



Tel. + 61 2 888 00 300  
<http://thefreeschool.education/ielts.html>

## **Upper intermediate IELTS (Academic stream)**

**Subject code:** IELTS1001

**Teaching week 4:** Academic reading : discussion 3

**Commences Monday:** 30 January 2017

**Presenter:** Dr. Jay Jericho

---

### **1. Welcome message**

Welcome colleagues to teaching week 4, Academic reading: discussion 3.

### **2. Miscellaneous announcements relevant to this course.**

None.

### **3. Discuss questions asked by the cohort**

These were answered by private message inside the discussion forum by Jay.

I encourage people to post their questions and discussion on the public forum so that other participants can benefit from your content and the tutors' replies.

4. **List open-access scholarly material for the current week**

IDP Australia - IELTS academic reading practice tests

<https://www.ieltsessentials.com/global/prepare/freepracticetests/academicreadingpracticetest>

<http://idpielts.me/prepare-ielts/free-ielts-practice-tests/>

<https://ielts.com.au/study-for-ielts/practice-test/>

<https://www.ieltsessentials.com/global/prepare/freepracticetests/academicreadingpracticetest>

British Council

“Free IELTS practice Tests”

<http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/prepare-test/free-practice-tests>

“Free IELTS practice activities and resources”

<http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/prepare-test/british-council-online-resources>

Cambridge University

“Free paper-based sample tests”

<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/ielts/preparation/>

Reference resources:

Online Cambridge Dictionary

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

Collins English Thesaurus

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus>

## 5. Summarize the previous teaching week

Last week's teaching notes extended our introduction to the academic reading component of the IELTS exam. The notes from teaching week two and teaching week three provide an essential foundation to this week's notes. Discussion this week concludes my presentation of the IELTS academic reading component.

## 6. Introductory discussion to the topic

Recall that there are seven different types of academic reading tasks:

1. Identifying information
2. Identifying a writer's views
3. Matching features
4. Matching headings
5. Multiple choice questions
6. Table completion
7. Diagram label completion

This week we take a closer look at some of the finer points involved in mastering the academic reading questions. We also examine some advanced reading exercise techniques that will enable you to score a higher band score (*circa* 7.0 and higher) for this part of the IELTS exam.

## 7. YouTube presentations to support the introduction

How to succeed on IELTS academic reading  
11 minutes and 14 seconds  
Learn English with Emma  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PDgVEhfKso>

IELTS Reading strategies: True, False, Not Given  
15 minutes and 44 seconds  
Learn English with Emma  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNyLs7YWFL8>

Please watch these YouTube presentations before you proceed to the next subsection of these notes (*i.e.* part 8., below).

## 8. Topic discussion - further detail

The two YouTube presentations offer some valuable advice about some of the difficulties that students may encounter during the IELTS reading passage.

### Time

Most people who take the IELTS exam struggle to complete all questions within the time limit imposed on the exam to some degree. Ideally, you should aim to finish each section of the exam early if possible so that you may check your answers. You should never leave an answer blank, especially for questions such as true/false/not given and multiple choice questions. If you are not sure of the answer, you should guess the answer. This strategy gives you a chance of earning some credit for randomly guessing a correct answer. There are no penalties for incorrect answers

## Elimination guess strategy

When you are not sure of an answer, it is best to make an intelligent ‘best guess’ rather than a random guess from the options available.

Consider this example. Imagine that a multiple choice question asks you this question in August 2016:

“What is the name of the President of the United States?”

It is possible that you can see this person’s face in your mind and you know that the current American President is definitely a man. However, you are unsure of his name. Some people might choose to randomly guess the answer from the four options below, because they feel like they have a one in four chance of earning one point for a correct answer.

- A) — Angela Merkel
- B) **David Cameron**
- C) — Theresa May
- D) **Barack Obama**

If you take a closer look at the options above, you will see that two of these names are definitely female names. You are best to eliminate the options that you know are not correct (A and C). By limiting your guess to a small range of options (those shown in bold font above) you have a higher chance of success if you make a guess that is semi-random.

The same principle applies when you need to fill in labels in diagrams. You are advised to complete those labels that you are sure of the answer first. You may then use a semi-random logical approach to guessing the spaces that remain blank. If you may select an option only once, be sure that you randomly guess the answer by selecting only from the options that you have not scribed on your answer sheet.

### Skim-reading

Many of the reading passages in the IELTS reading exam contain long words and vocabulary that you might not recognize. To answer all questions within the time limit imposed you may need to master ‘scan-reading’, also known as ‘skim-reading’. As a general rule, larger words in the sentences and paragraphs will be the keywords that match the answer to the question. Short words such as pronouns (e.g. her, they) and prepositions (e.g. in, the) may account for half of all words in the paragraph. However, these shorter words will rarely enable you to quickly identify the text in the passage that is relevant to the question. You need to draw on your vocabulary skills to match the synonym in the question with the reading passage.

These synonyms might be one key word or a passage of text. Consider these examples:

Question	Passage of text
Dangerous	Risky situation
Controlled population expansion	Breeding
Negative personal experience	Horrific private encounter

## Context as meaning

Sometimes you can match the key word in the question with the passage that you must read by focusing on the issues and topics contained in the discussion. In some cases, there may not be an obvious or direct connection, *i.e.*, you cannot match synonyms using your vocabulary skills. Consider this example:

Question: Which passage below refers to the risks involved in plastic surgery?

Passage 1: The Government imposes strict laws on medical malpractice. This is because such outcomes may cause hardship or death.

Passage 2: Some invasive healthcare interventions are routine, whereas others which are optional are avoided by large numbers of the population, largely because people are not willing to expose themselves to outcomes that can be avoided.

## Tricky context answers

Some questions may use a ‘false flag’ that may trick the reader to assume that the question and a passage of discussion is a match by using paired synonyms that in fact do not answer the question.

Consider these synonyms: ‘dark’ and ‘dim’. These words are a match insofar as they are synonyms. This does not automatically mean that these words are a correct match if they appear in the question and options part of a question.

Consider this example:

The author's reference to 'dark skies' informs us that:

Option 1: She becomes frightened when the weather is dim.

Option 2: The reader has perpetually lived in a sunny environment.

In this illustration example, Option 1 is not correct. I reiterate the point that sometimes IELTS reading passages use 'false-flag' synonyms that might lead test-takers to select an incorrect question. A relatively small number of questions in the IELTs exam use this false-flag technique. You need to master advanced reading techniques to score 7.0 or higher in the IELTS exam. One way to do this is to become adept at fully understanding the meaning of the question and the reading passage, rather than relying on skim-reading techniques to match synonyms. Using the skim-reading technique works best in cases where you are running short of time to complete all answers.

### Double negatives

Be careful when working with statements that are double negatives.

In mathematics, two negative signs make a positive. The same principle applies using the English language. Examples include:

Not unhappy: The person is either neutral or happy.

Not dead: The living being is alive (it may also be dying).

Some linguists argue that double negatives, such as the examples above, are poor use of the English language. It is not necessary to say that ‘a person is not dead’ when we could use positive language that is direct and succinct, such as ‘a person is alive’.

Words that refer to absence or incapacity are negative words. The word ‘zero’ implies absence. The word ‘off’ indicates that an event or physical object is not on.

Questions and answers that contain double negatives might be more difficult to answer as the correct answer is not always intuitive. The double negative may occur within the same sentence or it may be paired between the sentence and option.

Consider this question that contains a *double negative* in the question (*i.e.* not AND extinct) and a negative word in the answer (*i.e.* incorrect):

Which of the following is an example of an animal that is *not extinct*?

- A) Dodo bird
- B) Tasmanian Tiger
- C) Tyrannosaurus rex
- D) All answers above are *incorrect*.

### Negatives as correct answers

In a similar vein to the discussion in the subsection above, some questions require you to nominate an answer that contains a negative word as the correct option. These sorts of questions are not necessarily a double negative. These sorts of questions are counter-intuitive, as students earn credit for providing a correct answer when they nominate an option that is a negative word.

An example of a negative word as a correct answer is found in this example:

Select the correct answer from the four options below.

Which of the following statements is true?

- A) Athens is the Capital of Italy.
- B) France is not the capital of Europe.
- C) Canberra is the Capital of New Zealand.
- D) Bangkok is the Capital of Myanmar.

### **.9. Instructions for how to proceed after reading the tutor's notes**

Please watch the YouTube presentations listed above. Watching these YouTube presentations is not optional. You need to view these presentations in order to master the skills required to prepare for and take part in the IELTS academic reading assessments.

Please also read the course materials listed in the other sections above. The readings in section 4 offer technical advice about how to approach academic reading assessment questions.

#### **10. Discussion questions set by the tutor**

What is the answer for the four questions listed in section 8? Explain the logic that you use to choose your answer on the discussion board.

#### **11. Discussion and questions put forward by participants.**

I look forward to reading your contributions on the discussion board at:

<http://chat.thefreeschool.education/forum131.html>.

**Jay and Conny**