

Reading Skills exam – sample task sheet

In this part of the Academic English exam, you're going to read two texts and complete the tasks that follow them. You have to complete all the tasks. Make sure you read the instructions carefully and provide clear answers. You have 70 minutes.

Text 1. You're going to read a text about memory and how it can be improved at any age.

source: www.theguardian.com

1 You walk into a room, but can't remember what you came in for. Or you bump into an old
2 acquaintance at work, and forget their name. Most of us have had momentary memory lapses like
3 this. The good news for the increasingly forgetful, however, is that not only can memory be
4 improved with reading fiction, but that it looks increasingly as if some cases of Alzheimer's may
5 be preventable too.

6 Neuroscientist Dr Richard Restak, former president of the American Neuropsychiatric
7 Association, has written more than 20 books on the human brain. "Memory lapses are", he writes,
8 "the single most common complaint over-55s raise with their doctors, even though much of what
9 they describe turns out to be nothing to worry about."

10 Coming out of a shop and not being able to remember where you left the car, for example,
11 is perfectly normal: it's likely you just weren't concentrating when you parked, and therefore the
12 car's location wasn't properly encoded in your brain. "Most of these signs of 'memory loss' are
13 signs of not paying attention. The first thing is you put the information in memory and then you
14 have to be able to retrieve it. But if you've never consolidated it in the first place, it doesn't
15 exist."

16 But what if you forget where you left your car keys, and eventually find them inside the
17 fridge? "That's often the first sign of something serious – you open up the refrigerator door, and
18 it's the newspaper, or your car keys, inside. That's a little bit beyond forgetful."

19 Memory does vary, he points out, and some people will always have been scatty. But the
20 real red flag is a change that seems out of character. For example, Restak has noticed that many
21 patients in the early stages of dementia and Alzheimer's stop reading fiction, because it's too
22 difficult to remember what the character said or did a few chapters earlier – which is unfortunate,
23 he says, because reading complex novels can be a valuable mental workout in itself.

24 Like following a recipe, keeping track of fictional plots is an exercise of working memory
25 – as distinct from short-term memory (temporarily storing something like a phone number that
26 you can safely forget the minute you've dialed it) or episodic memory, which covers things like
27 recollections of childhood. Working memory is what we use to "work with the information we
28 have", says Restak, and it's the one we should all prioritise. Left to its own devices, he points out,
29 memory naturally starts to decline from your 30s onwards, which is why he advocates practising
30 it daily.

31 He also recommends tackling hearing or vision problems promptly. "You have to have a
32 certain level of vision to read comfortably, and if that's missing then you are going to read less.
33 As a result of that, you're going to learn less and be a less interesting person to other people. All
34 of these things really come down to socialisation, which is the most important part of keeping
35 away Alzheimer's and dementia, and keeping your memory."

Complete the following tasks.

Task 1. Read the text and decide where the following phrases/clauses/sentences go. Indicate your choice by giving the number of the line you think the phrase/clause/sentence should begin in. Give only ONE answer.

a) , but in middle age they can start to feel more ominous

b) – that’s consolidating it –

c) , because they make it harder to engage in conversations
and hobbies that keep the cogs turning.

3 pts/ item, /9 pts

Task 2. Summarize the general ideas of the text in two or three well-formed sentences. Your summary should focus on the topic and the key arguments that are developed throughout the text. Give only ONE answer.

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/10 pts

Task 3. Decide whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE, or there is NO EVIDENCE for them in the passage. Indicate your decision with capital letters T, F or NE. Justify your opinion in one or two well-formed sentences. Give only ONE answer. Abbreviations, fragments, and arrows are not accepted.

- a) Reading fiction is part of the general treatment offered to dementia and Alzheimer's patients.
- b) Keeping track of the plot and the characters of a novel is a great exercise for episodic memory.
- c) There is cause-and-effect relationship between being mentally fit and socially active.
- d) Not remembering where you parked your car indicates deteriorating memory.
- e) Professor Restak is American.

3 pts/item, /15 pts

Text 2. You are going to read four different opinions about the influence of artificial intelligence (AI) on workplaces.

Article A

AI will harm the standard of living for many people by causing mass unemployment as robots replace people. AI robots and other software and hardware are becoming less expensive and need none of the benefits and services required by human workers, such as sick days, lunch hours, bathroom breaks, health insurance, pay raises, promotions, and performance reviews, which spells trouble for workers and society at large. 48% of experts believe AI will replace a large number of blue- and even white-collar jobs, creating greater income inequality, increased unemployment, and a breakdown of the social order. – *Encyclopedia Britannica*

Article B

Technological substitution of human employees is treated as a serious concern, but technological complementarity - the use of automation and artificial intelligence to complement workers, rather than replace them - is viewed optimistically as a good thing. Research on automation and AI in the workplace has identified five hypothetical channels through which automation might impact worker well-being: worker freedom, sense of meaning, cognitive load, external monitoring, and job insecurity. To avoid worker dissatisfaction, policymakers could inform workers about the changes or involve them in the process, so they don't feel like they're losing autonomy and are just surveilled and dictated to by machines. – *Science Daily*

Article C

As AI and robotics continue their relentless advance, the workforce will increasingly be divided into winners and losers. The losers will be those who focus largely on routine, predictable tasks, regardless of whether these activities are physical or intellectual in nature – these professions will probably be replaced by robotics-driven technologies. The winners are likely to be skilled trade workers who do work that requires dexterity, mobility, and problem-solving ability in highly unpredictable settings and those whose occupations require the development of deep, sophisticated relationships with other people. Intellectual work that is creative or activities that are otherwise genuinely non-routine and unpredictable in nature fall into this category, too. – *The Guardian*

Article D

The overall impact of artificial intelligence and robotics on the job market is likely to be significant and in some specific areas the technologies may lead to dramatic change within the next few years. However, the reality is that most of these technologies are unlikely to arrive in time to offer a solution to the immediate challenges faced by employers, such as critical worker shortages in transportation and logistics in the UK. By one estimate, the country is currently short of at least 100,000 truck drivers. As has been widely publicised, the lack of drivers has led to supply shortages of everything from petrol to McDonald's milkshakes. – *The Guardian*

Task 1. Open-ended questions. Provide a brief answer (1-4 words) to each of the following questions. For each question, you will find the answer in one of the four extracts (A-D). Give only ONE answer.

a) What is the scientific term for the practice of using AI as a supplement to human workforce?
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b) Who are the least likely to lose their workplaces due to AI and automation in the future?
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e) What characterizes easily replaceable tasks?
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3 pts/item, /9 pts

Task 2. Cross-text multiple matching. For questions 1-6, choose from articles A-D. The same article may be chosen more than once. Give only ONE answer.

Which article

- a) expresses article C's concerns about people losing their jobs because of AI?
- b) expresses a more optimistic view on the role of technology in workplaces than the other articles?
- c) focuses more on current employment issues than on making long-term predictions?
- d) shares A's opinion that both manual and intellectual work are likely to be replaced by AI?
- e) is different from A in attitude towards the impact of robotics on employees?
- f) is the only one to tackle the impact of AI on society in general?

2 pts/item, /12 pts

Task 3. Vocabulary in context. Answer the questions with words and expressions from the text. Give only ONE answer.

1. Which word (in article C) is closest in meaning to ‘circumstances’?

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2. Which word (in article B) is the antonym of ‘dependence’?

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3. Find the word that means ‘skill in performing tasks, especially with the hands’ (article C).

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4. Which adjective (in article D) best describes something that is considerable and impactful?

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5. What does the writer mean when saying something ‘spells trouble’ (article A)?

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1 pt/item, /5 pts

Total score: /60 pts %