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Welcome to IELTS, your ticket to study and work overseas!

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 2,000 and 2,750 words

The articles used in the reading test come from a variety of sources — magazine articles, features articles from newspapers, book extracts and journals — and they are all of interest to the general reader. To do well, you need to be able to use global reading skills to understand the main ideas or gist, as well as applying microskills to locate and interpret key information.

To prepare, you should try to read as wide a variety of different kinds of articles and books as possible, to develop your reading skills in general. Just reading practice tests will not help you to do this and will not be very interesting.



The British Council.

PHOTO: CATHERINE THOMAS, TAIPEI TIMES

Tips

- Quickly read through the article to get an idea of the topic and content.
- Don't try to understand every word — this will waste a lot of time and it may not be necessary to answer the question.
- Only worry about words that are important for answering the questions.
- Try to guess the meaning of unknown keywords by looking at them in the context of the whole sentence.
- Read instructions very carefully. Sometimes you have to find words in the text, other times you have to use your own words. Also, check the word limit; often you will be limited to from one to three words.
- Keep a close watch on the time. Time management is a big problem for most students.

Key vocab



Etiquette: Before you go on your business trip to Japan, you need to learn some basic Japanese business etiquette, such as how to bow and how to receive a business card.

A forgotten art: Thanks to TV, conversation is now becoming a forgotten art.

Catastrophic: The results of global warming could be truly catastrophic.

The wrong hands: You must make sure your personal details don't end up in the wrong hands.

Taboo: Talking about politics with new acquaintances is a bit of a taboo.

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.

- We offer free, professional and impartial support for studying in the UK.
- We organise collaborative events and exchanges in education, arts, science, and English language teaching.
- We support learners and teachers of English in Taiwan.
- We provide English language courses.
- We offer access to UK examinations — including IELTS.

READING TEST

How the digital world is changing behavioural norms

Phoning home while on the train, pick-up attempts at online flirting Web sites and breakups achieved in a text message: the digital world has brought forth any number of new communication phenomena.

But things that are being celebrated as trendy also have a downside. In digital contact between people, style and etiquette often fall by the wayside. And some rules change so quickly that many people can't keep pace.

Adriano Sack, German-born author of books on manners, had to learn about the new norms firsthand. A New York City resident, he recounts private experiences and many new impressions on cooperation between people in the digital world. In New York City, for example, cell phones are not just a danger to drivers. Sack explains how the mayor wanted to ban cell phone use by pedestrians because so many people were not paying attention to traffic while talking on their phones, Sack said. He also recalled a communications professor who used his phone 11 times during lunch with him.

Such behaviour would make many manners experts blow their tops. But things are coming full circle. "It used to be that people who were always reachable were cool and important," said the Berlin-based style trainer Jan Schaumann. He has spotted a change in accessibility. "Today a person is interesting if he can afford to turn off his cell phone." During a meeting, Schaumann said he considers it a sign that a good tone has been set when a person turns off his or her cell phone and concentrates solely on the face-to-face meeting. "Anything else is disrespectful."

According to Sack, the young cell phone and Internet generation has forgotten the fundamentals of etiquette through their early embrace of digital technology. Handwriting has become almost a forgotten art. A child growing up in a normal family nowadays learns to use a mouse before he or she can write with a pencil.

According to Schaumann's estimation, the content of e-mails and text messages, reflects that and many old rules of communication still apply in the digital world. "Private and business e-mails should be written in an orderly fashion. The writer should follow the rules of orthography and grammar," said Schaumann. He considers

the use of smiley faces to express mood "catastrophic."

In other places, the new communication possibilities have also resulted in new rules for relationships. A letter can't be answered from one minute to the next. E-mails and text messages have shortened the waiting time for a reply. "Of course, a lot of people receive plenty of messages per day. And despite the volume, they should be answered as quickly as possible."

Schaumann said a time lapse of between 24 and 48 hours is appropriate. A faster response seems positive, according to his assessment. More important is the content of the answer. Sack has established a few other rules. "Write nothing in an e-mail that could be liable in a court of law, insulting or embarrassing to yourself," he said, adding they always land in the wrong hands, especially at the workplace where a lot of information flows at a rapid pace.

Answering private e-mail during work hours can not only drive the boss crazy, experts say it also shows a lack of style. "That is an absolute no-go," said communications coach Rudi Rhode of Wuppertal. "A person isn't being paid to do private communication." Private cell phoning while at work is also taboo, said Rhode. If a call comes in, it's better to transfer it to voice mail or to take it, but immediately let the caller know you are at work and keep the conversation short. An exception would be a call from one's children because that could be something important.

A quickly typed text message can be practical in cases when people aren't sure how to respond. But when it comes to emotional situations, texting should be taboo, Schaumann said. "The cell phone generation turns to their beloved text messaging more and more often in conflict resolution," Schaumann observed. If it's time to end a relationship, it's done these days in a text message. Behavioural experts consider this cheap and lacking respect. This has just as little class as the tactic of having a friend call during a date in case it's going badly and there's an excuse to leave, if necessary. Schaumann said it's possible to end a bad date nicely and honestly. One rule that still stands in the digital age is "do unto others as you would have others do unto you." (DPA)

Questions 1 :

▶ Which THREE problems are mentioned in the article?

- A. People walking in the street not paying attention to traffic
- B. Interruptions to people's sleeping patterns
- C. Children not doing enough exercise
- D. A deterioration in children's handwriting skills
- E. Meals interrupted by repeated cell phone calls
- F. Loud cell phone conversations on public transport



PHOTO: CATHERINE THOMAS, TAIPEI TIMES

Questions 2 - 10 :

▶ Complete each of the following sentences with words from the reading passage. Write NO MORE THAN THREE words for each answer.

2. Despite its many advantages, the digital world has a _____.
3. _____ are two of the things that often suffer as a result of digital contact between people.
4. In the past, you were seen as _____ if you were always contactable.
5. It is _____ not to give a person your full attention in a meeting.
6. Expressing your feelings with emoticons is _____.
7. Answering e-mails quickly is seen as being more _____ than a slower response.
8. Embarrassing e-mails often end up in _____.
9. Apart from calls from one's _____, it is not appropriate to answer personal cell phone calls in the workplace.
10. Nowadays, people often end a _____ by sending a text message.

Answers:

- 1. A, D, E
- 2. downside
- 3. Style and etiquette
- 4. cool and important
- 5. disrespectful
- 6. catastrophic
- 7. positive
- 8. the wrong hands
- 9. children
- 10. relationship

