IELTS Reading Strategies

TO SOLVE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS:

Multiple choice questions are usually time-consuming because the options given are very similar in nature and thus confusing. Choosing the correct option becomes difficult as it appears as though all options are related to the question asked. On an average 7-8 questions are asked in each reading test. These questions are of 2 kinds, one wherein you need to select one answer from the given 3-4 alternatives and second where you need to choose 2 answers from the given 5 alternatives. Carefully read what is mentioned in the question to avoid confusion.

GUIDELINES TO SOLVE:

1. First skim read the entire passage to get the overall idea of the passage.
2. Give headings to the paragraphs for self-understanding while reading.
3. Go through the multiple-choice questions. Read the first one, find out exactly what details your looking for (highlight those words) and try locating the paragraph containing the above information.
4. For such questions you need to read more than 1 sentence in the paragraph.
5. Accordingly choose the option which best suits the question asked.
6. Or else follow the **Mantra of Elimination:** eliminate the options which are not correct as per you and don't suit the details which you're expected to find out. Here you need to be very sure while choosing the options to be rejected.
7. Ultimately, you're left with fewer options which give you more clarity on the answer.

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

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.

Choose the correct letter A, B, C and D

Write the correct letter next to the question number. **The TWO questions below are solved for you.**

1. According to the introduction, we become aware of the importance of smell when
    A. We discover new smell.
    B. We experience a powerful smell
    C. Our ability to smell is damaged.
    D. We are surrounded by odours.

2. The experiment described in paragraph B
    A. Shows how we make use of smell without realising it.
    B. Demonstrates the family members have a similar smell.
    C. Proves that a sense of smell is learnt.
    D. Compares the sense of smell in males and females.

Solved Examples:

1. According to the introduction, we become **aware** of the **importance of smell** when

Here the underlined words give an idea of what information we are looking for. It's about when we realise the importance of smell.

These details are present in the subtitle. "It is only when the faculty of smell is impaired for some reason..... plays in our sense of well being.". This sentence relates to option C which says: Our ability to smell is damaged. The information given in other options are mentioned in subtitle but none are related to awareness of the importance of smell. So the correct **option is C.**

2. The **experiment** described in paragraph B

The question itself tells us that the information is asked from paragraph B. It is related to the experiment described. Here we use the **mantra of elimination**. **Option B** says, it demonstrates that family members have similar smell. There's no description about the similarity of smell among family members. **Option C** says, it proves that a sense of smell is learnt. The sense of smell is naturally present we only realise it when the organ to detect smell is injured. **Option D** says, it compares the sense of smell in males and females. Here the experiment was carried out for spouses and not for men and women as an individual. But if we see **Option A**, it says how we make use of smell without realising it. This appears similar in meaning to the last line of the paragraph, '.....but as the experiment revealed even when not consciously considered, smells register.' So, the correct answer is **Option A**

Practice Exercises 1.1

Choose the correct letter A, B, C and D. Write the correct letter next to the question number.

1. According to the introduction, we become aware of the importance of smell when
   A. We discover new smell.
   B. We experience a powerful smell
   C. Our ability to smell is damaged.
   D. We are surrounded by odours.

2. The experiment described in paragraph B
   A. Shows how we make use of smell without realising it.
   B. Demonstrates the family members have a similar smell.
   C. Proves that a sense of smell is learnt.
   D. Compares the sense of smell in males and females.

3. What is the writer doing in paragraph C?
   A. Supporting other research
   B. Making a proposal
   C. Rejecting a common belief
   D. Describing limitation

4. What does the writer suggest about the study of smell in the atmosphere in Paragraph E?
   A. The measurement of smell is becoming more accurate.
   B. Researchers believe smell is purely physical reaction.
   C. Most smells are inoffensive
   D. Smell is yet to be defined.

Practice reading 1.2

The Truth about the Environment

For many environmentalists, the world seems to be getting worse. They have developed a hit-list of our main fears: that natural resources are running out; that the population is ever growing, leaving less and less to eat; that species are becoming extinct in vast numbers, and that the planet's air and water are becoming ever more polluted.

But a quick look at the facts shows a different picture. First, energy and other natural resources have become more abundant, not less so, since the book 'The Limits to Growth' was published in 1972 by a group of scientists. Second, more food is now produced per head of the world's population than at any time in history. Fewer people are starving. Third, although species are indeed becoming extinct, only about 0.7% of them are expected to disappear in the next 50 years, not 25–50%, as has so often been predicted. And finally, most forms of environmental pollution either appear to have been exaggerated, or are transient – associated with the early phases of industrialisation and therefore best cured not by restricting economic growth, but by accelerating it. One form of pollution – the release of greenhouse gases that causes global warming – does appear to be a phenomenon that is going to extend well into our future, but its total impact is unlikely to pose a devastating problem. A bigger problem may well turn out to be an inappropriate response to it.

Yet opinion polls suggest that many people nurture the belief that environmental standards are declining and four factors seem to cause this disjunction between perception and reality.

One is the lopsidedness built into scientific research. Scientific funding goes mainly to areas with many problems. That may be wise policy, but it will also create an impression that many more potential problems exist than is the case.

Secondly, environmental groups need to be noticed by the mass media. They also need to keep the money rolling in. Understandably, perhaps, they sometimes overstate their arguments. In 1997, for example, the World Wide Fund for Nature issued a press release entitled: 'Two thirds of the world's forests lost forever'. The truth turns out to be nearer 20%.

Though these groups are run overwhelmingly by selfless folk, they nevertheless share many of the characteristics of other lobby groups. That would matter less if people applied the same degree of scepticism to environmental lobbying as they do to lobby groups in other fields. A trade organisation arguing for, say, weaker pollution controls is instantly seen as self-interested. Yet a green organisation opposing such a weakening is

seen as altruistic, even if an impartial view of the controls in question might suggest they are doing more harm than good.

A third source of confusion is the attitude of the media. People are clearly more curious about bad news than good. Newspapers and broadcasters are there to provide what the public wants. That, however, can lead to significant distortions of perception. An example was America's encounter with El Niño in 1997 and 1998. This climatic phenomenon was accused of wrecking tourism, causing allergies, melting the ski-slopes and causing 22 deaths. However, according to an article in the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, the damage it did was estimated at US$4 billion but the benefits amounted to some US$19 billion. These came from higher winter temperatures (which saved an estimated 850 lives, reduced heating costs and diminished spring floods caused by meltwaters).

The fourth factor is poor individual perception. People worry that the endless rise in the amount of stuff everyone throws away will cause the world to run out of places to dispose of waste. Yet, even if America's trash output continues to rise as it has done in the past, and even if the American population doubles by 2100, all the rubbish America produces through the entire 21st century will still take up only one-12,000th of the area of the entire United States.

So what of global warming? As we know, carbon dioxide emissions are causing the planet to warm. The best estimates are that the temperatures will rise by 2–3°C in this century, causing considerable problems, at a total cost of US$5,000 billion.

Despite the intuition that something drastic needs to be done about such a costly problem, economic analyses clearly show it will be far more expensive to cut carbon dioxide emissions radically than to pay the costs of adaptation to the increased temperatures. A model by one of the main authors of the United Nations Climate Change Panel shows how an expected temperature increase of 2.1 degrees in 2100 would only be diminished to an increase of 1.9 degrees. Or to put it another way, the temperature increase that the planet would have experienced in 2094 would be postponed to 2100.

So this does not prevent global warming, but merely buys the world six years. Yet the cost of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, for the United States alone, will be higher than the cost of solving the world's single, most pressing health problem: providing universal access to clean drinking water and sanitation. Such measures would avoid 2 million deaths every year, and prevent half a billion people from becoming seriously ill.

It is crucial that we look at the facts if we want to make the best possible decisions for the future. It may be costly to be overly optimistic – but more costly still to be too pessimistic.

Practice Exercise 1.2

Choose the correct letter A, B, C and D. Write the correct letter next to the question number.

1. What aspect of scientific research does the writer express concern about in paragraph 4?
    A. The need to produce results
    B. The lack of financial support.
    C. The selection of areas to research.
    D. The desire to solve every research problem.

2. The writer quotes from the Worldwide Fund for Nature to illustrate how
    A. Influential the mass media can be.
    B. Effective environmental groups can be.
    C. The mass media can help groups raise funds.
    D. Environmental groups can exaggerate their claims.

3. What is the writer's main point about lobby groups in paragraph 6?
    A. Some are more active than others.
    B. Some are better organised than others.
    C. Some receive more criticism than others.
    D. Some support more important issues than others.

4. The writer suggests that newspapers print items that are intended to
    A. Educate readers.
    B. Meet their reader's expectations.
    C. Encourage feedback from readers.
    D. Mislead readers.

5. What does the writer say about America's waste problem?
    A. It will increase in line with population growth.
    B. It is not as important as we have been led to believe.
    C. It has been reduced through public awareness of the issues.
    D. It is only significant in certain areas of the country.

ANSWER KEY

Practice Exercise 1.1

1. C
2. A
3. C
4. D

Practice Exercise 1.2

1. C
2. D
3. C
4. B
5. B

To solve more practice tests and to improve your IELTS question solving skills subscribe at

www.mentorsbasket.com

DISCOVER WHAT YOU CAN ATTAIN WITH THE

LANGUAGE POWER