

IELTSFever Academic IELTS Reading Test 134

Reading Passage 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1-13, which are based on the IELTSFever Academic IELTS Reading Test 133 Reading Passage MENTAL GYMNASTICS below.

MENTAL GYMNASTICS

{A} THE working day has just started at the head office of Barclays Bank in London. Seventeen staff are helping themselves to a buffet breakfast as young psychologist Sebastian Bailey enters the room to begin the morning's training session. But this is no ordinary training session. He's not here to sharpen their finance or management skills. He's here to exercise their brains.

{B} Today's workout, organised by a company called the Mind Gym in London, is entitled "having presence". What follows is an intense 90-minute session in which this rather abstract concept is gradually broken down into a concrete set of feelings, mental tricks and behaviours. At one point the bankers are instructed to shut their eyes and visualise themselves filling the room and then the building. They finish up by walking around the room acting out various levels of presence, from low-key to over the top.

{C} It's easy to poke fun. Yet similar mental workouts are happening in corporate seminar rooms around the globe. The Mind Gym alone offers some 70 different sessions, including ones on mental stamina, creativity for logical thinkers and "zoom learning". Other outfits draw more directly on the exercise analogy, offering "neurobics" courses with names like "brain sets" and "cerebral fitness". Then there are books with titles like *Pumping Ions*, full of brainteasers that claim to "flex your mind", and software packages offering memory and spatial-awareness games.

{D} But whatever the style, the companies' sales pitch is invariably the same—follow our routines to shape and sculpt your brain or mind, just as you might tone and train your body. And, of course, they nearly all claim that their mental workouts draw on serious scientific research and thinking into how the brain works.

{E} One outfit, Brainergy of Cambridge, Massachusetts (motto: "Because your grey matter matters") puts it like this: "Studies have shown that mental exercise can cause changes in brain anatomy and brain chemistry which promote increased mental efficiency and clarity. The neuroscience is cutting-edge." And on its website, Mind Gym trades on a quote from Susan Greenfield, one of Britain's best known neuroscientists: "It's a bit like going to the gym, if you exercise your brain it will grow."

{F} Indeed, the Mind Gym originally planned to hold its sessions in a local health club, until its founders realised where the real money was to be made. Modern companies need flexible,

bright thinkers and will seize on anything that claims to create them, especially if it looks like a quick fix backed by science. But are neurobic workouts really backed by science? And do we need them?

{G} Nor is there anything remotely high-tech about what Lawrence Katz, co-author of *Keep Your Brain Alive*, recommends. Katz, a neurobiologist at Duke University Medical School in North Carolina, argues that just as many of us fail to get enough physical exercise, so we also lack sufficient mental stimulation to keep our brain in trim. Sure we are busy with jobs, family and housework. But most of this activity is repetitive routine. And any leisure time is spent slumped in front of the TV.

{H} So, read a book upside down. Write or brush your teeth with your wrong hand. Feel your way around the room with your eyes shut. Sniff vanilla essence while listening intently to orchestral music. Anything, says Katz, to break your normal mental routine. It will help invigorate your brain, encouraging its cells to make new connections and pump out neurotrophins, substances that feed and sustain brain circuits.

{I} Well, up to a point it will. "What I'm really talking about is brain maintenance rather than bulking up your IQ," Katz adds. Neurobics, in other words, is about letting your brain fulfill its potential. It cannot create super-brains. Can it achieve even that much, though? Certainly the brain is an organ that can adapt to the demands placed on it. Tests on animal brain tissue, for example, have repeatedly shown that electrically stimulating the synapses that connect nerve cells thought to be crucial to learning and reasoning, makes them stronger and more responsive. Brain scans suggest we use a lot more of our grey matter when carrying out new or strange tasks than when we're doing well-rehearsed ones. Rats raised in bright cages with toys sprout more neural connections than rats raised in bare cages—suggesting perhaps that novelty and variety could be crucial to a developing brain. Katz, And neurologists have proved time and again that people who lose brain cells suddenly during a stroke often sprout new connections to compensate for the loss—especially if they undergo extensive therapy to overcome any paralysis.

{J} Guy Claxton, an educational psychologist at the University of Bristol, dismisses most of the neurological approaches as "neuro-babble". Nevertheless, there are specific mental skills we can learn, he contends. Desirable attributes such as creativity, mental flexibility, and even motivation, are not the fixed faculties that most of us think. They are thought habits that can be learned. The problem, says Claxton, is that most of us never get proper training in these skills. We develop our own private set of mental strategies for tackling tasks and never learn anything explicitly. Worse still, because any learned skill— even driving a car or brushing our teeth—quickly sinks out of consciousness, we can no longer see the very thought habits we're relying upon. Our mental tools become invisible to us.

{K} Claxton is the academic adviser to the Mind Gym. So not surprisingly, the company espouses his solution—that we must return our thought patterns to a conscious level, becoming aware of the details of how we usually think. Only then can we start to practise better thought patterns, until eventually these become our new habits. Switching metaphors, picture not gym classes, but tennis or football coaching.

{L} In practice, the training can seem quite mundane. For example, in one of the eight different creativity workouts offered by the Mind Gym entitled "creativity for logical thinkers" one of the mental strategies taught is to make a sensible suggestion, then immediately pose its opposite. So, asked to spend five minutes inventing a new pizza, a group soon comes up with no topping, sweet topping, cold topping, price based on time of day, flat-rate prices and so on.

{M} Bailey agrees that the trick is simple. But it is surprising how few such tricks people have to call upon when they are suddenly asked to be creative: "They tend to just label themselves as uncreative, not realising that there are techniques that every creative person employs." Bailey says the aim is to introduce people to half a dozen or so such strategies in a session so that what at first seems like a dauntingly abstract mental task becomes a set of concrete, learnable behaviours. He admits this is not a short cut to genius. Neurologically, some people do start with quicker circuits or greater handling capacity. However, with the right kind of training he thinks we can dramatically increase how efficiently we use it.

{N} It is hard to prove that the training itself is effective. How do you measure a change in an employee's creativity levels, or memory skills? But staff certainly report feeling that such classes have opened their eyes. So, neurological boosting or psychological training? At the moment you can pay your money and take your choice. Claxton for one believes there is no reason why schools and universities shouldn't spend more time teaching basic thinking skills, rather than trying to stuff heads with facts and hoping that effective thought habits are somehow absorbed by osmosis.

Questions 1-5

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1 In boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet, write

YES	if the statement agrees with the writer
NO	if the statement does not agree with the writer
NOT GIVEN	if there is no information about this in the passage

- (1) Mind Gym coach instructed employees to imagine that they are the building
- (2) Mind Gym uses the similar marketing theory that is used all round
- (3) Susan Greenfield is the founder of Mind Gym.

- (4) All businesses and industries are using Mind Gym's sessions globally.
- (5) According to Mind Gym, extensive scientific background supports their mental training sessions.

Questions 6-13

Use the information in the passage to match the people (listed A-D) with opinions or deeds below. Write the appropriate letters A-D in boxes 6-13 on your answer sheet.

- (A) Guy Claxton
- (B) Sebastian Bailey
- (C) Susan Greenfield
- (D) Lawrence Katz

NB You may use any letter more than once

- (6) We do not have enough inspiration to keep our brain fit.
- (7) The more you exercise your brain like exercise in the gym, the more brain will grow.
- (8) Exercise can keep your brain healthy instead of improving someone's IQ.
- (9) It is valuable for schools to teach students about creative skills besides basic knowledge.
- (10) We can develop new neuron connections when we lose old connections via certain treatments.
- (11) People usually mark themselves as not creative before figuring out there are approaches for each person.
- (12) An instructor in Mind Gym who guided the employees to exercise.
- (13) Majority of people don't have appropriate skills-training for brain.

Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 14-27, which are based on the IELTSFever Academic IELTS Reading Test 133 Reading Passage *Have Teenagers Always Existed* below.

Have Teenagers Always Existed

{A} Our ancestor, Homo erectus, may not have had culture or even language, but did they have teenagers? That question has been contested in the past few years, with some anthropologists claiming evidence of an adolescent phase in human fossil. This is not merely an academic

debate. Humans today are the only animals on Earth to have a teenage phase, yet we have very little idea why. Establishing exactly when adolescence first evolved and finding out what sorts of changes in our bodies and lifestyles it was associated with could help us understand its purpose. Why do we, uniquely have a growth spurt so late in life?

{B} Until recently, the dominant explanation was that physical growth is delayed by our need to grow large brains and to learn all the behavior patterns associated with humanity - speaking, social interaction and so on. While such behaviour is still developing, humans cannot easily fend for themselves, so it is best to stay small and look youthful. That way your parents and other members of the social group are motivated to continue looking after you. What's more, studies of mammals show a strong relationship between brain size and the rate of development, with larger-brained animals taking longer to reach adulthood. Humans are at the far end of this spectrum. If this theory is correct, and the development of large brains accounts for the teenage growth spurt, the origin of adolescence should have been with the evolution of our* own species (Homo sapiens) and Neanderthals, starting almost 200,000 years ago. The trouble is, some of the fossil evidence seems to tell a different story.

{C} The human fossil record is extremely sparse, and the number of fossilised children is minuscule. Nevertheless, in the past few years anthropologists have begun to look at what can be learned of the lives of our ancestors from these youngsters, of the most studied is the famous Turkana boy, an almost complete skeleton of Homo erectus from 1.6 million years ago found in Kenya in 1984. Accurately assessing how old someone is from their skeleton is a tricky business. Even with a modern human, you can only make a rough estimate based on the developmental stage of teeth and bones and the skeleton's general size.

{D} You need as many developmental markers as possible to get an estimate of age. The Turkana's teeth made him 10 or 11 years old. The features of his skeleton put him at 13, but he is as tall as a modern 15-year-old. Susan Anton of New York University points to research by Margaret Clegg who studied a collection of 18th-century 19th-century skeletons whose ages at death were known. When she tried to age the skeletons Without checking the records, she found similar discrepancies to those of the Turkana boy. One 10-year-old boy, for example, had a dental age of 9, the skeleton of a 6-year-old but was tall enough to be 11. 'The Turkana kid still has a rounded skull, and needs more growth to reach adult shape,' Anton adds. She thinks that Homo erectus already developed modern human patterns of growth, with a late, if not quite so extreme, adolescent spurt. She believes the Turkana boy was just about to enter it.

{E} If Anton is right, that theory contradicts the orthodox idea linking late growth with development of a large brain. Anthropologist Steven Leigh from the University of Illinois goes further. He believes the idea of adolescence as catch-up growth does not explain why the growth rate increases so dramatically. He says that many apes have growth spurts in particular body regions that are associated with reaching maturity, and this makes sense because by timing the short but crucial spells of maturation to coincide with the seasons when food is plentiful, they minimise the risk of being without adequate food supplies while growing. What makes humans unique is that the whole skeleton is involved. For Leigh, this is the key.

{F} According to his theory, adolescence evolved as an integral part of efficient upright locomotion, as well as to accommodate more complex brains. Fossil evidence suggests that our ancestors first walked on two legs six million years ago. If proficient walking was important for survival, perhaps the teenage growth spurt has very ancient origins. While many anthropologists will consider Leigh's theory a step too far, he is not the only one with new ideas about the evolution of teenagers.

{G} Another approach, which has produced a surprising result, relies on the minute analysis of tooth growth. Every nine days or so the growing teeth of both apes and humans acquire ridges on their enamel surface. These are like rings in a tree trunk: the number of them tells you how long the crown of a tooth took to form. Across mammals' the rate at which teeth develop is closely related to how fast the brain grows and the age you mature. Teeth are good indicators of life history because their growth is less related to the environment and nutrition than is the growth of the skeleton.

{H} A more decisive piece of evidence came last year, when researchers in France and Spain published their findings from a study of Neanderthal teeth. Neanderthals had much faster tooth growth than *Homo erectus* who went before them, and hence, possibly, a shorter childhood. Lead researcher Fernando Ramirez-Rozzi thinks Neanderthals died young about 25 years old - primarily because of the cold, harsh environment they had to endure in glacial Europe. They evolved to grow up quicker than their immediate ancestors. Neanderthals and *Homo erectus* probably had to reach adulthood fairly quickly, without delaying for an adolescent growth spurt. So it still looks as though we are the original teenagers.

Questions 14-17

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D. Write the correct letter in boxes 14-17 on your answer sheet.

Question 14 In the first paragraph, why does the writer say 'This is not merely an academic debate'?

- (A) Anthropologists' theories need to be backed up by practical research.
- (B) There have been some important misunderstandings among anthropologists.
- (C) The attitudes of anthropologists towards adolescence are changing.
- (D) The work of anthropologists could inform our understanding of modern adolescence.

Question 15 What was Susan Anton's opinion of the Turkana boy?

- (A) He would have experienced an adolescent phase had he lived.
- (B) His skull showed he had already reached adulthood.
- (C) His skeleton and teeth could not be compared to those from a more modern age.

(D) He must have grown much faster than others alive at the time.

Question 16 What point does Steven Leigh make?

(A) Different parts of the human skeleton develop at different speeds.

(B) The growth period of many apes is confined to times when there is enough food.

(C) Humans have different rates of development from each other depending on living conditions.

(D) The growth phase in most apes lasts longer if more food is available.

Question 17 What can we learn from a mammal's teeth?

(A) A poor diet will cause them to grow more slowly.

(B) They are a better indication of lifestyle than a skeleton.

(C) Their growing period is difficult to predict accurately.

(D) Their speed of growth is directly related to the body's speed of development.

Questions 18-23

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

In boxes 18-23 on your answer sheet, write

YES	if the statement agrees with the writer
NO	if the statement does not agree with the writer
NOT GIVEN	if there is no information about this in the passage

(18) It is difficult for anthropologists to do research on human fossil because they are so rare.

(19) Modern methods mean it is possible to predict the age of a skeleton with accuracy.

(20) Susan Anton's conclusion about the Turkana boy reinforces an established idea.

(21) Steven Leigh's ideas are likely to be met with disbelief by many anthropologists.

(22) Researchers in France and Spain developed a unique method of analyzing teeth.

(23) There has been too little research comparing the brains of Homo erectus and Neanderthals.

Questions 24-27

Complete each sentence with the correct ending, A-G, below.

Write the correct letter AG, in boxes 11-14 on your answer sheet.

(24) Until recently, delayed growth in humans until adolescence was felt to be due to

(25) In her research, Margaret Clegg discovered

(26) Steven Leigh thought the existence of adolescence is connected to

(27) Research on Neanderthals suggests that they have short lives because of

- (A) inconsistencies between height, skeleton and dental evidence.
- (B) the fact that human beings walk on two legs.
- (C) the way teeth grew.
- (D) a need to be dependent on others for survival.
- (E) difficult climatic conditions.
- (F) increased quantities of food
- (G) the existence of much larger brains than previously

Reading Passage 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 28-40, which are based on the IELTSFever Academic IELTS Reading Test 133 Reading Passage Plant Scents below.

Can we call it "ART"?

Life-Casting and Art

{A} When these life-castings were made in the 19th century, no one thought of them as art. But, if critics today can hail Tracey Emin's unmade bed and the lights going off and on in a gallery as masterpieces of some kind, then shouldn't these more skilful and profoundly strange works have a greater claim on our attention?

{B} Art changes over time; what is art changes, too. Objects intended for devotional, ritualistic or recreational use are re-categorised, by latecomers from another civilisation who no longer respond to these original purposes. Where would New Yorker cartooning be without Lascaux gags in which one bison-painter makes anachronistically "artistic" remarks to another? What also happens is that techniques and crafts judged nonartistic at the time are reassessed.

{C} In the 19th century, life-casting was to sculpture what photography was to painting; and both were viewed as cheating short-cuts by the senior arts. Their virtues - of speed and unwavering realism - also implied their limitations; they left little or no room for the imagination. For many, life-casting was an insult to the sculptor's creative gesture; in a famous lawsuit of 1834, a moulder whose mask of the dying Napoleon had been reproduced and sold without his permission, was judged to have no rights in the image - in other words, he was specifically held not to be an artist. Rodin said of life-casting: "It happens fast, but it doesn't make art." Others feared that the whole canon of aesthetics might be blown off course if too much nature was allowed in, it would lead art away from its proper pursuit of the ideal.

{D} Gauguin, at the end of the century, worried about future developments in photography: if ever the process went into colour, what painter would labour away at a likeness with a brush made from squirrel-tail? But painting has proved robust. Photography changed it, of course, just as the novel had to reassess narrative after the arrival of the cinema. But the gap between the senior and junior arts was always narrower than the die-hards implied: painters have always used technical back-up - studio assistants to do the boring bits, cameras lucida and obscura; while apparently lesser crafts involve great skill, thought, preparation, choice, and - depending how we define it - imagination. Life-casting was complex, technical work, as Benjamin Robert Haydon discovered when he poured 250 litres of plaster over his black model Wilson and nearly killed him.

{E} Time changes our view in another way, too. Each new art movement implies a reassessment of what has gone before; what is done now alters what was done before. In some cases, this is merely self-serving, with the new art using the old to justify itself: Look how all of that points to this, aren't we clever to be the culmination of all that has gone before? But usually it is a matter of re-alerting the sensibility, reminding us not to take things for granted; every so often we need the aesthetic equivalent of a cataract operation. So there are many items in this show - innocent bit-players back in the last half of the 19th century - which would sit happily nowadays in a commercial or public gallery. Many curators would probably put in for the stunning cast of the hand of a giant from Barnum's circus.

{F} The initial impact is on the eye, in the contradiction (which Mueck constantly exploits) between unexpected size and extreme verisimilitude. Next, the human element kicks in: you note that the nails are dirt-encrusted - unless this is the caster's decorative addition - and the paddy fingertips extend far beyond them. (Was the giant an anxious gnawer, or does giantism mean that the flesh simply outgrows the nails?) Then you take in the element of choice, arrangement, art if you like - the neat, pleated, buttoned sleeve end that gives the item balance and variation of texture. This is just a moulded hand, yet the part stands utterly for the whole: and, as an item on public display, it reminds us, slyly, poignantly, of the fullsize original who in

his time was just as much a victim of gawping. We are not a long way from Degas's *La Petite Danseuse* (which, after all, one critic said should be in the Dupuytren pathology museum); though we are nearer to contemporary art that lazily gets called cutting edge.

{G} Barthes proclaimed the death of the author, the liberation of the text from authorial intention, and the consequent empowerment of the reader; he announced this, needless to say, in a text written with a particular intention in order to communicate something very specific to a reader. An own goal of Keith Weller proportions. But what doesn't work for literature works much better for art. Pictures do float free of their creators' intentions; over time, the "reader" does become more powerful. Few of us can look at a medieval altarpiece as its painter "intended", we believe too little and aesthetically know too much, so we recreate, we find new fields of pleasure in the work. Equally, the lack of artistic intention of Paul Richer and other forgotten craftsmen who brushed oil on to flesh, who moulded, cast, decorated and primed a century and more ago is now irrelevant.

{H} What counts is the surviving object and our living response to it. The tests are simple: does it interest the eye, excite the brain, move the mind to reflection, and involve the heart; further, is an apparent level of skill involved? Much currently fashionable art bothers only the eye and briefly the brain; but it fails to engage the mind or the heart. It may, to use the old dichotomy, be beautiful, but it is rarely true to any significant depth. One of the constant pleasures of art is its ability to come at us from an unexpected angle and stop us short in wonder. That is what many of the objects in this show do. The *Ataxic Venus* doesn't make Ron Mueck's *Dead Dad* any less intense and moving an image, but she does offer herself as a companion, precursor, and, yes, rival.

Questions 28-32

The reading Passage has seven paragraphs A-H. Which paragraph contains the following information? Write the correct letter A-H, in boxes 28-32 on your answer sheet.

- (28)** Technicians do the boring work
- (29)** A trial on a famous figure's mask in 19th century
- (30)** Intention from author is claimed matters in Art
- (31)** How to assess an art
- (32)** Detailed depiction of an earlier work

Questions 33-38

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 2? In boxes 33-38 on your answer sheet, write

YES	if the statement agrees with the writer
NO	if the statement does not agree with the writer
NOT GIVEN	if there is no information about this in the passage

(33) The intention of using artistic objects will change as time pass.

(34) In 19th century, people appreciated the fast speed and realism of living casting.

(35) Rodin indicated that slow pace would improve the artistic quality of casting.

(36) The importance of painting dropped as the development of photographs.

(37) Life casting requires less skill and cost than painting.

(38) Emerge of new art makes people recognize the meaning of art again.

Questions 39-40

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D. Write your answers in boxes 25-25 on your answer sheet.

Question 39 Why hand of giant from Barnum's circus attract people's attention in the first place?

(A) details and human element

(B) size and realism

(C) texture and color

(D) imagination and intuition

Question 40 What requirement does it depend on when judging if an object is "art"?

(A) audience status

(B) fresh or old condition

(C) lasting period

(D) public response