

### **Module format**

IELTS Academic Reading has 3 passages and 40 items (questions). The number of items for any one passage may vary. Each item is worth one mark.

### **Timing**

IELTS Academic Reading takes 60 minutes to complete. Candidates are not given extra time to transfer their answers onto the Answer Sheet. They should do this as they work through the test.

### **Texts**

The passages used in the test are based on authentic texts, and are taken from sources such as magazines, journals, books and newspapers. They are designed to present the candidate with materials similar to those which they might need to read on a university course. Passages may also contain non-verbal material such as diagrams, graphs, illustrations etc. The passages may be written in a variety of styles, for example narrative, descriptive or discursive/argumentative. They deal with issues which are interesting, recognisably appropriate, and accessible to candidates entering postgraduate or undergraduate courses or seeking professional registration. At least one of the passages will contain detailed argument.

### **Task Types**

There are 10 basic task types, some with possible variations. They are:

Task Type 1 Multiple Choice

Task Type 2 Short-answer Questions

Task Type 3 Sentence Completion

Task Type 4 Notes, Summary or Table/Flow-chart Completion

Task Type 5 Labelling a Diagram

Task Type 6 Choosing Headings for Paragraphs or Sections of a Text

Task Type 7 Locating Information

Task Type 8 Identification of Writer's Views/Claims or of Information in a Text

Task Type 9 Classification

Task Type 10 Matching

### **The Process: Matching Paragraph Headings questions**

The first step in answering any IELTS question type is to **skim** the passage. You learnt how to do this in Step 3. When you **skim** a passage, you read it quickly to locate the **main idea of each paragraph**. You do this by:

- locating the topic sentence
- underlining the key words in the topic sentence
- underlining any related key words in the rest of the paragraph.

You also write down words that remind you of the main idea next to the paragraph.

### **Skimming the passage first**

Let's practise skimming the example IELTS reading passage *Culture and Learning*. Click on the button below to view the reading passage. The topic sentence of each paragraph has been highlighted to help you focus on the main idea.

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In the Reading Module, you will receive a workbook with the reading passages for the module. The workbook is provided to give you a realistic test experience. For this demonstration lesson, you will need to print the reading passage *Culture and Learning* in order to skim it.

While you skim, remember to:

- **underline** key words in the paragraphs; and
- **write the main idea** of each paragraph **next to** the paragraph.

After you have finished, click [here](#) to compare your skimming to how Cintia, an IELTS candidate, skimmed *Culture and Learning*.



## The Process

Now that you have skimmed the passage, let's look at the rest of the process for answering Matching Paragraph Headings questions.

To answer a Matching Paragraph Headings question type, you need to:

### Step 1

Go to the paragraph headings. (i, ii, iii etc.)

Skim all the paragraph headings.

**Underline** key words in each one.



### Step 2

Go to Paragraph A of the passage.

Review the main idea of Paragraph A.

Keep the **key words of the main idea** in your mind.



**Step 3**

Go back to the paragraph headings.

**Scan** the paragraph headings to match the key words of the main idea of Paragraph A with the underlined key words in the paragraph headings.

You will probably find more than one paragraph heading that has the same or similar key words.

**Note** all of them as **possibilities**.

**Step 4**

**Read** each of the possible paragraph headings intensively for detail.

You do this to distinguish between the paragraph headings that describe the **main idea of the paragraph** and those that describe supporting details or examples.

**Eliminate** the paragraph headings that describe **supporting details and examples**.

**Step 5**

**Choose** the paragraph heading that describes the main idea of the paragraph.

**Write** the number on your answer sheet.

Follow the same process for each paragraph in order.

**Note** that you only have to do Step 1, **underlining the key words** of the paragraph headings, **once**.

Now let's practise this process for Paragraph A of *Culture and Learning*.

## **Practise the Process: Matching Paragraph Headings**

### **Example**

Let's look at Siddhi, an IELTS teacher, demonstrating the process of matching a paragraph heading to the main idea of Paragraph A of *Culture and Learning*. First review the paragraph headings and Paragraph A.



### **Questions 1-5**

The reading passage has five paragraphs labeled A-E.

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below. Write the appropriate number (i-x) in boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet.

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| i   | Cultural differences in writing styles |
| ii  | Primary and secondary school education |
| iii | Overseas students                      |
| iv  | Academic writing styles                |
| v   | International languages                |

- vi Variation within cultures
- vii Variations in subjects taught
- viii Tertiary education
- ix Cultural variation in learning between cultures
- x Changes in the British education system

1 Paragraph A .....

**A** Every culture has its own distinctive conventions regarding what should be learned and how learning should take place. In one culture, students may be encouraged to work with their classmates, while in another culture this activity may be prohibited. In some societies, students are discouraged from asking questions, while in others they may be required to do so.

### Step 1

Go to the paragraph headings. (i-x)

Skim all the paragraph headings.

Underline key words in each one.

- i. Cultural differences in writing styles
- ii. Primary and secondary school education
- iii. Overseas students
- iv. Academic writing styles
- v. International languages
- vi. Variation within cultures
- vii. Variations in subjects taught
- viii. Tertiary education
- ix. Cultural variation in learning between cultures
- x. Changes in the British education system



### Step 2

Go to Paragraph A of the passage.

Review the main idea of Paragraph A.

Keep the key words of the main idea in your mind.

The key words of the main idea are **every culture, differences in learning.**

Keep all these in your mind.

#### Paragraph A

Every culture has its own distinctive conventions regarding what should be learned and how learning should take place. In one culture, students may be encouraged to work with their classmates, while in another culture this activity may be prohibited. In some societies, students are discouraged from asking questions, while in others they may be required to do so.



### Step 3

Go back to the paragraph headings.

These four paragraph headings are **possibilities** because the key words of the main idea from Paragraph A match the underlined key words in the paragraph headings. Note that *variation(s)* is a synonym of *difference(s)*.

Scan the paragraph headings to match the key words of the main idea of Paragraph A with the underlined key words in the paragraph headings.

You will probably find more than one paragraph heading that has the same or similar key words.

Note all of them as possibilities.

- i. Cultural differences in writing styles
- vi. Variation within cultures
- vii. Variations in subjects taught
- ix. Cultural variation in learning between cultures



#### Step 4

Read each of the possible paragraph headings intensively for detail.

You do this to distinguish between the paragraph headings that describe the main idea of the paragraph and those that describe supporting details or examples.

Eliminate the paragraph headings that describe supporting details and examples.

You can eliminate the following:

i. Cultural differences in writing styles You can eliminate this because *writing style* is an example of a cultural difference in learning. Also, *writing style* is not mentioned in Paragraph A.

vi. Variation within cultures You can eliminate this because it refers to differences *within* cultures, not *between* different cultures.

vii. Variations in subjects taught You can eliminate this because *subjects* is an example of a cultural difference in learning. Also, *subjects* is not mentioned in Paragraph A.



#### Step 5

Choose the paragraph heading that describes the main idea of the paragraph.

- i. ~~Cultural differences in writing style~~
- vi. ~~Variation within cultures~~
- vii. ~~Variations in subjects taught~~
- ix. Cultural variation in learning between cultures

Write the number on your answer sheet.

- ix. Cultural variation in learning between cultures

This is a **good choice** because *cultural variation* is a synonym of *cultural differences*; there is a reference to *learning*; *between cultures* is similar in meaning to *every culture*.

#### DOs and DON'Ts

- ✓ Keep an eye on the time: it will probably seem to pass very quickly, so take care not to spend too much time on any one passage or question. Remember that you only have 60 minutes to answer the questions and to transfer your answers to your Answer Sheet.
- ✓ Start at the beginning of the test and work through it. If you cannot do a particular question, leave it and go on to the next. You can then return to that question later if you have time. Put a mark next to this question on the Question Paper so that you can find it again quickly.
- ✓ Answer as many questions as you can.

- ✓ Look carefully at the title of the passage and any subtitles and illustrations it may have. You can get a quick idea of what the passage is about from these.
- ✓ Read the instructions for each set of questions very carefully: it is important to do exactly what you are asked to do
- ✓ Where appropriate remember to skim the questions before reading the passage so that you have a purpose for reading.
- ✓ Make sure you give the passage a quick read through so that you are familiar with the topic and how it is developed in the passage. An understanding of the text structure can be very helpful in answering the questions.
- ✓ Use the glossary, if there is one provided, to help you understand unfamiliar words.
- ✓ Pay attention to any examples that are provided.
- ✓ Make sure that your answers keep to the word limit asked for: if you are asked for 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS', for example, then do not write more.
- ✓ Make sure that you copy words accurately from the text: spelling mistakes will mean that you will lose the mark for that question.
- ✓ Make sure that where you have to write an answer yourself, your answer is grammatically correct, (e.g. Short-answer Questions, Sentence Completion, Summary Completion).

- ✗ Don't waste time reading the whole passage each time for each set of questions. Remember that many task types ask you to locate or check details in the text. In cases like this you need to skim quickly through the passage rather than read it all carefully.
- ✗ Don't go back to the beginning of the passage for each question when you know from the task type that the answers will come in the order of the information in the passage.
- ✗ Don't forget that questions can come before the reading passage as well as after.
- ✗ Don't become anxious if there are questions you cannot answer. Leave them and move onto the next questions. You can always come back to the ones you couldn't answer at the end of the test if you have time.
- ✗ Don't worry if you don't understand every word. It may not be necessary to understand all the words in order to answer the questions correctly.
- ✗ Don't forget that you must write your answers on your Answer Sheet. You will not be given extra time to do this at the end of the test.
- ✗ Don't write more than one answer when only one is required; even if one of your answers is correct, you will not receive a mark.