

3 Using notes to follow a talk

The headings in a set of notes can help you in the same way as the headings in a column.

3.1 Read the notes below and answer questions 1–4 below.

- 1 How is the information organised differently, in comparison with the table in 2.1?
- 2 How will this help you to follow the talk?
- 3 What **new** topic will you hear about, which was not in the table in 2.1?
- 4 For which question do you need to write a nationality?

Plants that changed the world

Prehistory: flowering plants

- arrived about 130 million years ago
- became an essential source of 1

2737 BC: tea

- discovered in China, played a key role in USA, China & UK
- led to financial problems in Britain – a Chinese ruler insisted all tea was paid for with 2 , which had to be sourced from other countries

202 BC: White Mulberry

- in demand from 202 BC when it was essential in the production of 3
- trade routes led to the spread of different 4 but also made more people ill and encouraged the exchange of dangerous products (e.g. 5)

16th century: the potato

- originated in Central and South America, brought to Europe by the 6
- it was rapidly accepted because it was cheap and contained lots of 7
- helped prevent one specific 8
- 1845–1849 – large-scale failure of potato crops led to a million deaths in Ireland and the 9 of another million people

3.2 33 Listen and complete the notes with ONE WORD ONLY.

3.3 Check your answers, then listen again and notice how the notes help to guide you through the talk.

What's the difference between Academic Reading and General Training Reading?

There are two separate reading tests, one for Academic candidates and one for General Training candidates. Before enrolling for the test, you need to decide which test is best for you. See www.ielts.org for advice.

How long does the IELTS Reading paper last?

The test lasts 60 minutes. Within that time, you must complete three separate sections with a total of 40 questions. You must also transfer your answers onto a separate answer sheet (there is no extra time given for this).

What type of information will I read?

The Reading paper has three separate sections. Each section is a little more difficult than the one before and features authentic reading passages. The Academic module contains three long texts of an academic nature. The General Training module features a mixture of long and short texts of a more general nature, as well as texts related to work situations.

How is the Reading paper assessed?

You will be asked a total of 40 questions. In order to assess how much of the reading passages you understand, the questions will usually paraphrase (use different words with the same meaning) the words that are in the text. The questions test a variety of reading skills including your ability to do the following.

- Identify the writer's overall purpose.
- Follow key arguments in a text.
- Identify opinions and attitudes.
- Locate specific information.
- Distinguish main ideas from supporting details.
- Extract information from a text to complete a diagram, summary, table or set of notes.

What type of questions will I need to answer?

There are 12–13 questions in each section, and you will be asked 1–3 different types of question in any section. There are several possible types of question. For some tasks, you need to write words or numbers from the reading passage.

- sentence completion
- summary, note, table, flow-chart completion
- short-answer questions
- diagram label completion

In other tasks, you need to choose one option from a list and write a letter on your answer sheet.

- multiple choice
- matching information
- matching headings
- matching features
- matching sentence endings
- summary completion

You may also need to decide if sentences are True/False/Not Given or Yes/No/Not Given, based on the information that you read.

How do I answer the questions?

The instructions and the questions will tell you what type of information you need to locate in the texts, and the type of answer you need to write. Carefully follow all of the instructions on the question paper. In this unit, you will be able to practise all of these question types.

How can I improve my Reading paper score?

You can improve your score by following the instructions exactly and remembering the Test Tips in this unit. Managing your time so that you can complete all of the questions is an important part of the Reading paper. This unit will also tell you the reading skills you need to practise in order to achieve your best score. Before the test, try to read a variety of texts and improve your speed-reading skills. Studying all aspects of English (including vocabulary and grammar) will also help improve your IELTS score. If you make any mistakes in the Practice Tests in this book, make sure that you read the texts again carefully and use the Answer Key to help you identify any problems.

Reading skills

1 Reading strategies

In this unit you will practise:

- using the features of a passage
- understanding explanations
- skimming a text and speed reading
- global understanding of a passage

1 Using the features of a Reading passage

1.1 Label the reading passage with the correct letters in the box (A–G).

Features of a Reading passage

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| A footnote | E heading |
| B subheading | F caption |
| C column | G paragraph |
| D figure / illustration | |

1

2

3

Health-Tea

Sid Cowans looks at the health properties of a favourite drink

If you are a tea drinker you have probably heard of **tannins**, which are plant based chemicals found in tea. They are responsible for the **astringent** bitter taste sometimes associated with tea. When you drink a cup of tea, it usually dissolves and remains clear unless the water is too cold or too **alkaline**.

Tannins occur in many different types of plants and food, but are especially present in **oak galls**, which have been used for centuries in Chinese medicine due to their health giving properties. Tannins are often present in drinks and medicine because they are **soluble** in water, but how much they dissolve depends on factors like temperature and the chemical make up of the liquid.



Tannins exist in all types of tea

¹ In chemistry, an alkali is the opposite of an acid.

² Abnormal growths on oak trees

6

5

4

Most Reading passages will have a heading and a subheading. The subheading is used to give you the context to the passage.

1.2 Match headings A–D from four Reading passages with subheadings 1–5. There is one extra subheading that you do not need.

- A Alpine Glacial Lakes
- B Clean Dream
- C Virtual Connections
- D Creating Young Scientists

- 1 Researchers disagree about whether social media is making us more isolated.
- 2 Climatologists are assessing the impact of climate change on high-altitude bodies of water.
- 3 James Clegg identifies two current trends that are expanding the role of science in high schools.
- 4 Alan Parker outlines a recent breakthrough in technology.
- 5 In the 19th century, a schoolgirl and a former travelling salesman helped turn the humble soap bar into an \$18 billion industry.

Understanding the context can help you to predict the type of information contained in the Reading passage.

1.3 Match the types of information 1–6 to Reading headings A–D.

You will need to use the information in the subheadings to help you and you may use any letter more than once.

- 1 arguments put forward by several different experts
- 2 a description of a project in mountainous areas
- 3 a discussion about the impact of technology on society
- 4 research linked to trends in weather patterns
- 5 a historical look at a successful business venture
- 6 an argument presented from one expert's point of view

An IELTS Reading passage might contain *footnotes*. These help explain technical terms. Some terms are explained in the passage. Other terms can be understood by reading the text carefully.

1.4 The passage in 1.1 contains several explanations and definitions.

Read the passage and match terms (1–5) with meanings A–F.

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 tannin | A a taste similar to a lemon |
| 2 astringent | B a chemical found in certain plants |
| 3 alkaline | C able to dissolve in liquid |
| 4 oak gall | D the opposite of acidic |
| 5 soluble | E becoming cloudy |
| | F a problem found on a type of tree |

1.5 What helped you to identify the definition of each word?

- A a footnote in the text
- B an explanation in the text
- C the surrounding context



Test Tip Timing is an important part of the Reading test. Try to finish each section in **less than 20 minutes**.

Read the passage as quickly as possible (up to three minutes). Look at the questions to see what type of information you need to find (up to one minute).

Spend 12–13 minutes reading the passage in detail and answering the questions.

If a question is taking too long, move on. Use your last 3–4 minutes to transfer your answers, checking and filling in any gaps in your answers.

2 Skimming a passage and speed reading

Skimming a passage means reading it quickly (concentrating on content words, like nouns and verbs) to find the main points. It is not reading for detail. Skimming a text will also give you a general idea of how the information is organised, which can help you locate information more easily later on. In your own language, you can probably skim read 100 words in 20 seconds. In the exam, you should aim to skim read 100 words in 30 seconds.

2.1 This passage has four paragraphs of around 100 words each.

- 1 Using a timer, skim read the text to get the general idea of what it is about.
- 2 After 30 seconds, jump to the start of the next paragraph.

- A** The diets of children have changed dramatically over the last century due to the effect of technologies (such as improved transport, canning and refrigeration), social changes (such as the establishment of boarding schools) and evolving ideas about the nutritional needs of growing bodies. Before World War I, the meals of children and adults alike would typically consist of vegetables (often potatoes), large amounts of bread (often 0.5 kg/day) and soups with small amounts of meat.
- B** Imagine a 12-year-old Australian boy from 1970 standing next to a 12-year-old boy from 2010. The boy from 2010 will probably be 3–5 cm taller and 7 kg heavier than his counterpart in 1970. He will also be 25% fatter. A lot of that fat will be around the waist. The 2010 school trousers won't fit the boy from 1970; they will be 10 cm too big around the waist. Now imagine that the two boys have a running race of over 1,600 metres: the boy from 1970 will finish 300 metres ahead of his mate from 40 years in the future.
- C** There are two chances in three that the boy from 1970 walked to school each day; there are three chances in four that the boy from 2010 is driven to school by mum or dad. There are four chances in five that in 1970 the boy was allowed to play unsupervised in the neighbourhood; there is only one chance in four that in 2010 the boy will be allowed to go down to the park on his own. The boy in 1970 probably played three or four different sports; the boy from 2010 plays one or none. It is 30 times more likely that the local river was the favourite play space of the boy from 1970 than it is for the boy today.
- D** What has caused these dramatic changes in the space of a single generation? There are two main theories. Increasing overweight is caused by an energy imbalance: either energy intake (food) increases, or energy expenditure decreases, or both. The 'Gluttony Theory' argues that children are fatter because they are eating more than they used to, and more bad food (high energy density, high in fat and sugar, high in saturated fats). The 'Sloth Theory' argues that children are fatter because they are less active than they used to be. The two theories have battled it out in nutrition and physical activity journals for the last 10 years.

2.2 Now look at questions 1–3 and, without looking at the passage, try to remember whether this information was

- A near the beginning.
 - B in the middle.
 - C near the end.
- 1 a comparison of children now and in the past
 - 2 different hypotheses for the changes in weight
 - 3 a list of factors that brought about changes in our diet

2.3 Questions 1–3 in 2.2 each give the main idea of the paragraphs in the passage. Read the questions again and decide which paragraph (A–D) they relate to.

3 Global understanding

Sometimes, you may be asked a question that focuses on the whole Reading passage. This type of question may ask you to choose a suitable title for the passage.

3.1 Which title (A–D) would be the most suitable for the Reading passage in 2.1?

- A Children's eating patterns mimic those of their parents
- B The rapid transformation occurring in children's body size
- C A demonstrated positive link between diet and health in children
- D The impact of modern technology on today's food production

Skim reading a passage can also give you a sense of the attitude of the writer. Global questions can sometimes focus on this.

3.2 Read the passage again and answer the global question below. Which of the following describes the writer's tone in this passage?

- A He is giving a neutral account of recent scientific research.
- B He is shocked that so many children are becoming overweight.
- C He feels enthusiastic about the progress that is being made.
- D He is doubtful that the situation will change in the near future.

Reading skills

2 Descriptive passages

In this unit you will practise:

- scanning for specific details
- completing notes or a flow-chart
- recognising paraphrase
- labelling a diagram

1 Scanning for detail

The passages in the IELTS Reading paper gradually become more difficult, with Section 1 being the easiest.

1.1 Spend one minute skim reading the following passage to get a sense of the overall meaning. What is the main topic?

- A new discoveries in chemistry
- B the discovery of ancient objects
- C how international scientific teams work

Ochre find reveals ancient knowledge of chemistry

The oldest ochre-processing toolkits and workshop ever found have been unearthed, indicating that as far back as 100,000 years ago, humans had an understanding of chemistry.

South Africa's Blombos Cave lies within a limestone cliff on the southern Cape coast, 300 km east of Cape Town. It's known for its 75,000-year-old rich deposits of artefacts such as beads, bone tools and ochre engravings. Some engravings date as far back as 100,000 years.

Archaeologist Christopher S. Henshilwood from the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and University of Bergen, Norway has been excavating at the site since 1992, and has reported the discovery of a mixture, rich in ochre, stored in two abalone shells. It dates back to the Middle Stone Age – 100,000 years ago. Ochre is a term used to describe a piece of earth or rock containing red or yellow oxides or hydroxides of iron. It can be used to make pigments, or paints, ranging from golden-yellow and light yellow-brown to a rich red. Its use spans the history of humans – from those living more than 200,000 years ago, to modern indigenous communities.

Made from an array of materials, this mixture, which could have functioned as wall, object and skin decoration or skin protection (acting in a similar way to modern-day sunscreen), indicates the early developments that occurred in the people who originally used the site.

"[Judging from] the complexity of the material that has been collected from different parts of the landscape and brought to the site, they [the people] must have had an elementary knowledge of chemistry to be able to combine these materials to produce this form. It's not a straightforward process," said Henshilwood.

1.2 Scanning involves searching a text quickly for a specific piece of information. Practise scanning the passage for the words/numbers in the box.

75,000	100,000	200,000	artefacts	ochre
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2 Using words from the passage

There are several types of question that ask you to write a word and/or number from the passage.

- You will be told the maximum number of words to write.
- You must only write words that are in the passage. Make sure you copy the spelling correctly.
- You do not need to change the words in the passage and you do not need to join words together.
- If you write too many words or make a spelling mistake, your answer will be marked wrong.



Test Tip If the question asks you to write TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER, this means the answer may be:

- one word
- one word + a number
- two words
- two words + a number

Remember that even if a number is written as a word, it counts as a number (e.g. *twenty five trees* = one word and a number). You do not need to write full sentences or join words together. For example:

Answer the question with **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the reading passage.

What **TWO** colours did the painter use?

(Answer: *black, white* not *black and white*)

Short answer questions and sentence completion tasks

Short answer questions test your ability to find specific details in a passage. Use the words in the questions to:

- help locate the relevant part of the passage
- find out exactly what details you are looking for.

2.1 In questions 1–3 below, the key words that you need to locate in the passage are in bold, and the details you need to find out are underlined. Use these words to help you locate the relevant parts of the text and then answer the questions.

Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** from the passage for each answer.

- 1 Which of the **artefacts** mentioned are the oldest?
- 2 When was the material **Henshilwood** found originally made?
- 3 What two common materials did ancient humans use to obtain their **ochre**?

2.2 Look at the remaining questions, 4–6. Underline the words that will help you locate the information in the passage and highlight the details you need to find. Then answer the questions.

- 4 What did the ancient people use to keep their ochre mixture in?
- 5 Nowadays, who makes use of ochre?
- 6 Apart from painting, what else might ancient humans have used ochre for?

3 Notes/flow-chart/diagram completion

The questions in 3.1 all focus on paraphrase. Paraphrase is the use of different words with the same meaning. This helps to test how much of the Reading passage you understand.

3.1 Look again at Questions 4–6.

- 1 For Question 4, which word/s in the passage mean the same as 'keep ... in'?
- 2 For Question 5, which word in the passage helped you to identify what happens 'nowadays'?
- 3 For Question 6, which word/s in the passage mean the same as 'used for'?

Sentence completion questions also test your ability to find specific details or information in the passage. You must fill in the gaps in the sentences with appropriate words from the passage. The sentences will paraphrase the words and ideas. They also contain details that help you find the part you need to read in detail.

3.2 Spend 30 seconds skim reading the next part of the Reading passage to get the general meaning.

The Blombos Cave discovery is the earliest-known example of a pigment- or paint-producing workshop. All of the materials were discovered at the same site, and they included an array of raw materials including samples of bone and charcoal, as well as pigment-producing equipment such as grindstones and hammerstones. Judging by the equipment, which shows signs of wear, Henshilwood and his team were able to deduce the process used to produce the ochre mixture.

First, the pieces of ochre were rubbed on quartzite slabs and crushed to produce a red powder. This was combined with ground-up mammal bone, the traces of which show signs that it was heated before being ground. The ochre powder and the bone pieces were mixed with charcoal, stone chips, quartz grains and a liquid (perhaps water) and was then transferred to abalone shells to be gently stirred before being ready for application.