

Paragraph Headings

Matching Paragraph Headings:

Reading Lesson 1

Objective: to practice matching paragraph headings to paragraphs.

A common type of IELTS Reading question will ask you to select headings of paragraphs and match them to the paragraphs from a text.

On this page there is a **full reading text** and some **practice questions**.

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At the end of the page, there is a discussion of the answers and how you should have identified the correct match.

Strategies to answer the questions

1. Quickly read through the paragraph headings so you can see what they say.
2. Then look at the first paragraph.
3. Often only the topic sentence needs to be read carefully because the main idea and answer are there – you may be able to just skim the rest.
4. Sometimes, however, the answer is not in the topic sentence and the whole paragraph needs to be read more carefully.
5. If a match is not immediately obvious, move on to the next one.
6. If you are unsure between two answers at first, put them both in. You may be able to eliminate one answer later if it fits another paragraph better.
7. If at the end you are still stuck between two answers for a question, pick which fits best.

Things to beware of

1. There are always more choices of paragraph headings on the list than paragraphs, so be careful when matching them.
 2. Watch out for synonyms – often words in the paragraphs and paragraph headings will not be the same; they will be synonyms.
 3. Having a noun from a heading that is in the paragraph does not guarantee they match – you still need to read it carefully to check.
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One Paragraph Practice Exercise

Before you do a full reading, we'll have a practice with one paragraph.

This is the **first paragraph** from the full reading you will do. There are only five choices of paragraph headings for this first one (less than on the full reading).

Follow the procedure shown above, and click on what you think is the correct answer. The **topic sentence is in red** to remind you to focus on that.

Yoruba Towns

A. The Yoruba people of Nigeria classify their towns in two ways. Permanent towns with their own governments are called “ilu”, whereas temporary settlements, set up to support work in the country are “aba”. Although ilu tend to be larger than aba, the distinction is not one of size, some aba are large, while declining ilu can be small, but of purpose. There is no “typical” Yoruba town, but some features are common to most towns.

Now you know some strategies and have practiced with one paragraph, you can now practice matching paragraph headings with a full text.

Matching Paragraph Headings – Practice

Read and focus on the **topic sentences** in the text below and then match the paragraph headings to their paragraphs.

One has been done for you.

Questions 1-6

The reading passage has seven paragraphs: **A – G**.

*Choose the most suitable paragraph headings **B – G** from the list of headings on the right.*

*Write the appropriate numbers (**i – ix**) in the text boxes below the headings.*

NB *There are more paragraph headings than paragraphs so you will not use them all.*

Yoruba Town

A. The Yoruba people of Nigeria classify their towns in two ways. Permanent towns with their own governments are called “ilu”, whereas temporary settlements, set up to support work in the country are “aba”. Although ilu tend to be larger than aba, the distinction is not one of size, some aba are large, while declining ilu can be small, but of purpose. There is no “typical” Yoruba town, but some features are common to most towns.

B. In the 19th century most towns were heavily fortified and the foundations of these walls are sometimes visible. Collecting tolls to enter and exit through the walls was a major source of revenue for the old town rulers, as were market fees. The markets were generally located centrally and in small towns, while in large towns there were permanent stands made of corrugated iron or concrete. The market was usually next to the local ruler’s palace.

C. The palaces were often very large. In the 1930’s, the area of Oyo’s palace covered 17 acres, and consisted of a series of courtyards surrounded by private and public rooms. After colonisation, many of the palaces were completely or partially demolished. Often the



rulers built two storey houses for themselves using some of the palace grounds for government buildings.

D. The town is divided into different sections. In some towns these are regular, extending out from the center of the town like spokes on a wheel, while in others, where space is limited, they are more random. The different areas are further divided into compounds called “ile”. These vary in size considerably from single dwellings to up to thirty houses. They tend to be larger in the North. Large areas are devoted to government administrative buildings. Newer developments such as industrial or commercial areas or apartment housing for civil servants tends to be build on the edge of the town.

E. Houses are rectangular and either have a courtyard in the center or the rooms come off a central corridor. Most social life occurs in the courtyard. They are usually built of hardened mud and have roofs of corrugated iron or, in the countryside, thatch. Buildings of this material are easy to alter, either by knocking down rooms or adding new ones. And can be improved by coating the walls with cement. Richer people often build their houses of concrete blocks and, if they can afford to, build two storey houses. Within compounds there can be quite a mixture of building types. Younger well-educated people may have well furnished houses while their older relatives live in mud walled buildings and sleep on mats on the floor.

F. The builder or the most senior man gets a room either near the entrance or, in a two storied house, next to the balcony. He usually has more than one room. Junior men get a room each and there are separate rooms for teenage boys and girls to sleep in. Younger children sleep with their mothers. Any empty room are used as storage, let out or, if they face the street, used as shops.

G. Amenities vary. In some towns most of the population uses communal water taps and only the rich have piped water, in others piped water is more normal. Some areas have toilets, but bucket toilets are common with waste being collected by a “night soil man”. Access to water and electricity are key political issues.

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List of Paragraph Headings



- i. Town facilities
- ii. Colonisation
- iii. Urban divisions
- iv. Architectural home styles
- v. Types of settlements

- vi. Historical foundations
- vii. Domestic arrangements
- viii. City defenses
- ix. The residences of the rulers
- x. Government buildings

Match the heading with the paragraph

Example: Paragraph A

Answer: v

5. Paragraph F

6. Paragraph G

Paragraph Headings Answer Discussion

Paragraph B

(vi) – *Historical foundations*

B. In the 19th century most towns were heavily fortified and the foundations of these walls are sometimes visible. Collecting tolls to enter and exit through the walls was a major source of revenue for the old town rulers, as were market fees. The markets were generally located centrally and in small towns, while in large towns there were permanent stands made of corrugated iron or concrete. The market was usually next to the local ruler's palace.

In this first question, the word 'foundation' is in the topic sentence. This does not automatically make 'vi' the correct answer. However, it is a good reason to flag this up as a possibility. The heading also refers to 'history', so the reference to '19th century' in the topic sentence tells us the paragraph is about the history. A quick skim of the paragraph confirms this.

Paragraph C

(ix) – *The residences of the rulers*

C. The palaces were often very large. In the 1930's, the area of Oyo's palace covered 17 acres, and consisted of a series of courtyards surrounded by private and public rooms. After colonization, many of the palaces were completely or partially demolished. Often the rulers built two storey houses for themselves using some of the palace grounds for government buildings.

The topic sentence mentions the palaces, which is where the rulers of Yoruba would likely live, and the heading mentioned the homes (residences) of the rulers, so it is likely to be ix. Reading the rest of the paragraph confirms that the whole paragraph talks generally about the palaces in Yoruba. Don't be tricked by the 'colonisation' heading. This only refers to one sentence in the paragraph, not the whole paragraph. It is therefore a supporting point rather than the main idea.

Paragraph D

(iii) – *Urban divisions*

D. The town is divided into different sections. In some towns these are regular, extending

out from the center of the town like spokes on a wheel, while in others, where space is limited, they are more random. The different areas are further divided into compounds called “ile”. These vary in size considerably from single dwellings to up to thirty houses. They tend to be larger in the North. Large areas are devoted to government administrative buildings. Newer developments such as industrial or commercial areas or apartment housing for civil servants tends to be build on the edge of the town.

The answer is first seen in the topic sentence. The word ‘divided’ should have flagged this up

to you as a possibility. Notice the use of the synonym ‘urban’ to replace ‘town’. It is common to see

synonyms in paragraph headings questions and other IELTS reading questions.

Paragraph E

(iv) – Architectural home styles

E. Houses are rectangular and either have a courtyard in the center or the rooms come off a central corridor. Most social life occurs in the courtyard. They are usually built of hardened mud and have roofs of corrugated iron or, in the countryside, thatch. Buildings of this material are easy to alter, either by knocking down rooms or adding new ones. And can be improved by coating the walls with cement. Richer people often build their houses of concrete blocks and, if they can afford to, build two storey houses. Within compounds there can be quite a mixture of building types. Younger well-educated people may have well furnished houses while their older relatives live in mud walled buildings and sleep on mats on the floor.

The topic sentence starts to give you a clue that ‘iv’ is the correct choice of the paragraph headings

as it discusses houses and their styles. This is then discussed further in the supporting sentences that follow.

Paragraph F

(vii) – Domestic arrangements

F. The builder or the most senior man gets a room either near the entrance or, in a two storied house, next to the balcony. He usually has more than one room. Junior men get a room each and there are separate rooms for teenage boys and girls to sleep in. Younger children sleep with their mothers. Any empty room are used as storage, let out or, if they face the street, used as shops.

In this context, ‘domestic’ means of or relating to the home, so the heading is referring to the arrangements

within the home. Again, just by reading the topic sentence you can see that this paragraph is discussing



home arrangements and skimming through the rest of the paragraph confirms this.

Paragraph G

(i) – Town facilities

G. Amenities vary. In some towns most of the population uses communal water taps and only the rich have piped water, in others piped water is more normal. Some areas have toilets, but bucket toilets are common with waste being collected by a “night soil man”. Access to water and electricity are key political issues.

*‘Facilities’ is a synonym of ‘amenities’ so this is the first clue that this could fit this paragraph,
but you need to read on to confirm that the paragraph is discussing the facilities of the town, which it is.*

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