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In response to the growing popularity of IELTS, the Taipei Times, in conjunction with the British Council, brings our readers an IELTS preparation page which will run every Saturday on p14 of the Taipei Times. Each week will focus on a different area of the test. IELTS, the International English Language Testing System, is an upper-intermediate test of English communication. It can be used for university entry and emigration around the English-speaking world and beyond. It measures your ability to communicate across the four language skills — reading, writing, listening and speaking — through authentic, challenging tasks. With over 700,000 people taking IELTS annually, it is one of the fastest growing English tests in the world, trusted and accepted by over 4,000 organisations and faculties worldwide, and is a great alternative to TOEFL.

The Reading Test

- 60 minutes
- 40 questions
- Three texts
- Total length between 2000 and 2750 words

The texts used in the test come from magazines, books and journals, and are written for the non-specialist reader. There are several different question types which test different reading micro-skills, so make sure you always read any instructions very carefully.

Multiple Choice Questions

For this type of question you have to choose the best answer out of four or more alternatives. Sometimes you have to select **more than one answer**. Some questions require you to find specific information in the text, whereas others will test your global understanding of the article.



The British Council, Taipei.

PHOTO: CATHERINE THOMAS, TAIPEI TIMES

Exam strategy

1. Read the question carefully
2. Scan the article for the data you need
3. Look for parallel expressions — the question and the article will often use different words which mean the same thing
4. Don't waste time. If you can't answer a question, move on to the next one
5. Guess any questions you are not sure about — you could pick up extra marks!

Matching Opinion Questions

This is another very common question type. For this, you need to match an opinion to someone quoted in the text.

Exam strategy

1. Quickly scan the text and **highlight people's names**.
2. Read what each person says.
3. Match their opinion against the possible options.

Remember! The opinions in the text and in the questions will be reworded, so you need to think carefully about each person's point of view.

CREDIT: HARRY HAYNES, THE BRITISH COUNCIL, TAIPEI

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We currently operate in 109 countries and territories and have over 70 years of experience. In Taiwan our aim is to build lasting relationships between the UK and Taiwan by connecting people with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK.

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- * We organise collaborative events and exchanges in education, arts, science, and English language teaching.
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READING TEST

Beijing spitters do their part for 'green Olympics'

As bicycle attendant Guo Guiyou stands guard outside a busy Beijing railway station, he suddenly makes a loud coarse noise as he opens his mouth and propels a goblet of spit on to the pavement. "It's good to spit, it's good for your health," said the 40-year-old man unapologetically as he rubs his shoe over the foul puddle he has just created.

Although there is now a wide consensus that spitting is "uncivilised" behaviour, as pre-Olympics manners campaigns term it, spitting is still pretty much a trademark sight and sound across the country.

Even though the government has stepped up punishment for spitting, a possible fine of 50 yuan (seven dollars) does not deter Guo. "That's okay — most of the time, they don't see you," he said.

Few who visit China can help but notice the frequency of spitting in public, which often follows a irritatingly gravelly clearing of the throat and lungs, and a complete lack of embarrassment about the habit. Late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping was a known to be an enthusiastic spitter who proudly kept a spittoon close by when he greeted foreign dignitaries at the Great Hall of the People in the 1970s and 1980s.

Although the practice spreads diseases that are rife in China, it is still common on the roads and alleys of the Chinese capital to have to dodge disgusting blobs of saliva — especially in winter when they freeze and become hazardous to pedestrians and cyclists alike. But to many Chinese, spitting is a physical phenomenon as natural as sneezing or belching, and is traditionally nothing to be ashamed of.

"Well, I can't spit inside my car, can I?" said taxi driver Sui Ningguo, as he wound down the window and propelled his phlegm outwards. "No one cares about spitting anyway."

Medical experts say phlegm is generated normally when one is suffering from respiratory infections, but it is also produced when the lungs are irritated by pol-

lution and habits such as smoking and eating heavy, oily food. Li Yan, a respiratory disease expert at Beijing's Xuanwu Hospital, believes widespread respiratory infections, partly due to China's polluted environment, and the population's lack of hygiene awareness contribute to the habit. "Dry climate in many Chinese cities, coupled with bad air quality, also lead to the build-up of mucus in one's respiratory tract, generating phlegm." She said air-borne respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis, pneumonia and influenza can be spread by the phlegm of a disease carrier.

Doctors say the urge to spit is probably more to do with the commonly perceived concept in China that one should spit whenever one feels a throat irritation. "A lot of it is just bad habit. Some people spit even when there is no phlegm and what they spit out is in fact saliva," said Wang Jidong, professor at the Beijing Chinese Medicine University. "But saliva is part of your normal secretion and aids digestion. It's just a wrong idea that people have."

Earlier this year, officials admitted that getting the capital's residents to bring their manners up to international standard in time for the Olympics next August could be a bigger task than constructing the new sports venues. Zhang Faqiang, vice head of the Beijing Olympic organising committee, said the most difficult area in staging a "civilised" Olympics rests in "the quality of the people".

But some ordinary Beijing residents say they really do not care. "As an individual, I can't care too much about the country's affairs. To be honest, who cares?" said Guo, the bicycle attendant.

(AFP)

Question 1: Multiple Choice

Which two of the following are given in the article as reasons for spitting?

- A. Stress
- B. Pollution
- C. Humidity
- D. A lack of understanding about hygiene
- E. Poor ventilation

Question 2: Multiple Choice

Choose the best ending to this sentence.
According to the article, in China, the habit of spitting is ...

- A. limited to major cities.
- B. encouraged by the government.
- C. popular among teenagers.
- D. common throughout the country.

Question 3: Multiple Choice

Match the people quoted in the text with the opinions given below.

People

1. Guo Guiyou _____
2. Sui Ningguo _____
3. Li Yan _____
4. Wang Jidong _____
5. Zhang Faqiang _____

Opinions

- A. Spitting can spread common illnesses
- B. People often spit unnecessarily
- C. Spitting is a non-issue for normal people
- D. Uncivilised behaviour is the biggest obstacle to hosting the Olympics
- E. Spitting is good for your health

Key Vocab.

Pavement: In Britain, it is illegal to ride your bike on the pavement.

Unapologetically: "Staff will no longer be given paid leave on election days," the notice unapologetically stated.

Consensus: Gentlemen, can we try and reach a consensus on the theme for this year's office party?

Pedestrian: The whole of Ximending is designed with pedestrians in mind, so it's great for shopping.

Cyclists: Cycling in Taipei can be quite dangerous, so cyclists should always wear a sensible helmet.

Answers:

- Question 1: B and D
Question 2: D
Question 3: D
1. "It's good to spit, it's good for your health,"
2. "No one cares about spitting anyway,"
3. "...diseases such as tuberculosis,
4. "Some people spit even when there is no
5. "The most difficult area in staging a "civilised" Olympics rests in "the quality of the people"

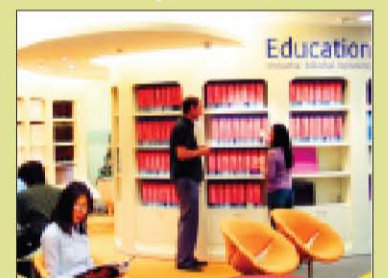


PHOTO: CATHERINE THOMAS, TAIPEI TIMES

