IELTS Reading Strategies

TO SOLVE SENTENCE COMPLETION QUESTIONS:

Sentence completion question puts your ability to find specific details from the passage to test and also examines you on how much Reading Passage you understand. Such questions will paraphrase the words and ideas given in the passage. Also they will include details that help you find that part that you need to read in detail. Carefully read the question to know the number of words required to fill in the blanks.

GUIDELINES TO SOLVE:

1. Skim read the entire passage to get the overall idea of the passage. (5 min)
2. Understand what kind of information is given in each paragraph. You can give headings to each paragraph for your self-understanding. This way it's easy for you to locate the paragraph which contains the information asked.
3. Read the first statement given for the Sentence completion questions.
4. Underline the relevant part of the statement to help you locate your answer.
5. Look for the paragraph that has this text.
6. Locate the text in the paragraph which is similar in meaning to what is given in the question. Look for keywords and paraphrases from the question.
7. Carefully read the text, before and after the words you have found.
8. Fill in the gaps with suitable words considering the word limit mentioned in the question.
9. Spend less than 1 min to analyse each statement.

Let's look at the application of the above-mentioned guidelines for the following passage below.

Practice Reading 1.1

The meaning and power of smell

The sense of smell, or olfaction, is powerful. Odours affect us on a physical, psychological and social level. For the most part, however, we breathe in the aromas which surround us without being consciously aware of their importance to us. It is only when the faculty of smell is impaired for some reason that we begin to realise the essential role the sense of smell plays in our sense of well-being

A A survey conducted by Anthony Synott at Montreal's Concordia University asked participants to comment on how important smell was to them in their lives. It became apparent that smell can evoke strong emotional responses. A scent associated with a good experience can bring a rush of joy, while a foul odour or one associated with a bad memory may make us grimace with disgust. Respondents to the survey noted that many of their olfactory likes and dislikes were based on emotional associations. Such associations can be powerful enough so that odours that we would generally label unpleasant become agreeable, and those that we would generally consider fragrant become disagreeable for particular individuals. The perception of smell, therefore, consists not only of the sensation of the odours themselves, but of the experiences and emotions associated with them.

B Odours are also essential cues in social bonding. One respondent to the survey believed that there is no true emotional bonding without touching and smelling a loved one. In fact, infants recognise the odours of their mothers soon after birth and adults can often identify their children or spouses by scent. In one well-known test, women and men were able to distinguish by smell alone clothing worn by their marriage partners from similar clothing worn by other people. Most of the subjects would probably never have given much thought to odour as a cue for identifying family members before being involved in the test, but as the experiment revealed, even when not consciously considered, smells register.

C In spite of its importance to our emotional and sensory lives, smell is probably the most undervalued sense in many cultures. The reason often given for the low regard in which smell is held is that, in comparison with its importance among animals, the human sense of smell is feeble and undeveloped. While it is true that the olfactory powers of humans are nothing like as fine as those possessed by certain animals, they are still remarkably acute. Our noses are able to recognise thousands of smells, and to perceive odours which are present only in extremely small quantities.

D Smell, however, is a highly elusive phenomenon. Odours, unlike colours, for instance, cannot be named in many languages because the specific vocabulary simply doesn't exist. 'It smells like . . . ,' we have to say when describing an odour, struggling to express our olfactory experience. Nor can odours be recorded: there is no effective way to either capture or store them over time. In the realm of olfaction, we must make do with descriptions and recollections. This has implications for olfactory research.

E Most of the research on smell undertaken to date has been of a physical scientific nature. Significant advances have been made in the understanding of the biological and chemical nature of olfaction, but many fundamental questions have yet to be answered. Researchers have still to decide whether smell is one sense or two – one responding to odours proper and the other registering odourless chemicals in the air. Other unanswered questions are whether the nose is the only part of the body affected by odours, and how smells can be measured objectively given the non-physical components. Questions like these mean that interest in the psychology of smell is inevitably set to play an increasingly important role for researchers.

F However, smell is not simply a biological and psychological phenomenon. Smell is cultural, hence it is a social and historical phenomenon. Odours are invested with cultural values: smells that are considered to be offensive in some cultures may be perfectly acceptable in others. Therefore, our sense of smell is a means of, and model for, interacting with the world. Different smells can provide us with intimate and emotionally charged experiences and the value that we attach to these experiences is interiorised by the members of society in a deeply personal way. Importantly, our commonly held feelings about smells can help distinguish us from other cultures. The study of the cultural history of smell is, therefore, in a very real sense, an investigation into the essence of human culture.

Complete the sentences below.

Choose ONE WORD ONLY from the passage for each answer. **The TWO questions below are solved for you.**

1. Tests have shown that odours can help people recognise the _____ belonging to their husbands and wives.
2. Certain linguistic groups may have difficulty describing smell because they lack the appropriate _____.
3. The sense of smell may involve response to _____ which do not smell, in addition to obvious odours.
4. Odours regarded as unpleasant in certain _____ are not regarded as unpleasant in others.

Solved examples:

1. Tests have shown that odours can help people recognise the _____ belonging to their husbands and wives.

   This text belongs to the **paragraph B** which mentions about the test that was carried to prove the essential cues of odours in social bonding.

   'In one well-known test, women and men were able to distinguish by smell alone **clothing** worn by their marriage partners from similar **clothing** worn by other people.'

   The above sentence is paraphrased in the first question. Here the prop used for comparison of odours for women and men is clothing. This indicates that the word for the fill in the gap is **clothing.**

2. Certain linguistic groups may have difficulty describing smell because they lack the appropriate _____.

   This text belongs to the **paragraph D** which mentions about the description of smell using words.

   'Odours, unlike colours, for instance, cannot be named in many languages because the specific **vocabulary** simple doesn't exist.'

   The above sentence is paraphrased in the second question. One cannot describe odours because there is no specific vocabulary to report it. This indicates that the word for the fill in the gap is **vocabulary.**

Practice Exercise 1.1

Complete the sentences below.

Choose ONE WORD ONLY from the passage for each answer.

1. Tests have shown that odours can help people recognise the (**clothing**) belonging to their husbands and wives.
2. Certain linguistic groups may have difficulty describing smell because they lack the appropriate (**vocabulary**).
3. The sense of smell may involve response to _____ which do not smell, in addition to obvious odours.
4. Odours regarded as unpleasant in certain _____ are not regarded as unpleasant in others.

Practice Reading 1.2

The effects of light on plant and animal species

Light is important to organisms for two different reasons. Firstly it is used as a cue for the timing of daily and seasonal rhythms in both plants and animals, and secondly it is used to assist growth in plants.

Breeding in most organisms occurs during a part of the year only, and so a reliable cue is needed to trigger breeding behaviour. Day length is an excellent cue, because it provides a perfectly predictable pattern of change within the year. In the temperate zone in spring, temperatures fluctuate greatly from day to day, but day length increases steadily by a predictable amount. The seasonal impact of day length on physiological responses is called *photoperiodism*, and the amount of experimental evidence for this phenomenon is considerable. For example, some species of birds' breeding can be induced even in midwinter simply by increasing day length artificially (Wolfson 1964). Other examples of photoperiodism occur in plants. A *short-day plant* flowers when the day is less than a certain critical length. A *long-day plant* flowers after a certain critical day length is exceeded. In both cases the critical day length differs from species to species. Plants which flower after a period of vegetative growth, regardless of photoperiod, are known as *day-neutral plants*.

Breeding seasons in animals such as birds have evolved to occupy the part of the year in which offspring have the greatest chances of survival. Before the breeding season begins, food reserves must be built up to support the energy cost of reproduction, and to provide for young birds both when they are in the nest and after fledging. Thus many temperate-zone birds use the increasing day lengths in spring as a cue to begin the nesting cycle, because this is a point when adequate food resources will be assured.

The adaptive significance of photoperiodism in plants is also clear. Short-day plants that flower in spring in the temperate zone are adapted to maximising seedling growth during the growing season. Long-day plants are adapted for situations that require fertilization by insects, or a long period of seed ripening. Short-day plants that flower in the autumn in the temperate zone are able to build up food reserves over the growing season and over winter as seeds. Day-neutral plants have an evolutionary advantage when the connection between the favourable period for reproduction and day length is much less certain. For example, desert annuals germinate, flower and seed whenever suitable rainfall occurs, regardless of the day length.

The breeding season of some plants can be delayed to extraordinary lengths. Bamboos are perennial grasses that remain in a vegetative state for many years and then suddenly flower, fruit and die (Evans 1976). Every bamboo of the species *Chusquea abietifolia* on the island of Jamaica flowered, set seed and died during 1884. The next generation of bamboo flowered and died between 1916 and 1918, which suggests a vegetative cycle of about 31 years. The climatic trigger for this flowering cycle is not yet known, but the adaptive significance is clear. The simultaneous production of masses of bamboo seeds (in some cases lying 12 to 15 centimetres deep on the ground) is more than all the seed-eating animals can cope with at the time, so that some seeds escape being eaten and grow up to form the next generation (Evans 1976).

The second reason light is important to organisms is that it is essential for *photosynthesis*. This is the process by which plants use energy from the sun to convert carbon from soil or water into organic material for growth. The rate of photosynthesis in a plant can be measured by calculating the rate of its uptake of carbon. There is a wide range of photosynthetic responses of plants to variations in light intensity. Some plants reach maximal photosynthesis at one-quarter full sunlight, and others, like sugarcane, never reach a maximum, but continue to increase photosynthesis rate as light intensity rises.

Plants in general can be divided into two groups: *shade-tolerant* species and *shade-intolerant* species. This classification is commonly used in forestry and horticulture. Shade-tolerant plants have lower photosynthetic rates and hence have lower growth rates than those of shade-intolerant species. Plant species become adapted to living in a certain kind of habitat, and in the process evolve a series of characteristics that prevent them from occupying other habitats. Grime (1966) suggests that light may be one of the major components directing these adaptations. For example, eastern hemlock seedlings are shade-tolerant. They can survive in the forest understorey under very low light levels because they have a low photosynthetic rate.

Practice Exercise1.2

Complete the sentences below.

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

1. Day length is a useful cue for breeding in areas where _____ are unpredictable.
2. Plants which do not respond to light levels are referred to as _____.
3. Birds in temperate climates associate longer days with nesting and the availability of _____
4. Plants that flower when days are long depend on _____ to help them reproduce.
5. Desert annuals respond to _____ as a signal for reproduction.
6. There is limit to the photosynthetic rate in plants such as _____.
7. Tolerance to shade is one criterion for the _____ of plants in forestry and horticulture.

IELTS Reading Strategies

ANSWER KEY

Practice Exercise 1.1

1. Clothing
2. Vocabulary
3. Chemicals
4. Cultures

Practice Exercise 1.2

1. Temperatures
2. Day-neutral
3. Food/ food resources/ adequate food/ adequate food resources
4. Insects/ fertilization by insects
5. Rainfall/ suitable rainfall
6. Sugarcane
7. classification

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