

The Question Types

There are four main question types in the Academic Reading Module. These are:

- overview questions
- specific information questions
- viewpoint questions
- summarising questions.

Overview questions

These questions will often require you to choose a heading for different sections of the reading. You will be given a number of possible headings to choose from. There are always more headings than you will need. You will not always have to give a heading to every section. Sometimes these questions will be multiple-choice questions asking you what the topic of a particular section is.

Specific information questions

These questions could take several forms. The most common are:

- multiple-choice
- questions requiring a short answer
- completing sentences
- matching lists of items
- classifying items.

Viewpoint questions

The most common form for this question requires you to identify whether statements agree with the views or claims of the writer or of other people mentioned in the reading.

There could also be multiple-choice questions about the writer's attitude.

Summarising questions

The most common form for this type of question requires you to complete a short summary of information contained in the reading. You could also be asked to match two phrases or two parts of a sentence to summarise some of the information contained in the passage. You may also have to choose a title for the whole passage, usually one of four answer choices.

Each of these question types will be illustrated and practised in detail in the relevant sections which follow. Any question type can occur with any reading.

Overview Questions

For each section of the Reading test, the best strategy is to read **all** instructions, questions and examples very quickly. This gives you a clear focus when you read the passage and helps you to decide the best strategy for dealing with the questions.

If there are overview questions which require you to match headings with sections of the text, they always come before the reading. If there are questions which require you to choose the best topic from several options, they come after the reading. In both cases the best strategy is to quickly skim the passage.

- Read the first sentence of each paragraph.
- Skim the rest of each paragraph looking for key words.
- Match the headings with the sections.
- Write the heading numbers beside the appropriate sections in the test booklet.
- Read the text more closely to confirm your choices.

Practice

The following exercise will give you practice with this strategy.

Only the first sentence of each paragraph is given.

- Read the instructions.
- Read the headings.
- Read the first sentence of each paragraph once.
- Assign one or more headings to each section as you read.

Time target – 5 minutes

Questions 1–4

The following Reading Passage has six sections A–F. Choose the most suitable heading for the sections from the list of headings below. Write the appropriate numbers (i–viii) in boxes 1–4 on your answer sheet.

Note: There are more headings than sections so you will not use all of them. You may use any of the headings more than once.

HEADINGS

- (i) Accommodating newcomers
- (ii) World Bank efforts
- (iii) Community participation
- (iv) Upgrading housing
- (v) Community leaders
- (vi) Better infrastructure
- (vii) Getting business involved
- (viii) New regeneration strategies

Example	Answer
Section A	viii

- 1 Section C
- 2 Section D
- 3 Section E
- 4 Section F

READING PASSAGE

URBAN REGENERATION

A The science-fiction city of the future – Le Corbusier’s grand schemes, or Niemeyer’s Brasilia – seems ever less likely to replace our decaying cities and sprawling slums. A few new “open field” towns may be built as satellites to our biggest cities to fulfill this dream but will not house the urban poor. The new urban strategies are aimed at mobilising local communities and stretching scarce resources to cope with massive problems.

B The massive slum clearance and building boom of the ‘60s and ‘70s are over and reaction has set in.

C Community involvement and leadership are critical... Encouraging a dialogue between city officials and shantytown dwellers can

produce more effective initiative than top-down planning.

D Current thinking aims at providing incentives to employers, through aid and technical advice, and the provision of small workshops.

E The World Bank has funded improvement schemes worldwide.

In the last decade “sites and services” schemes have concentrated on providing water, sanitation, street foundations and power, but left construction of housing to individual occupants.

F Whenever cityward migrations have reached unusual proportions, conventional housing and infrastructure services have been hard-pressed to cope.

DISCUSSION

You already know that heading viii has been used in the example. Therefore, it will probably not be used again.

You do not have to choose a heading for section B, even though it has been given a section letter. The IELTS does not always require you to choose a heading for every section. Check this before answering the questions.

Section C (Question 1)

In the first sentence in Section C, there are two key words that match two of the answer choices. These are *community* and *leadership*. Also, the word *involvement* is a synonym of *participation*. Therefore, at this stage, you would write in your question booklet iii and v. If you look at the first sentence of the second paragraph in this section, you find several other key words which indicate that your choices are on the right track. Can you find any clues that might help you decide which of these two is the correct choice?

Section D (Question 2)

This time there are no words the same as the words in the answer choices. However, there are close synonyms which indicate that choice vii might be the answer here. These are the words *business* and *employers*.

Section E (Question 3)

The first sentence and answer choice ii both mention the World Bank. But when you read the first sentence of the second paragraph you see that services, such as water, sanitation, street foundations and power are mentioned. These are all types of infrastructure. So you must also consider answer choice vi for this section.

Section F (Question 4)

This sentence talks about *cityward migrations*. People coming to the city are newcomers. But *housing* is also mentioned in this sentence as well as in answer choice iv. Answer choice i mentions *accommodating newcomers*, which includes housing.

So in an IELTS test you would write **in your question book**: iii and v beside Section C, vii beside Section D, ii and vi beside Section E, and i and iv beside Section F. Now you will have to read the passage in greater detail to confirm your choices and make your final selections.

However, in the real IELTS you cannot spend your time reading the complete passage in order to confirm a few answers. You need to keep other questions on that passage in mind at the same time. As you are reading, you should mark sections of the reading passage that might provide answers to these questions.

Look at some other questions for this same passage before you begin reading.

Questions 5–9.

Choose the appropriate letter A–C.

- 5 Le Corbusier and Niemeyer are probably
- A traffic engineers
 - B architects
 - C builders
- 6 El Salvador is given as an example of a country which
- A is decaying
 - B experienced civil unrest
 - C operated a community self-help scheme
- 7 What percentage of the economy of a large city in a developing country is likely to be found in the informal sector?
- A 30
 - B 40–60
 - C 60–80
- 8 Which scheme is given as an example of one making improvements with World Bank funding?
- A El Salvador
 - B Lusaka
 - C Francistown
- 9 In order to limit the number of people migrating to cities the author suggests that governments should
- A invest more in rural areas
 - B provide better water supplies
 - C let settlers build their own houses

Now read the complete passage that follows to confirm your answers to Questions 1–4 and to answer Questions 5–9.

READING PASSAGE

URBAN REGENERATION

A The science-fiction city of the future – Le Corbusier's grand schemes, or Niemeyer's Brasilia – seems ever less likely to replace our decaying cities and sprawling slums. A few new "open field" towns may be built as satellites to our biggest cities to fulfill this dream but will not house the urban poor. The new urban strategies are aimed at mobilising local communities and stretching scarce resources to cope with massive problems.

B The massive slum clearance and building boom of the '60s and '70s are over and reaction is set in. The human costs of uprooting communities, to re-house them in socially and constructionally disastrous high-rise blocks, are all too evident. Gradual renewal of our decaying city centres is now under way, through reuse of existing structures plus more sensitive new architecture. The renewal is often community-based and many small agencies have sprung up to help municipal and private efforts. Nothing, however, can replace major long-term investment by governments to deal with obsolescence and disrepair.

C Community involvement and leadership are critical. El Salvador, prior to heightened civil unrest in the early '80s, boasted an almost model scheme – a local non-profit

making group concentrating on low-cost housing, operating through long-term repayment, appropriate technology and communal self-help.

Encouraging a dialogue between city officials and shantytown dwellers can produce more effective initiative than top-down planning. Redirected, local skills and organisation can carry out low-cost schemes on a large scale, as in El Salvador. Establishing local administrative centres helps to focus community spirit, and allows a degree of self-management.

D Current thinking aims at providing incentives to employers, through aid and technical advice, and the provision of small workshops. The World Bank now funds many such schemes. The huge informal economy of many large cities (between 40% and 60% in Jakarta, Bombay and Lima, for example) is a major provider of jobs, and at present receives negligible support through government credit.

E The World Bank has funded improvement schemes worldwide. They include shantytown and transport improvements. The Francistown Project in Botswana succeeded in giving 95% of households clean water, roads, and street lighting. Squatters were given legal tenure.

In the last decade “sites and services” schemes have concentrated on providing water, sanitation, street foundations and power, but left construction of housing to individual occupants. This policy has evolved into “upgrading” of existing slums and shanties. One project in Lusaka, Zambia, in the ‘70s tackled the upgrading and servicing of 31 000 plots, bringing basic needs to about 30% of people.

F Whenever cityward migrations have reached unusual proportions, conventional housing and infrastructure services have been hard-pressed to cope. The many millions

of poor people now crowding into slums and squatter settlements cannot afford even the simplest permanent housing schemes (86% of urban populations in Bangladesh, for instance, are below the absolute poverty line).

Authorities are being forced to take a different line, tackling only the most basic provision themselves, and letting the settlers do the rest, with minimal aid. Just one of their intractable problems is that of water supply which is often privately owned – and very scarce. The most urgent need, however, is for greater rural investment to slow the flood to the cities.

DISCUSSION

Question 1 (Section C)

Closer reading of this section shows the two paragraphs focus more on community involvement and cooperation than on leadership, therefore heading iii is better than v.

Question 2 (Section D)

This section talks about the informal sector as a source of jobs, so the best heading is still vii.

Question 3 (Section E)

Closer reading of this section shows the World Bank is only mentioned as a provider of funds. There is much more information about the provision of infrastructure in cities, so your choice would be vi.

Question 4 (Section F)

There is discussion of several aspects of housing and services for migrants to the city, so i is a better choice than iv, which is only about housing.

Questions 5–9

As you were reading, did you underline the following: Le Corbusier, Niemeyer, El Salvador, informal economy, World Bank, and between 40% and 60%? If you did, it would be fairly easy for you to find the answers to Questions 5–8. Question 9 asks for the author’s suggestion or recommendation. This is often found towards the end of a passage. In this case it is in the last sentence.

Question 5 (Section A)

Le Corbusier and Niemeyer appear to be the names of people, as all the answer choices are occupations. Choices A and C are not broad enough for the designers of cities, which seems to be what this section of the passage is about. Therefore the answer is B. Of course, it is possible that you know they are architects.

Question 6 (Section C)

The example of El Salvador immediately follows the sentence ‘Community involvement and leadership are critical.’ It is followed by information between commas which is less important, so the main sentence here reads ‘El Salvador...boasted an almost model scheme.’ Because of the context the scheme must be one involving a community self-help scheme as described in the paragraph. The answer is C.

Question 7 (Section D)

For this question you should look for numbers and possibly also a % sign. You can find numbers and % signs in several sections of the reading. When you quickly read the sentences containing numbers and % signs, you find that Section D mentions the ‘informal economy’. The answer is B.

Question 8 (Section E)

The World Bank is mentioned in two sections of the Reading: D and E. But only in section E is it followed by an example of a particular scheme receiving funding: Francistown. The answer is C.

Question 9 (Section F)

The last sentence of the reading passage reads ‘The most urgent need, however, is for greater rural investment to slow the flood to the cities.’ This matches answer choice A which is ‘invest more in rural areas’.



EXERCISE 1

Time target – 5 minutes

Match these headings with the following short readings.

HEADINGS		
Cross–Strait Words	Labour–Law Protest	Export Policy Attacked
Helping Hand	Food Aid Short	Risky Remarks
Killings in Paris	Polls Next Year	Church and State
Apec Delegate	No to Tokyo	No Seats, No Support