

Practice Test 42

The IELTS Reading Practice Test with Answer keys is a great help to students who intend to take IELTS examinations. There is a sample of questions that appear in the actual IELTS test that will help them to improve their reading skills.

Reading Passage 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1-13 which are based on Reading Passage 1

Running Dry

The problems of water shortages have always been with us. Worldwide consumption of water is doubling every 20 years, a solution is desperately needed.

A. Government water commission maps in Mexico show 96 overexploited aquifers¹. Seawater has polluted 17 others because of too much pumping, while toxic seepage is spreading fast. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Mexican children are contracting digestive diseases due to poor water storage. Mexico City, built eight centuries ago atop vast lagoons, cannot adequately supply water for its 22 million inhabitants, like many cities in the world, less than half of the city's waste is treated. The rest sinks into underground lakes or flows toward the Gulf of Mexico, turning rivers into sewers. This presents an extremely difficult prospect for Mexico's future. The Mexican National Water Commission lists some 35 cities that must shrink dramatically unless more water can be found. A forced exodus from parched cities seems far-fetched, and no one suggests it will happen next week but it is a spectre haunting Mexico's future.

B. Much of the water that Mexico depends upon is the same water that is badly needed in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. One forecast is that Corpus Christi, Texas (population: 277,454), will run out of the water around 2018. In the meantime, the problem is getting worse. Deputy director of the Mexican National Water Commission Cantu Suarez reports, "In Oaxaca, south of Mexico City, women line up at dawn to fill a few plastic containers from a passing water truck. In Alamos, far to the north, ancient aquifers are pumped at five times the sustainable rate."

C. Mexico is only one example of desperation in a world running short of water. Parts of the earth are dying, with fields poisoned by salt and village wells running dry. And there are legal battles looming. The Colorado River, drained by 10 U.S. states with their own water crises, is a muddy trickle by the time it reaches the rich farmland of Baja California. Under complex water agreements with the United States, Mexico can take water from the Rio Grande but must pay it back. President Vicente Fox has promised to pay the debt,

which amounts to enough to put the state of Delaware under a flood of water. But with Mexico already so short of water, it is not realistic to think it can happen.

D. Canada with its thousands of lakes and rivers would be viewed by most people as having an inexhaustible water supply. In comparison to Africa and other dry- places, most of Canada's waters are pristine. But the cumulative effect of mistreatment over the years has taken an evident toll. The cities of Victoria on the west coast and Halifax on the east still dump billions of litres of raw sewage into their oceans. The world's biggest freshwater basin, the Great Lakes, is described as a chemical soup not fit to drink from or swim in. Some concerned experts view them as loaded with toxic chemicals, heavy metals, pesticides, and sewage. Far too many rivers and streams in Canada have been badly contaminated by industrial activity.

E. Humans can live about a month without food but only a few days without water. Because 70 per cent of the human body is water, weight loss in some quick diets is dramatic due to water loss. Of all the water in the world, only about 2.5 per cent is fresh and two-thirds of this is locked up in glaciers and ice caps. Nobody knows how much water is underground or in permafrost. All life on earth is sustained by a fraction of one per cent of the world's water. If a five-litre jug (about 1.3 gallons) represented the world's water, the available freshwater would not quite fill a teaspoon.

F. Overall, in most parts of the planet, there is enough water to supply human needs. The huge problem, however, is the rapidly increasing populations in places that lack adequate water resources, as well as mismanagement of available resources. Canada, with only 0.5 per cent of the world's population, has 5.6 per cent of its usable freshwater supply. China, with 22 per cent of the population on earth, has only 5.7 per cent of usable freshwater. We cannot just move fresh water to where it is most needed – like in the Sahara, Ethiopia, Somalia or India.

G. In January 2000, the Newfoundland government identified a dozen of its communities with high levels of potentially dangerous THMs (trihalomethanes) in water supplies. In an attempt to solve this issue the main solution put forward by scientists is sterilization of the water. However, this approach can also be the cause of problems. Drinking such water over a long period can cause bladder and colon cancers, but health experts maintain the benefits far outweigh these risks. As a result, the bottled water business is booming. In just one decade, sales have surged from \$2.6 billion to \$7.7 billion in the United States of America alone. This represents a 10 per cent growth rate for the past 10 years. But is it safe? Canadian standards for testing bottled water are lower than those for municipal supplies, so there are no assurances that bottled water is any better than tap water.

H. At the start of the 20th century, there were 1.65 billion people; 100 years later there are more than 6 billion, and the United Nations estimates there will be nearly 9 billion by 2050. But the annual supply of renewable freshwater will remain the same, so the amount of water available to each person decreases and the population grows, raising the possibility of water shortages. The supply of water to the future is a major issue that will confront tomorrow's leaders.



1. aquifers: underground bed yielding groundwater for wells and springs
2. A ground that is permanently frozen

Question 1-4

Reading Passage 1 has eight paragraphs A-H.

Which paragraph contains the following information?

Write the correct letter A-H in boxes 1-4 on your answer sheet.

- 1 where most freshwater is located in the world
- 2 A way Mexican women obtain water
- 3 the effect of waste upon Mexican rivers
- 4 Mexico's financial commitment for its water

Question 5-8

Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 5-8 on your answer sheet write

YES, if the statement reflects the claims of the writer

NO, if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer

NOT GIVEN, if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this

- 5 Unhealthy water is causing illness among Mexican children.
- 6 Mexicans are moving to other cities because of water shortages.
- 7 Mexican food crops will fail without water from America.



8 Drinking water in Canada has been polluted by industry.

Question 9-13

Complete the summary of paragraphs F-H below.

Chose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answer in blank spaces next to 9-13 on your answer sheet.

The main issue that confronts cities with poor water supplies is their growing 9 _____. Canada, which contains 10 _____ of the world's freshwater, has dealt with water pollution in some cities through a process of 11 _____. Although treated for dangerous pollution, some health experts believe city water to be a cause of 12 _____. Not all people are content to drink town water and this has added to a demand for 13 _____.

Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 14-26 which are based on Reading passage 2

How to Reduce Employee Turnover

A. The chief executive of a large hotel became aware that his company was experiencing an annual employee turnover of about 60 per cent, at an annual cost estimated between \$10 to \$15 million. This large amount of money was calculated based on three factors: the money spent hiring and training replacements; the cost to the business in lower productivity due to employees becoming familiar with the requirements of their new job; and reduced occupancy rates, due to poor guest satisfaction levels.

B. The Chief Executive knew that in order to save his company, he had to reduce the high turnover costs. Making up for the lost income due to turnover is not an easy task and many companies have not declared war on unwanted employee turnover because they have not taken the time to work out the costs of lost revenues and productivity. But the hotel boss decided to tackle the issue head-on by implementing a 4 point plan, the hotel first took the time to calculate their turnover costs; secondly to evaluate the main causes for the staff turnover and; thirdly to discuss some of the solutions to the problems and lastly to prioritize actions and evaluate future returns following implemented changes.

C. Within a two-year period, the results were significant. The annual employee turnover

was reduced by 78 per cent and this impacted downtime due to training and guest satisfaction. The result was a \$10 million savings for the company. Because most do not know the root causes of employee turnover and costs have often not been accurately estimated, causes are usually not known. As a result, solutions are commonly not targeted at a company's individual, specific causes. The following is an examination of what the Chief Executive did to turn the hotel around.

D. Two factors were considered in relation to the calculation of costs: those departments who had the highest rates of turnover and those whose turnover had the greatest potential effect on profit. After some investigation, it was shown that some of the positions with the highest turnover rates such as cleaners and gardeners did not carry with them high associated costs. In fact, what was revealed was that only 6 per cent of employees accounted for 43 per cent of the turnover. Positions that involved a substantial amount of time in training were the ones that attracted the highest costing. The analysis revealed that those positions within the hotel which had the greatest impact on profit were people like the front office receptionists and those working in accounts.

E. As unusual as it may sound, it is now a common understanding that offering employees more money is not necessarily a good solution to high employee turnover – often they leave because they simply dislike the work. Therefore, it was important to tackle the analysis from the perspective of what were the chief causes for staff leaving. A holistic approach was undertaken and several key findings emerged. The hotel found that fundamentally they adopted poor recruiting and selection practices. For example, it was shown that almost 35 per cent of the cleaning staff left after the first week and a further 25% during the first month. Candidates were being over-sold the job by recruiters and left soon after they encountered unrealistic job expectations.

F. Devising solutions to these issues was the other half of the equation. As far a recruiting was concerned, they changed their approach by getting personnel from the hotel to handle it. Once this change was made, the attrition rates decreased substantially. To add to employee motivation, new staff were made aware of the mission and goals of the organization and how they would be paid above industry standard for striving to attain hotel values. New staff were shown where the hotel was heading and how they would have a guaranteed, stable employment situation with a major force in the hotel industry' – it was even suggested that after a period of employment, new staff might be given the opportunity to contribute to organizational goal setting.

G. They had been losing many of their employees during the first month or two of employment, so they made new staff aware that bonuses would be offered to newly-hired employees at the end of their first three months which greatly assisted in goal setting. Staff luncheons and the in-house volleyball and basketball competitions remained an effective part of staff unity and development and a support program was also introduced to help all staff with any job-related issues which gave employees a heightened sense of being cared for by the establishment. Another area of change that proved successful was the introduction of the Valuable Employee Program (VEP). When a person was employed in the past they were assigned a senior member of staff who assisted them with getting used

to their new job.

H. Due to the limitations of the senior member's position however, they were often not in a position to explain any details regarding future advancement. Now, when staff are employed, they are clearly told what is expected in the job and where it might lead to the right candidate. Hotel surveys revealed that over 30 per cent of employees were not satisfied with the career opportunities in their current jobs so the articulation of the definite and realistic opportunity for advancement through the VEP led to a major decrease in employee attrition. Once the ship had been righted and the relative returns on human resource investments had been calculated, setting priorities became a formality. Although at first a daunting task, the enormous cost of employee turnover offered an excellent opportunity for the hotel to improve profitability.

Question 14-18

Complete the summary below of paragraphs A-D of Reading Passage 2.

Choose **ONE OR TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in blank spaces next to 14-18 on your answer sheet.

Training new employees; downtime as new employees get used to their new job, and unfavourable guest satisfaction levels all led to a large 14_____ for a large hotel. It was determined that the solution to these problems, was in the reduction of the company's 15_____. The hotel addressed these issues in 4 ways through the implementation of a 16_____. The efforts of the hotel chief executive decreased downtime and reduced employee turnover which, in turn, resulted in improvements in 17_____. The company position was improved by \$10 million. It is not common for big companies to experience such 18_____

Question 19-21

Do the following statements reflect the claims of the writer in Reading Passage 2?

In boxes 19-21 on your answer sheet write

YES, if the statement reflects the claims of the writer

NO, if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer



NOT GIVEN, if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this

19 It was surprising that positions with the highest turnover were not connected to high costs.

20 There was a clear connection between high costs and length of training.

21 New employees were given an incorrect description of their job.

Question 22-26

Reading Passage 2 gives FIVE effective changes that the hotel introduced for staff

Choose these changes from list A-L below.

Write the appropriate letters A-K in boxes 22-26 on your answer sheet.

A changes

B discussed future plans

C introduced regular staff luncheons

D started a regular sports program

E clearly defined job expectations

F did their own staff recruiting

G built new sporting facilities

H involved new staff in goal setting

I offered bonuses to proven, committed new staff

J began meeting regularly with new staff

K implemented a support program

L began recruiting through an employment service

22

23

24

25

26

Reading Passage 3

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

A. Political and family values within society have impacted the modern family structure. Traditionally, it has been the man's role to be the breadwinner for the family – providing the funds to pay for food and shelter. However, due to the many new and unique responsibilities placed upon families, in numerous cases, both men and women – fathers and mothers – have had to enter the workforce. Generally, the reasons for both being involved in the workforce revolve around the need to add to the family's current financial base. To a lesser extent, the need to interact with 'adults' in a stimulating work environment is another popular reason. Whatever their reasons, for many families, the decision for father and mother to go out of the home and join the labour force has led to a number of side effects within the home which, in turn, impact upon their performance as employees.

B. Many researchers agree that attitudes towards work are carried over into family life. This spillover can be positive or negative. Positive spillover refers to the spread of satisfaction and positive stimulation at work resulting in high levels of energy and satisfaction at home. If the amount of research is to be taken as an indication, it would seem that positive spillover is not a dominant occurrence in the workplace with most research focussing on the effects of negative spillover. Often pointing out the incompatible nature of work and family life, the research focuses on problems and conflict at work which has the effect of draining and preoccupying the individual, making it difficult for him or her to participate fully in family life.

C. Social scientists have devised a number of theories in an attempt to explain the work-family dynamic. Compensation theory is one that has been widely used. It assumes that the relationship between work and family is negative by pointing out that high involvement in one sphere – invariably the work sphere – leads to low involvement in the other. As an individual advances within a career, demands typically fluctuate from moderate to more demanding and if the advancing worker has younger children, this shift in work responsibilities will usually manifest itself in the form of less time spent with the family.

Researchers subscribing to this theory point out that the drain on family time is significantly related to work-family conflict with an escalation in conflict as the number of family members increases

D. The human state is one of change. In exploring the work-family dynamic it can be clearly seen that as the pattern of adult development for men and women differs and as a family and career demands fluctuate, individuals may link work and family roles differently at different stages of their life. Hence, the relationship between work and family is constantly changing over a person's life. The developmental approach, therefore, adopts a psychological – developmental framework to explore the dynamics of the relationship between individual, family, and career developments in the life-span of a worker.

E. Interpersonal 'climates' influence motivation of family and work-related activities. Within the family, the feeling of being valued by one's partner directly affects a person's self-determination, while at the same time within the workplace, the feeling of being 'autonomy-supported' by one's employer has been shown to have a positive effect on one's self-determined motivation towards work-related activities. Studies built on the theory of self-determination, therefore, point out that if people have abundant levels of self-determination, participation in those areas will most often result in desirable outcomes. Segmentation theory proposes that work and family are actually two entirely separate domains and individuals are able to maintain a clear demarcation between the two.

F. Theorists subscribing to this view maintain that emotions, attitudes and behaviours enlisted in the two different environments are separate and will not have any impact upon work or family. While this theory is certainly applicable for some, apparently not all men and women are able to neatly divide the two experiences. Winthrop points out that, "Even though a woman may enter the workforce, research has shown that within the context of the family, the care of her husband and children, as well as the living quarters, is still heavily the woman's domain." This kind of idea is tied up in the old adage; a woman's place is in the home. She is seen as the one who takes care of all domestic duties whereas, stereotypically, it is the man who brings home the food for the family. The degree to which this is felt is certainly based upon societal expectations and behavioural norms. Despite this, there has been no positive link shown that one sex experiences greater difficulty in managing work-family conflicts over another.

G. Perhaps the most positive relationship that could be established between work and family conflict was in regard to irregular work hours. Factors such as having to work on weekends, having to work longer than nine hours per day or having to work during vacation periods all added to the conflict dynamic. Additionally, rank or position and thus expectations of workers and time demands all showed a negative impact upon family and work relations. Many have conducted empirical research in relation to work-family conflict and job satisfaction with significantly varying results. However, one generally recognized outcome about which few researchers disagree is that when work-family conflict arises, job satisfaction decreases.

Question 27-30

Choose the correct letter A, B, C or D and write them next to 27-30 on your answer sheet.

27 The main reason fathers and mothers join the workforce is

- A They want to escape the boring environment of the home.
- B they want to be able to retire comfortably.
- C they need extra money.
- D they need the mature interaction that goes on between adults.

28 'Spillover' is

- A mostly positive when it comes to the workplace.
- B a term researchers use to describe work life.
- C a dominant area of scientific research.
- D a term that relates to how work-life affects family life.

29 the significance of rope's comment is that working women

- A should not do the work of men.
- B are heavily relied upon to do household duties.
- C should not work outside of the home.
- D leave household work for their husbands to do.

30 Regarding work and family, the writer concludes that

- A work itself plays an important role in job satisfaction.
- B more empirically-based theories are yet to be offered by researchers.
- C family relationships have a significant effect on job satisfaction.
- D work and family are best kept separate from each other.

Question 31-34



Look at the following list of theories (Questions 31-34) and the list of definitions below.

Match each theory with its related idea.

Write the correct letter **A-H** in boxes **31-34** on your answer sheet.

31 Segmentation

32 Self-determination

33 Compensation

34 Developmental

A family and career remain essentially changeless

B work and family are totally unrelated

C the relationship between work and family is constantly changing

D negative working environments hurt work performance

E high levels lead to positive work and family outcomes

F family duties tend to dominate work duties

G determined people tend to have successful families

H high work involvement results in family neglect

Question 35-39

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage 3?

In boxes 35-39 on your answer sheet write

TRUE, if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE, if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN, if there is no information on this



- 35 Lack of money is the main reason both fathers and mothers enter the workforce.
- 36 The conflict between work and family increases according to the size of the family.
- 37 High-income earners balance work and family life better than low-income earners.
- 38 Men handle work stresses better than women.
- 39 Work-family conflict is due largely to constant changes in work hours.

Question 40

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

Write your answer next to 40 on your answer sheet.

40 What is the best title for Reading Passage 3?

- A Family relationships and job promotion.
- B The psychological effects of work.
- C Theories on family and work.
- D Work-family conflict and job satisfaction.

Answers

[restrict paid=true]

Reading Passage 1

1.