well, I don't necessarily agree that all children find it more difficult to concentrate nowadays, but if it is the case, the main reason would have to be the ubiquity of electronic devices. The modern world is basically a battle for the eyeballs of users, and to get the attention of those users, companies include all kinds of bells and whistles in their products.

The most obvious distraction is a notification – it could be a new message, an update, or just something from an app encouraging you to come back and use it. If children don't turn off their phones, or at least put them on airplane mode, it can be extremely difficult to resist the allure of those notifications, thus making it very difficult to concentrate.

Q: What kinds of jobs require high levels of concentration?

A: Being a surgeon would of course be one such job. If you are operating on someone, the slightest misstep could be fatal, so you have to be on the ball at all times. Surgeons can be sued for negligence or malpractice if they make a mistake during a surgery, so they have a double incentive not to lose their concentration even for a second.

Being a professional sports player would also require high levels of concentration, particularly in low-scoring games like football. A goalkeeper whose mind wanders for 5 seconds in an important game could cost his team the championship!

Topic: Positive Suggestions about Work/Study (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe an occasion when someone gave you positive advice about your work or study.

You should say:

Who the person is

What he/she said

How the advice affected you

And explain how you felt about the advice

Advice



- This question is paired with the 'An interesting neighbour' question, because it's quite easy to create a story in which your interesting neighbour gave you some positive advice.
- The most logical choice of story, if you choose to create one, is about an experienced neighbour who gives you advice about what to study. That is what I have chosen.
- However, you could also talk about a different type of interesting neighbour e.g. your friend of the same age, and say what suggestion they gave you.
- In my answer, I have made the middle part relevant to both stories – it's all about my interesting neighbour that I asked for advice.
- The parts that must change, however, are the beginning and ending, as they have to be specific to the question. If you don't include a clear introduction (see my answer for an example), there is a good chance the examiner will realize that you have combined two questions into one, which will negatively affect your score.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- The time that someone gave me some positive advice was when I was in high school, and I asked my neighbour about + details
- Someone + gave me clarity when I faced a dilemma
- Person + treated him almost as a member of the family
- He was almost like part of the furniture
- A tenured professor
- I would pick his brain constantly
- He had mountains of experience
- He was always able to furnish me with the information I needed
- I was torn between my true passion, which was for + passion +, and + other less good choice
- The answer was the latter
- I enrolled as a + major + student

Answer

The time that someone gave me some positive advice was when I was in high school, and I asked my neighbour about what I should major in at university.

Firstly, to give a bit of background, my neighbour was a really wonderful elderly man called Harold. He lived alone because his wife died many years ago, and so my parents would often invite him round to our house for dinner and treated him almost as a member of the family. He came round so often that he was almost like part of the furniture.

He was an interesting character, and useful for advice in this case, because he had been a tenured professor at the local university. His area of expertise was Biology, which just so happened to be one of my favourite classes in high school, and so I would pick his brain constantly whenever I wasn't sure about my homework. He had mountains of experience both in the classroom and in



the field, so he was always able to furnish me with the information I needed. He was basically my own personal fountain of knowledge!

The positive advice he gave me, which was to some degree a turning point in my life, was when I went round to his house to ask him what I should study in university. I was torn between my true passion, which was for biology, and a more practical subject with good career prospects, like business. My parents wanted me to study business, but my neighbour asked me a very simple question. He said, 'When you look back at the end of your life, do you want to remember a career of business, or a career of biology?' Of course, the answer was the latter, and so I enrolled as a biology student.

So that is my wise and interesting neighbour Harold, who gave me some really important and positive advice about my choice of major.

Part 3 Questions:

- Should parents always encourage their children?
- Is negative feedback or positive feedback more important?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Extraordinarily lenient
- The most flagrant breaches of + rule/law
- Public decency
- A barbaric, old-fashioned concept
- Positive reinforcement
- A bit of a leg-up to get started
- Something + also has a role to play
- Traumatize
- Long-lasting low self-esteem
- An undesirable outcome
- Short, sharp negative feedback
- Grow up feeling inclined towards + habit/type of behaviour

Answer

Q: Should parents always encourage their children?

A: No, certainly not, particularly if the kids are doing something they shouldn't. There does seem to be a trend nowadays of parents being extraordinarily lenient with their children, and not punishing them even for the most flagrant breaches of the house rules or public decency. Those parents seem to regard discipline as a barbaric, old-fashioned concept – but for me, when a child is doing something wrong, they certainly shouldn't be encouraged.



On the other hand, if a child is doing something good, then the positive reinforcement that some encouragement can give is a great idea. And parents can also encourage their child in situations such as a crisis of confidence, when they need a bit of a leg-up to get started. So, really, it depends on the situation.

Q: Is negative feedback or positive feedback more important?

A: I think, in general, positive feedback is more important than negative feedback, because we should use it more frequently, but negative feedback also has a role to play. For instance, a parent who is constantly criticizing every step their child takes is likely to traumatize the child and leave them with long-lasting low self-esteem, which is clearly an undesirable outcome.

If, instead, the parent gives short, sharp negative feedback when required, but focuses 80-90% on the positives, that child is likely to grow up feeling inclined towards those positive behaviours and therefore more likely to be a success in life. So that, for me, is why positive feedback is more important.

Topic: An Interesting Neighbour (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe an interesting neighbour. You should say:

Who he/she is

How you know him/her

What you do together

And explain why he/she is interesting

Advice

- This answer is paired with the 'positive advice about studies' question because it's quite easy to create a story in which your interesting neighbour gave you some positive advice.
- The most logical choice of story, if you choose to create one, is about an experienced neighbour who gives you advice about what to study. That is what I have chosen.
- However, you could also talk about a different type of interesting neighbour e.g. your friend of the same age, and say what suggestion they gave you.
- In my answer, I have made the middle part relevant to both stories – it's all about my interesting neighbour that I asked for advice.



- The parts that must change, however, are the beginning and ending, as they have to be specific to the question. If you don't include a clear introduction (see my answer for an example), there is a good chance the examiner will realize that you have combined two questions into one, which will negatively affect your score.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- The interesting neighbour that I'd like to talk about is one who + details
- Someone + gave me clarity when I faced a dilemma
- Person + treated him almost as a member of the family
- He was almost like part of the furniture
- a tenured professor
- I would pick his brain constantly
- He had mountains of experience
- He was always able to furnish me with the information I needed
- I was torn between my true passion, which was for + passion +, and + other less good choice
- The answer was the latter
- I enrolled as a + major + student

Answer

The interesting neighbour that I'd like to talk about is one who shared my passion for biology and gave me clarity when I faced a dilemma.

Firstly, to give a bit of background, my neighbour was a really wonderful elderly man called Harold. He lived alone because his wife died many years ago, and so my parents would often invite him round to our house for dinner and treated him almost as a member of the family. He came round so often that he was almost like part of the furniture.

He was an interesting character, and useful for advice in this case, because he had been a tenured professor at the local university. His area of expertise was Biology, which just so happened to be one of my favourite classes in high school, and so I would pick his brain constantly whenever I wasn't sure about my homework. He had mountains of experience both in the classroom and in the field, so he was always able to furnish me with the information I needed. He was basically my own personal fountain of knowledge!

The positive advice he gave me, which was to some degree a turning point in my life, was when I went round to his house to ask him what I should study in university. I was torn between my true passion, which was for biology, and a more practical subject with good career prospects, like business. My parents wanted me to study business, but my neighbour asked me a very simple question. He said, 'When you look back at the end of your life, do you want to remember a career of business, or a career of biology?' Of course, the answer was the latter, and so I enrolled as a biology student.



So that is my wise and interesting neighbour Harold, who gave me some really important and positive advice about my choice of major.

Part 3 Questions

- How can people improve the relationship with neighbours in their community?
- Is it important to get on well with your neighbours?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Observing the community rules
- A responsible member of the community
- Held in high regard
- Flout basic norms
- Become something of an outcast
- Reach out and build bridges with your neighbour
- A grumpy hermit
- Create positive relationships
- Go out of your way to help + someone

Answer

Q: How can people improve the relationship with neighbours in their community?

A: I think that there are two steps that people can take. Firstly, observing the community rules – if someone is seen as a responsible member of the community, they are much more likely to be held in high regard by their neighbours. Whereas someone who flouts basic norms is likely to become something of an outcast.

The second thing to do is to actively reach out and build bridges with your neighbours. If you are seen as a grumpy hermit who never interacts with anyone, it's hard to create positive relationships. But if you go out of your way to help your neighbours, smile at them and ask them about themselves, that's how good things get started.

Q: Is it important to get on well with your neighbours?

A: Absolutely, it definitely is important. The last thing you want is to have a relationship breakdown with the people who live next to, above or below you. Having a good relationship means that you always have a bit of leeway when it comes to things like a late-night gathering at your apartment, as your neighbours will be more forgiving if they feel positively inclined towards you. A neighbour that you have alienated, on the other hand, would be far more likely to call the police to complain.



And neighbours can act as mini-saviours in all kinds of situations. The classic is when you need an ingredient as part of a meal you are making, and you suddenly realise the cupboard is bare. In that situation, you could stop everything and go down to the shops to buy what you need ... or you could pop your head next door and see if your neighbour has it. And of course the latter is only feasible if you have a good relationship with them.

Topic: A Contest You'd Like to Participate in (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a content/competition you would like to participate in.

You should say:

What the contest/competition is about

Where the content/competition will be held

When it will be held

And explain why you would like to participate in it

Advice

- This is an opportunity to combine three questions into one answer. We will be combining; 1) A contest; 2) A positive change; 3) Keeping fit and healthy.
- In order to combine the 3, you need to choose an activity that has competitions and keeps you healthy, and talk about starting to do that activity.
- Choices could be: running (race); dancing (contest); football (tournament); walking (specific walking challenge), or any other sport which has a competitive element (tennis, ping-pong, golf etc).
- As always when we combine answers, make sure to keep the middle part of the answer relevant to all 3 questions.
- Then, the start and end of the answer will change according to the question, by using the key words from the question to make a short introduction. This is very important! See my answers for examples.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Let me give you some background information first of all
- I started + activity + about a year ago during the global pandemic
- It played a huge role in my life



- The pandemic restrictions rendered it virtually impossible to consistently + activity
- I was spending days at a time isolated in my house
- Binge-watching shows on Netflix
- Piling on the pounds
- My expanding waistline
- Send your body into shock
- The first time you step foot out of the door
- Don't run before you can walk
- Cardiovascular conditioning
- Throw my hat into the ring for + competition
- I'll be raising money for charity when I do it
- I see it as a stepping stone to + future activities

Answer

A competition that I would like to participate in is a 10k running race that takes place every year in my hometown of Manchester.

Let me give you some background information first of all. I started running about a year ago during the global pandemic. I used to play football and go to the gym a lot – it played a huge role in my life – but I found that the pandemic restrictions rendered it virtually impossible to consistently do either activity. It meant that I was spending days at a time isolated in my house, binge-watching shows on Netflix and piling on the pounds.

So, one day, after looking at my expanding waistline in the mirror, I decided to give running a try. I started conservatively, which I think is crucial – you don't want to send your body into shock by trying to run a marathon the first time you step foot out of the door! Don't run before you can walk, as the saying goes!

I started by doing just a short run around my local area, before gradually expanding my route as my cardiovascular conditioning improved. After a while, I could fairly easily complete a run of 6-7 kilometres – and that's what led me to decide to throw my hat into the ring for the annual Manchester 10k run. I plan to do it in October of this year, and I'll be raising money for charity when I do it, so it's not just keeping me fit and healthy, it's helping others as well! I see it as a stepping stone to possibly doing longer races in the future, such as the London or New York marathons – but let's see how this first competition goes!

So that is the competition that I would like to take part in is a 10k running race in my hometown of Manchester.

Part 3 Questions

- What kind of industries need competition?
- Is it necessary for managers to encourage their employees to compete with each other?



Vocabulary & Sentences

- In kind of a holding pattern
- Churning out the same design
- Tear up the rulebook
- Low-carbon, renewable energy model
- A new player in the market
- Commoditization of a product
- Companies' profit margins being eroded
- Treading water
- Innovation
- A cut-throat, dog-eat-dog culture
- The whole team could get left behind
- Not-for-profit
- For the greater good

Answer

Q: What kind of industries need competition?

A: Any industry in which there is a profit to be made requires competition, to some degree. For instance, the car industry was in kind of a holding pattern, just churning out the same design for decades, before Tesla came along, tore up the rulebook and set a new standard for everyone. Now, almost every major car company is designing their own low-carbon, renewable energy model – largely thanks to the competition from a new player in the market.

But too much competition can be bad for an industry, as it can lead to commoditization of a product and to companies' profit margins being eroded. That's how an industry loses quality and ends up treading water in terms of innovation and advancement.

Q: Is it necessary for managers to encourage their employees to compete with each other?

A: I think it depends on the type of company. A company with a cut-throat, dog-eat-dog culture would require that kind of approach from its managers, otherwise the whole team could get left behind.

On the other hand, a company with a more inclusive, gentle culture, such as a charity or not-for-profit, wouldn't necessarily need its employees to compete with each other. Instead, it would make more sense for them to cooperate for the greater good.



Topic: A Positive Change in Your Life (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a positive change you made in your life. You should say:

What it is

Why you did it

Who you did it with

And explain how you feel about the change

Advice

- This is an opportunity to combine three questions into one answer. We will be combining; 1) A contest; 2) A positive change; 3) Keeping fit and healthy.
- In order to combine the 3, you need to choose an activity that has competitions and keeps you healthy, and talk about starting to do that activity.
- Choices could be: running (race); dancing (contest); football (tournament); walking (specific walking challenge), or any other sport which has a competitive element (tennis, ping-pong, golf etc).
- As always when we combine answers, make sure to keep the middle part of the answer relevant to all 3 questions.
- Then, the start and end of the answer will change according to the question, by using the key words from the question to make a short introduction. This is very important! See my answers for examples.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Let me give you some background information first of all
- I started + activity + about a year ago during the global pandemic
- It played a huge role in my life
- The pandemic restrictions rendered it virtually impossible to consistently + activity
- I was spending days at a time isolated in my house
- Binge-watching shows on Netflix
- Piling on the pounds
- My expanding waistline
- Send your body into shock
- The first time you step foot out of the door
- Don't run before you can walk
- Cardiovascular conditioning
- Throw my hat into the ring for + competition
- I'll be raising money for charity when I do it



- I see it as a stepping stone to + future activities

Answer

A positive change that I made in my life is when I started to do long-distance running as a way of keeping fit. It even turned into something that I do competitions in.

Let me give you some background information first of all. I started running about a year ago during the global pandemic. I used to play football and go to the gym a lot – it played a huge role in my life – but I found that the pandemic restrictions rendered it virtually impossible to consistently do either activity. It meant that I was spending days at a time isolated in my house, binge-watching shows on Netflix and piling on the pounds.

So, one day, after looking at my expanding waistline in the mirror, I decided to give running a try. I started conservatively, which I think is crucial – you don't want to send your body into shock by trying to run a marathon the first time you step foot out of the door! Don't run before you can walk, as the saying goes!

I started by doing just a short run around my local area, before gradually expanding my route as my cardiovascular conditioning improved. After a while, I could fairly easily complete a run of 6-7 kilometres – and that's what led me to decide to throw my hat into the ring for the annual Manchester 10k run. I plan to do it in October of this year, and I'll be raising money for charity when I do it, so it's not just keeping me fit and healthy, it's helping others as well! I see it as a stepping stone to possibly doing longer races in the future, such as the London or New York marathons – but let's see how this first competition goes!

So that was the positive change I made in my life – starting to run long distances regularly.

Part 3 Questions

- Is it easy for older people to change?
- How can people change their daily routine if they want to?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Nor do I think it's completely impossible
- Old dogs can't learn new tricks
- Changes for the better
- That's fairly anecdotal evidence but it does suggest that + logical conclusion
- Get stuck in a rut
- Repeating the same old patterns
- Never move with the times
- Get left behind by the world
- Breaking old habits and building new habits



- Expend willpower
- Once you've passed that milestone
- The application of willpower

Answer

Q: Is it easy for older people to change?

A: I'd say it's not exactly easy, but nor do I think it's completely impossible. It depends on the person, really. We tend to assume that old dogs can't learn new tricks, but I personally know several older people who have made huge changes to their lives, changes for the better I should add, after the age of 60. That's fairly anecdotal evidence but it does suggest that there are older people who find it relatively easy to change.

But having said that, there are plenty of older people who get stuck in a rut in their 40s and never really escape it. They just carry on repeating the same old patterns, and never move with the times. Those people can, to some extent, get left behind by the world, which is quite sad.

Q: How can people change their daily routine if they want to?

A: It all comes down to breaking old habits and building new habits. Scientists say that it takes about 21 days of doing something new to build a new habit, and that's 21 days in which you really have to expend willpower making sure you continue doing something new. Then, once you've passed that milestone, everything becomes easier and the new habit sticks with you.

That could be something as simple as what time you wake up in the morning, or the type of breakfast you eat, or as big as changing your career or lifestyle completely. The key is to turn the change or new behaviour into a habit through the application of willpower in those crucial first few weeks.

Topic: A Traditional Product (2022.5)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a traditional product in your country. You should say:

What it is

When you tried this product for the first time

What it is made of

And explain how you feel about it



Advice

- This is a fairly wide topic – a product can be anything physical, including things like food and drink, which would both be quite easy choices.
- The idea of traditional is also flexible – it can refer to something from 50 years ago, or 500 years ago or even older. So, talking about a style of clothing could also be a good choice.
- The important thing is to choose a topic that you find easy to talk about and know some high-level vocabulary for. If you don't know any high-level vocabulary about a specific topic (e.g. clothing), then it's hard to get a high score.
- To think about how to fill your answer here, use the 5Ws and 1H (Why, who, when, where, what, how). Ask yourself questions like 'why do I use it', 'when do I use it', 'how long have I used it for', and you'll have plenty of things to talk about to fill your 2 minutes.

Vocabulary & Sentences

- There are a lot of traditional products in my country, and so it's a little hard to choose one in particular to talk about, but the one I've settled on is + product name
- It's something that is considered unremarkable here in + name of home country
- Product + is marketed as an almost exotic luxury in other parts of the world
- A social lubricant
- Social politeness
- I've lost count of the number of times that complete strangers have offered me + product
- A panacea
- It was said by an observer of + country + culture that + product + is essentially + opinion
- Worn out
- A soothing balm
- Across the pond in America
- To see a humble + product + sold for sky-high prices
- Product + is essentially baked into our culture

Answer

There are a lot of traditional products in my country, and so it's a little hard to choose one in particular to talk about, but the one I've settled on is English breakfast tea. It's something that is considered unremarkable here in the UK, but that is marketed as an almost exotic luxury in other parts of the world.



The way that we use English breakfast tea in the UK is kind of as a social lubricant. It is, of course, something people drink at breakfast, but we also drink it throughout the whole day. People will often offer each other a cup of tea as a sign of friendship and social politeness. I've lost count of the number of times that complete strangers have offered me a cup of tea!

It was said by an observer of British culture that tea was essentially a panacea – it does whatever you need it to do! If you feel worn out, it can give you energy. If you're stressed out, it can act as a soothing balm and calm you down.

And nowadays, particularly if you spend time across the pond in America, English breakfast tea is seen as something exclusive, desirable and a sign of class. It's very peculiar to Brits traveling abroad to see a humble cup of tea sold for sky-high prices, and that's also led to a growing trend of British people packing tea into their suitcases when they travel abroad!

Breakfast tea is essentially baked into our culture, and so that's why I chose it as my traditional product to talk about.

Part 3 Questions:

- Why is it important for children to learn about traditional products?
- What are some traditional products in your country?

Vocabulary & Sentences

- Keeping the cultural heritage of a country alive
- Globalisation
- Cultural convergence
- Cultures can shrivel and die
- Become amalgamated into a homogenized international world
- Keeping a country's cultural heart beating
- Fermented apples
- Served at room-temperature
- It retains a good amount of popularity around the country

Answer

Q: Why is it important for children to learn about traditional products?

A: Well, I'd say it's a big part of keeping the cultural heritage of a country alive. In the era of globalisation and cultural convergence, it's important to keep a country's traditions alive, and traditional products are a big part of that.

It's very easy for children to go with whatever new trend seems cool as they are growing up, and quite often that will be something international that takes the place of a traditional product. That's the way in which cultures can shrivel and die, or become amalgamated into a homogenized



international world. So, actively teaching children about traditional products is one way of keeping a country's cultural heart beating.

Q: What are some traditional products in your country?

A: We have a few, and most of them are food- or drink-based. For instance, there's a drink called cider, which is an alcoholic drink made from fermented apples. There is a more modern version, which is very sweet and comes chilled, but also a traditional version that is served at room-temperature and has a really strong flavour. It's definitely not everyone's cup of tea, but it retains a good amount of popularity around the country.

And another traditional product is the pork pie. It's basically what it sounds like – a pie that has pork inside, as well as an egg. It's about 600 years old, it's served, again, at room temperature or even cold, and it's delicious! I love it with a good cup of tea.

Topics: Something That Helped You Learn a Language AND A Course That Impressed You (2022.1)

Note:

- The following two questions are related. We can use a single answer (with a few changes) to answer both of these questions.
- For our example answer, I have chosen a course from Last Minute English. You can either choose the same course, or a different course that you have taken which you found impressive.
- It could be about English, or another foreign language. It could also be about a coding language e.g. JavaScript, Python
- You must choose a course as the 'thing that helped you learn a language' – that's the only way that these two questions can have the same answer. For example, if you say, 'My teacher helped me learn Japanese', it's not a type of course (it's a teacher!). So, make sure to choose a course that helped you learn a language.

Vocabulary:

- An all-in-one course
- Exclusive
- Specifically tailored
- Interactive
- Put something into practice
- Get quick feedback



Sentences:

- Well, the thing that helped me learn a language, specifically + language +, was a course from a company called + company name (For Q1)
- Well, the course that really impressed me that I'd like to talk about was an + details + course from a company called + company name (For Q2)
- It really helped me in my preparation for + test/qualification/trip
- First of all, let me introduce the course.
- It's basically an all-in-one course that helps you prepare for + goal
- It's pretty exclusive because it's taught by + specific teachers
- What I really liked about the course was that it was specifically tailored to my needs
- The teaching assistants provided me with a detailed study plan based on + your situation
- They also tested my + language + level and gave me materials and tasks based on what I needed to improve
- I remember learning some really important information about how to + important skill +, and then the next step was to + way of practicing important skill
- That way, I was able to put what I was learning into practice, get quick feedback on my improvement, and therefore improve my performance as quickly as possible
- Probably the thing I enjoyed most about the + name of course + was how the teachers + activity
- They demand excellence and they don't take no for an answer
- I was constantly being pushed to work harder and improve myself
- My + test/goal + results speak for themselves

Topic: Something That Helped You Learn a Language (2022.1)

Part 2 Question:

Describe something that helped you learn a language

You should say:

What it is

What language you learned

How it helped you learn the language

And how you felt about it

Advice:

- Make sure to include introduction and conclusion sentences that clearly echo the language in the question.



- You are mostly talking about a course in this answer, but your first and last sentences should be very clearly about this question – include the words ‘helped me learn a language’ at least once.

Answer:

Well, the thing that helped me learn a language, specifically English, was a course from a company called Last Minute English. It was an IELTS course and it really helped me in my preparation for the IELTS exam, and also to improve my English in general.

First of all, let me introduce the course. The name of the course is the IELTS Premium Package, and it’s basically an all-in-one course that helps you prepare for all areas of the exam. It’s pretty exclusive because it’s taught by former IELTS examiners, so as far as I’m aware, they only accept 5-10 students per month – and I was one of them!

What I really liked about the course was that it was specifically tailored to my needs. For example, the teaching assistants provided me with a detailed study plan based on my exam date, which meant I always knew what I should be doing. They also tested my English level and gave me materials and tasks based on what I needed to improve.

It was also a very interactive course. I remember learning some really important information about how to organise an IELTS essay, and then the next step was to write my own essay and give it to a teacher to be marked. That way, I was able to put what I was learning into practice, get quick feedback on my improvement, and therefore improve my performance as quickly as possible.

But probably the thing I enjoyed most about the IELTS Premium Package was how the teachers challenge you to improve. They demand excellence and they don’t take no for an answer! I was constantly being pushed to work harder and improve myself, and in the end, it was worth it, because my IELTS results speak for themselves!

So that was the thing that helped me improve my English language skills.

Part 3 Questions:

- What are some reasons that people learn a foreign language?
- What is the most difficult part of learning a foreign language?

Vocabulary:

- Obligation
- Professional development
- A particular set of skills
- The same qualifications
- Mother tongue
- Competitive advantage



- Shameful
- Vocal cords
- Child's mindset
- Shy away
- Lose face

Answer:

Q: What are some reasons that people learn a foreign language?

A: There are a few different reasons that people might learn a foreign language, actually. First of all, a lot of people start learning a foreign language in school, as part of a class. That's more of an obligation than a desire though, and it's reflected in how few people leave school with the ability to actually speak that language.

Another reason is for professional development. One person with a particular set of skills plus the ability to speak another language would naturally have an advantage in job applications over another candidate with the same qualifications but only speaking their mother tongue. People want a competitive advantage in all things, and a foreign language can be just that.

Q: What is the most difficult part of learning a foreign language?

A: Well, different people find different things difficult, but I think something that everyone struggles with is pronunciation. For many people, they find it extremely awkward and almost shameful to have to pronounce words and move their vocal cords in an unfamiliar way.

If it's their first time learning a foreign language, it's quite hard to get into that child's mindset where nothing embarrasses them and everything is a fun game. Adults believe that people are always judging them, and so they often shy away from things that could make them lose face – and pronunciation of a foreign language is exactly that.

Topic: A Course That Impressed You (2022.1)

Part 2 Question: Describe a course that impressed you a lot

You should say:

What the course was about

Where you took the course

What you did during the course



And explain why it impressed you a lot

Advice:

- Be sure to change the first sentence to make it relevant to the idea of 'a course that impressed you' - try to use those words if you can.

Answer:

Well, the course that really impressed me that I'd like to talk about was an IELTS course from a company called Last Minute English. It really helped me in my preparation for the IELTS exam, and also to improved my English in general.

First of all, let me introduce the course. The name of the course is the IELTS Premium Package, and it's basically an all-in-one course that helps you prepare for all areas of the exam. It's pretty exclusive because it's taught by former IELTS examiners, so as far as I'm aware, they only accept 5-10 students per month – and I was one of them!

What I really liked about the course was that it was specifically tailored to my needs. For example, the teaching assistants provided me with a detailed study plan based on my exam date, which meant I always knew what I should be doing. They also tested my English level and gave me materials and tasks based on what I needed to improve.

It was also a very interactive course. I remember learning some really important information about how to organise an IELTS essay, and then the next step was to write my own essay and give it to a teacher to be marked. That way, I was able to put what I was learning into practice, get quick feedback on my improvement, and therefore improve my performance as quickly as possible.

But probably the thing I enjoyed most about the IELTS Premium Package course was how the teachers challenge you to improve. They demand excellence and they don't take no for an answer! I was constantly being pushed to work harder and improve myself, and in the end, it was worth it, because my IELTS results speak for themselves!

So that was the IELTS preparation course that really impressed me.

Part 3 Questions:

- Why do some people have better memories than other people?
- Is remembering things important in the modern world?

Vocabulary:

- a scientific explanation
- retain information



- area of expertise
- off the top of my head
- nature and nurture
- outstanding
- utility
- social media accounts
- ubiquity
- socialisation purposes
- start from scratch
- get off the ground

Answer:

Q: Why do some people have better memories than other people?

A: That's a tough one, really! I'm sure there's a scientific explanation for why some people are able to retain information more easily than others, but I must admit that it's not my area of expertise. But just off the top of my head, my instinct would be that it comes down to, like a lot of other skills, a combination of nature and nurture.

The nature side is obviously DNA – whether a person's parents were good at remembering things or not. But then the nurture side, I would imagine, comes down to practice. The ability to remember is a skill that can be trained and improved, but not everyone does that practice or indeed needs to do it. So, I would expect that the people with outstanding memories both practice by themselves and come from a family with good memories.

Q: Is remembering things important in the modern world?

A: That's a good question! It depends what, really. For instance, there's not a great deal of utility in memorizing people's phone numbers the way we used to in the days before mobile phones. Nowadays, your phone remembers people's phone numbers, social media accounts and all kinds of other information so that you don't have to.

However, the ubiquity of mobiles doesn't necessarily mean that we can just hand over all memory responsibilities to our phones. For example, it's still important for socialisation purposes to remember the content of conversations with people so that we can build our relationships with them in the future. If we had to start from scratch with someone every time we met, it would be hard for that relationship to get off the ground!

Topics: A Person You Met Once AND An Interesting Conversation You Had (2022.1)

Note:



- Our answers for these two questions will be fairly similar. You can choose the same approach, or you can prepare these two answers separately – both methods are ok.
- If you choose to save time by preparing the two answers together, make sure to think about what the question must be asking – now it wants you to: “Describe a conversation that was interesting with a person you only met once.” That means that you have to choose the conversation carefully.
- For each question, make sure you very clearly change the introduction and conclusion sentences to mirror the question – and try to use the exact language from the question in your intro/conclusion sentences.

Topic: Someone You Follow on Social Media (2022.1)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a person who you follow on social media

You should say:

Who he/she is

How you found out about him/her

What he/she posts on social media

And explain why you follow him/her on social media

Advice:

- This is another flexible topic. If you choose carefully, you can answer about almost any topic that it would be possible to show on social media.
- For example, you could talk about a fitness instructor, a comedian, an actor, a gamer, a makeup artist, or a painter.
- Make sure to choose someone that covers an area that you feel comfortable talking about. This will allow you to display better vocabulary and fluency.
- For example, my choice of influencer is a fitness instructor, as I know a lot about fitness and therefore can bring in some specific fitness language.
- This is also a good opportunity to bring in some social media vocabulary. If you don't know many words related to social media and want to add extra high-level vocabulary, make sure to check out our *Advanced Vocabulary Booklet* – ask one of our staff for more information.

Vocabulary:



- Influencer
- Subscribers
- Algorithm
- Nutrition
- Cheat meals
- Body-fat percentage
- Muscle definition
- Digest

Sentences:

- The person I'd like to talk about is a + area + influencer on + channel
- He has over + number + subscribers, and he's really very good at what he does
- I'd say he's the leading + area + influencer in the Western internet
- I first found out about him about + number + years ago, when one of his videos was recommended by the algorithm on YouTube
- I guess I had been searching for + area of interest + content, and YouTube thought that I'd enjoy watching + influencer name
- I remember hitting the subscribe button after watching about 2 minutes of the first video!
- I think the first post of his that I saw was a video talking about + topic
- The results are clear to see
- His videos focus on + area - things like the best way to + activity +, or advice on common + activity + mistakes that people make
- His videos usually last for between + time and time + minutes, and they are packed full of really valuable information that's easy to digest

Answer:

The person I'd like to talk about is a fitness influencer on YouTube. His name is Jeff Cavaliere and he runs a company called AthleanX. He has over 10 million subscribers, and he's really very good at what he does – I'd say he's the leading male fitness influencer in the Western internet.

I first found out about him about 5 years ago, when one of his videos was recommended by the algorithm on YouTube. I guess I had been searching for fitness-related content, and YouTube thought that I'd enjoy watching Jeff – and they were right. I remember hitting the subscribe button after watching about 2 minutes of the first video!

I think the first post of his that I saw was a video talking about the benefits of good nutrition. He showed us around his home kitchen and talked us through a typical day of eating. What I remember most clearly of all was how strict and disciplined he was with his diet – he very rarely went for cheat meals, which is something that a lot of other influencers promote. And the results are clear to see – his body-fat percentage is incredibly low, which in turn gives him great muscle definition.



But mostly, his videos focus on different techniques for working out – things like the best way to exercise your back, or advice on common workout mistakes that people make. His videos usually last for between 8 and 12 minutes, and they are packed full of really valuable information that's easy to digest – I think that must be why he's so popular! So that is Jeff Cavaliere, a fitness influencer that I follow on YouTube.

Part 3 Questions:

- Do older people in your country spend much time on social media?
- What are the disadvantages of using social media?

Vocabulary:

- Encountered
- Maintain their social circles
- Inane
- Brainless
- Addictiveness
- Manipulate
- Ever-increasing amount of time
- Notifications
- Dopamine triggers
- Glued to their phones
- Scrolling
- Newsfeeds

Answer:

Q: Do older people in your country spend much time on social media?

A: To be perfectly honest, it depends on the older person. I've personally encountered many people in their 60s and 70s who spend a great deal of time on communication apps like WhatsApp and WeChat. They maintain their social circles using those apps, and would find it hard to go back to the world as it was before.

But I must admit that most older people in my country don't spend as much time on video-sharing apps like Douyin and Tik-tok as younger people. They generally find the videos shared on those apps a bit inane and brainless, and instead, usually spend their leisure time watching TV.

Q: What are the disadvantages of using social media?

A: Well, the biggest disadvantage that I can see is the addictiveness of social media. Companies like Facebook, Twitter and Tencent know exactly how to manipulate their users into spending an



ever-increasing amount of time on their apps, through the use of notifications, bright colors, and other dopamine triggers.

The result of that, as we see every day in any public place, is that people end up glued to their phones, not really doing anything worthwhile, but instead just burying themselves in endless scrolling through newsfeeds and homepages, feeding their addiction. To me, that is the biggest danger of social media.

Topic: A Long Walk (2022.1)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a long walk you went on

You should say:

When this happened

Where you walked

Who you were with

And explain how you felt about this long walk

Answer:

Well, the long walk that I went on which I'd like to tell you about, happened when I was on holiday in Paris about 4 years ago.

To give a bit of background, I went to Paris for a few days with my brother and sister. Paris is obviously an extremely famous city but none of us had ever been there before, so it was a nice chance for us to see what all the fuss was about!

When we first arrived, we checked into our hotel and then went out for a really long walk across the whole of the tourist area of the city. It was amazing – we saw the Eiffel Tower, the Champs-Élysées, the Louvre Museum, and all kinds of other world-famous tourist attractions. It's incredible how much there is to see in Paris.

While we were walking around, we also found a huge street food market and had some desserts there. I had heard a lot said about the fantastic patisserie that's available in Paris, but I'd never tried it until that trip. All I can say is that it lived up to its reputation! I've never eaten anything like it anywhere else in the world.

But the thing that did spoil the trip actually, and which would stop me going back to Paris, was how expensive everything was. On that same walk, I remember being charged 3 Euros just to use a



public bathroom! And I don't want to think about the outrageous prices at the hotel – it would just make me depressed to think about it. So, even though I really enjoyed it, I think it was just a one-time thing – unless I win the lottery, of course.

So, that was a long walk I went on when I was on holiday in Paris.

Part 3 Questions:

- Is it better to go on walks with others or alone?
- Is the city you live in a good place to go for long walks?

Vocabulary:

- Outgoing
- Layer of security
- Run into trouble
- Bail you out
- Meditation
- Tranquillity
- Nattering away
- Walkable
- Close proximity
- Selling points
- Freezing
- Boiling hot
- A complete nightmare
- Manageable

Answer:

Q: Is it better to go on walks with others or alone?

A: It depends on your goal for the walk, really. If you're feeling outgoing and social, then obviously it's better to go with a group of people. There's an added layer of security that way as well, because if you run into trouble, you'll have people there to bail you out or call for help, which wouldn't necessarily be the case if you were there by yourself.

On the other hand, the benefit of going alone is that you are able to take time to do some meditation or think about something that's been bothering you. You don't get that same peace and tranquillity if you're with a group of people who are nattering away about something or other. So, it really depends on what you're looking for.

Q: Is the city you live in a good place to go for long walks?



A: Yeah, it's not bad actually. It's a pretty walkable city, because everything in the city centre is in pretty close proximity, so you can get around without having to rely on public transport or a private car. That's one of the big selling points of my hometown, actually.

The issue, of course, is the weather. There are days in winter that are absolutely freezing and days in summer where the weather is boiling hot – and on those days, going outside for a long walk is a complete nightmare. And then in spring and autumn, when the temperature is a lot more manageable, it often rains, so if you're someone who doesn't enjoy the wet weather, you have to pick and choose your moments for long walks very carefully.

Topic: An Interesting City (2022.1)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a city that you think is interesting

You should say:

Where it is

What the city is famous for

Why it is interesting

And explain how you feel about it

Answer:

There are a number of cities that I've been to which I could say are really interesting, but the one that really stands out has to be Paris.

To give a bit of background, I went to Paris for a few days with my brother and sister about 4 years ago. Paris is obviously an extremely famous city but none of us had ever been there before, so it was a nice chance for us to see what all the fuss was about!

When we first arrived, we checked into our hotel and then went out for a really long walk across the whole of the tourist area of the city. It was amazing – we saw the Eiffel Tower, the Champs-Élysées, the Louvre Museum, and all kinds of other world-famous tourist attractions. It's incredible how much there is to see in Paris.

While we were walking around, we also found a huge street food market and had some desserts there. I had heard a lot said about the fantastic patisserie that's available in Paris, but I'd never tried it until that trip. All I can say is that it lived up to its reputation! I've never eaten anything like it anywhere else in the world.



But the thing that did spoil the trip actually, and which would stop me going back to Paris, was how expensive everything was. On that same walk, I remember being charged 3 Euros just to use a public bathroom! And I don't want to think about the outrageous prices at the hotel – it would just make me depressed to think about it. So, even though I really enjoyed it, I think it was just a one-time thing – unless I win the lottery, of course.

So, there we are, the most interesting city I've ever visited was Paris.

Part 3 Questions:

- What advantages can tourism bring to a city?
- Why are cities popular with young people as a place to live?

Vocabulary:

- economic benefits
- all corners of the globe
- a huge boost economically
- loosen the purse strings
- spring up
- get a head-start
- perception
- move up the career ladder
- pool of potential friends and partners
- cosmopolitan city
- millions of inhabitants

Answer:

Q: What advantages can tourism bring to a city?

A: Well, obviously the biggest advantage is the economic benefits that tourism can bring. If you have people regularly coming from all corners of the globe to spend their vacation in your city, it's obviously going to be a huge boost economically.

Tourists tend to travel having saved up some money, and as such, they're willing to loosen the purse strings when it comes to things like hotels and restaurants. They also pay for things like guided tours and shows, which the normal residents of a city might not necessarily take much interest in.

That in turn means that all kinds of small businesses can spring up to help provide a great holiday experience to those tourists, thus creating wealth and jobs for the local people in a city. So yeah, for me, the biggest benefit of tourism is financial.



Q: Why are cities popular with young people as a place to live?

A: I think the key word here is opportunity – but obviously opportunity comes in many forms. Cities provide young people with the opportunity to get a head-start in their career, as there are traditionally more jobs in a city than in the countryside. So there's definitely a perception that people living in cities are able to move up the career ladder much faster than those in the countryside.

But also, there are more social and romantic opportunities in cities. The pool of potential friends and partners is much smaller in a small village in the countryside compared to a large, cosmopolitan city with millions of inhabitants. So, in general, cities are a great way for young people to get a good start in all areas of their lives.

Topic: A Rule You Don't Like (2022.1)

Part 2 Question:

Describe a rule that you don't like

You should say:

What it is

Why you don't like it

How others feel about the rule

And explain whether you've followed the rule

Advice:

- This question is an opportunity to tell an entertaining story about an argument or conflict you've had in the past about a rule. It could be an argument with your parents, a teacher, a manager or a friend, and the argument itself could be serious or funny.
- Even if it was a serious conflict, you can turn it into a light-hearted story that the examiner will enjoy listening to. Remember, examiners are interested in hearing your personal stories, but don't burden them with things that are too tragic or emotional.
- This is a good opportunity to use some more advanced negative emotion vocabulary. Make sure to review the vocabulary in the list below and try to use it in your own answer. E.g. 'infuriating'
- You can either use the vocab in a genuine way (you really are angry/sad) or in a kind of joking way (you realise that you are exaggerating and it's a shared joke with the examiner).



- This answer also has a good amount of business-related vocabulary. If you are interested in improving your business English, either to help you find a new job or do better in your current job, make sure to ask our staff about how we can help you achieve your business English goals.

Vocabulary:

- Bossed around
- Disdain
- Administrative assistant
- Punctual
- In my defence
- See eye to eye
- Run a tight ship
- Butt heads
- KPIs
- Short-sighted
- Petty
- Infuriating
- Erode trust

Sentences:

- I must admit that I've never been a big fan of rules
- I don't like being bossed around and told what to do
- But one rule in particular that I don't like is the rule in many + organisation + that + rule details
- The origin of my disdain for this rule comes from + details
- I didn't see eye to eye with + person +, to put it lightly
- Organisation + had a very strict policy about + rule
- Person + liked to run a tight ship
- We were constantly butting heads about me + negative action
- I really thought that his focus on + rule + was short-sighted and petty, and it was infuriating
- He told me that + positive action + was a mark of respect towards + people
- He also told me that he couldn't make exceptions to the rule
- It would set a bad example to + people + and erode trust in the + organisation
- He was so insistent on it that eventually I just had to agree with him to get him off my back
- I can't claim to have been always completely + positive adjective + after that, but I certainly did follow the rule more often

Answer:



Well, to start with, I must admit that I've never been a big fan of rules – I don't like being bossed around and told what to do. But one rule in particular that I don't like is the rule in many companies that you have to be in the office at certain times of the day.

The origin of my disdain for this rule comes from my first job after graduating from university, when I worked as an administrative assistant in an office. I'm not a particularly punctual person, to be perfectly honest, but in my defence, I do work hard and get results when I'm in the office.

So, I didn't see eye to eye with my boss at that company, to put it lightly! The company had a very strict policy about clocking in and out on time, and my boss liked to run a tight ship. As such, we were constantly butting heads about me turning up to work 10 or 15 minutes late. To me, it wasn't a problem at all – I easily hit and usually exceeded all my KPIs in that job, and would stay late to complete my hours if I didn't arrive on time. I really thought that his focus on punctuality was short-sighted and petty, and it was infuriating!

Obviously, he didn't agree – he told me that turning up to work on time was a mark of respect towards the company, your colleagues and even yourself. He also told me that he couldn't make exceptions to the rule, as it would set a bad example to the other members of staff and erode trust in the team. He was so insistent on it that eventually I just had to agree with him to get him off my back! I can't claim to have been always completely punctual after that, but I certainly did follow the rule more often. But that doesn't mean I agreed with it!

Part 3 Questions:

- What are some typical rules that parents give to their children?
- Should people always follow the rules of society?

Vocabulary:

- Impose
- Falling behind
- Outperform their peers
- Immediately comes to mind
- Well-rested
- Puritanical
- The golden rule
- Meaningless niceties
- Dress codes
- Compulsion

Answer:

Q: What are some typical rules that parents give to their children?



A: Well, obviously every family and every household is different and unique, but most parents in my country usually impose a few rules that their children have to obey. The most obvious one is doing your homework – parents always want to ensure that their children aren't falling behind in school, so they put pressure on them to always outperform their peers.

Another that immediately comes to mind is going to bed at a certain time. Parents, much more than children, understand how important it is to be well-rested. A child's physical and emotional development is based, in large part, on whether they get enough sleep, so many parents are puritanical about children going to bed on time.

Q: Should people always follow the rules of society?

A: Well, it depends really. I always think it's best to follow the golden rule – treat others as you'd like to be treated yourself. And in many cases, that means following the rules of society, like trying to avoid hurting people either emotionally or physically.

But of course, there are certain societal rules that are mostly just meaningless niceties, and if people want to opt out of following those rules, I think that's perfectly reasonable. I'm talking about things like following dress codes when you go to certain places. No-one really gets hurt if you don't follow those rules, so, as far as I'm concerned, there should be no compulsion to obey them.