

IELTS Academic Reading Type 1 (Multiple Choice Questions)

Activity – teacher’s notes

Description

Activity based on a sample reading text but it can be adapted for use with any reading text with multiple choice questions

Time required: 30 minutes

Additional materials required:

- none

Aims:

- to introduce multiple choice type questions
- practise answering them by scanning and skimming a text for the relevant information and summarising the relevant part before considering the answer choices.

Procedure

1. Hand out the sample task to each student. Ask students to look at it for 30 seconds in order to find out in general what the text is about. Ask students to compare their ideas with a partner. Elicit a few ideas from the class.
2. Explain that to save time on the Reading paper, they must not read every word or try to understand all the text. Instead they must use the skills of skimming and scanning to find the answers. With multiple choice questions, they must skim and scan for information relating to the question stem, not the answer options, as these are often distractors (options which are not correct).
3. Hand out the worksheet. Students underline key words in the question stems and then compare their choices with their partner. Students should cover the answer options (A - D) and only focus on the stem at this stage.
4. Students skim and scan to find the relevant part of the text. Allow 30 seconds for this. Conduct a quick class check of the location in the text with students pointing to the relevant paragraph.
5. Allow 2 or 3 minutes for the paraphrasing, summarising and discussion of the first question in pairs. Monitor the class to check they are all giving answers that are possible.
6. Students now uncover the answer options (A – D) and select the best answer before comparing with their partner. Check their answers as a class. Ask a student with the correct answer to explain why they chose it and where in the text the relevant information is. If necessary, guide the students to the right answer choice by explaining why the alternatives are not possible. Encourage students to re-read the relevant part of the text.

7. Repeat for questions 11 and 12 using the same procedure and checking answers at the end of each step.
8. Round off the activity by asking students if the correct answer option for each question could be chosen according to its grammatical fit. Make sure students realise that this is not the case – all answer options (A – D) are grammatically possible.

Suggested follow-up activity

In a subsequent class, ask students to write their own multiple choice questions for another text and then exchange them with a partner. This provides further practice in a more light-hearted way, and the writing of questions provides good practice of understanding the text thoroughly and an insight into the examiners' minds.

IELTS Academic Reading Type 1 (Multiple Choice Questions) Activity – answer key

Key to Sample Task

Key words in bold

- 10 **Research** completed in **1982** found that in the **United States soil erosion**
- A reduced the productivity of farmland by 20 per cent.
 - B was almost as severe as in India and China.
 - C was causing significant damage to 20 per cent of farmland.
 - D could be reduced by converting cultivated land to meadow or forest.
- 11 By the **mid-1980s**, **farmers** in **Denmark**
- A used 50 per cent less fertiliser than Dutch farmers.
 - B used twice as much fertiliser as they had in 1960.
 - C applied fertiliser much more frequently than in 1960.
 - D more than doubled the amount of pesticide they used in just 3 years.
- 12 Which one of the following **increased** in **New Zealand** after **1984**?
- A farm incomes
 - B use of fertiliser
 - C over-stocking
 - D farm diversification
- 10 C The United States ... discovered in 1982 that about one-fifth of its farmland was losing topsoil at a rate likely to diminish the soil's productivity.
- 11 B Fertiliser use doubled in Denmark in the period 1960-1985
- 12 D Farms began to diversify

IELTS Academic Reading Type 1 (Multiple Choice Questions Activity) – Student’s Worksheet

1. Here are some multiple choice questions for the accompanying reading text. With multiple choice questions, it is important not to let the choice of answers distract you. You are going to use a technique which stops this confusion. At first this may seem a long process but with time each step becomes very quick. Look at Q10 and cover up the answer choices A, B, C and D. Focus only on the question stem and find and underline the key words in it.

Questions 10 – 12

Choose the appropriate letters A, B, C or D.

Write your answers in boxes 10-12 on your answer sheet.

10 **Research** completed in **1982** found that in the **United States** soil erosion

- A reduced the productivity of farmland by 20 per cent.
- B was almost as severe as in India and China.
- C was causing significant damage to 20 per cent of farmland.
- D could be reduced by converting cultivated land to meadow or forest.

11 By the **mid-1980s**, farmers in **Denmark**

- A used 50 per cent less fertiliser than Dutch farmers.
- B used twice as much fertiliser as they had in 1960.
- C applied fertiliser much more frequently than in 1960.
- D more than doubled the amount of pesticide they used in just 3 years.

12 Which one of the following **increased** in **New Zealand** after **1984**?

- A farm incomes
- B use of fertiliser
- C over-stocking
- D farm diversification

2. Keeping the key words in mind, skim and scan the reading text for the relevant part which contains information about Q10. Compare which part of the text this is with a partner
3. Still keeping the answer choices A-D covered up, try to complete the question stem using all the relevant information in the text. Use your own words to summarise and paraphrase in your mind what is said in the text. Compare your ideas with your partner. It is likely you will have slightly different answers here; this is fine as there are many ways to complete the question stem.
4. Now uncover the answer choices for Q10. Based on the information you have just summarised and paraphrased, choose the answer choice which is correct. Remember that there is only one that is totally correct and the others are there to

distract you. Compare with your partner and explain why you chose the answer.
Refer back to the text as necessary to justify your answer.

5. Continue in the same way with Q11 and Q12.

IELTS Academic Reading Type 1 (Multiple Choice Questions Activity) – Sample Task

Reading text

[Note: This is an extract from an Academic Reading passage on the subject of government subsidies to farmers. The text preceding this extract explained how subsidies can lead to activities which cause uneconomical and irreversible changes to the environment.]

All these activities may have damaging environmental impacts. For example, land clearing for agriculture is the largest single cause of deforestation; chemical fertilisers and pesticides may contaminate water supplies; more intensive farming and the abandonment of fallow periods tend to exacerbate soil erosion; and the spread of monoculture and use of high-yielding varieties of crops have been accompanied by the disappearance of old varieties of food plants which might have provided some insurance against pests or diseases in future. Soil erosion threatens the productivity of land in both rich and poor countries. The United States, where the most careful measurements have been done, discovered in 1982 that about one-fifth of its farmland was losing topsoil at a rate likely to diminish the soil's productivity. The country subsequently embarked upon a program to convert 11 per cent of its cropped land to meadow or forest. Topsoil in India and China is vanishing much faster than in America.

Government policies have frequently compounded the environmental damage that farming can cause. In the rich countries, subsidies for growing crops and price supports for farm output drive up the price of land. The annual value of these subsidies is immense: about \$250 billion, or more than all World Bank lending in the 1980s. To increase the output of crops per acre, a farmer's easiest option is to use more of the most readily available inputs: fertilisers and pesticides. Fertiliser use doubled in Denmark in the period 1960-1985 and increased in The Netherlands by 150 per cent. The quantity of pesticides applied has risen too: by 69 per cent in 1975-1984 in Denmark, for example, with a rise of 115 per cent in the frequency of application in the three years from 1981.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s some efforts were made to reduce farm subsidies. The most dramatic example was that of New Zealand, which scrapped most farm support in 1984. A study of the environmental effects, conducted in 1993, found that the end of fertiliser subsidies had been followed by a fall in fertiliser use (a fall compounded by the decline in world commodity prices, which cut farm incomes). The removal of subsidies also stopped land-clearing and over-stocking, which in the past had been the principal causes of erosion. Farms began to diversify. The one kind of subsidy whose removal appeared to have been bad for the environment was the subsidy to manage soil erosion.

In less enlightened countries, and in the European Union, the trend has been to reduce rather than eliminate subsidies, and to introduce new payments to encourage farmers to treat their land in environmentally friendlier ways, or to leave it fallow. It may sound strange but such payments need to be higher than the existing incentives for farmers to grow food crops. Farmers, however, dislike being paid to do nothing. In several countries they have become interested in the possibility of using fuel produced from crop residues either as a replacement for petrol (as ethanol) or as fuel for power stations (as biomass). Such fuels produce far less carbon dioxide than coal or oil, and absorb carbon dioxide as they grow. They are therefore less likely to contribute to the greenhouse effect. But they are rarely competitive with fossil fuels unless subsidised - and growing them does no less environmental harm than other crops.