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THE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM

THIS WEEK: SPEAKING / READING

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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.

Speaking: Describing Web sites

In parts one and two of the speaking test, you are often asked about your personal likes and dislikes. This could include books, TV shows, films, music and so on.
Today we're going to look at example answers from students who were asked about what Web sites they like to use.

PHOTO: MICHAEL KEARNEY, TAIPEI TIMES

Tips:

▶ Describe the things you like and dislike in as much detail as you can
▶ You'll get a higher score if you use a wide range of vocabulary
▶ Give reasons for your opinions
▶ If you don't know anything about the topic, explain why

Look at these example answers from part one of the speaking test.

Examiner: Which Web site do you use most regularly?

Evelyn: I'm really into www.facebook.com. It's a social-networking site. It helps you to catch up with your old friends and meet new contacts who like the same stuff as you. You can also download a lot of games and upload pictures and video onto your page. It's really addictive.

Adam: I've started using www.stumbleupon.com. I really like it. You install it into your browser, and then you choose categories you're interested in. Then it takes you to random Web sites based on what your preferences are, and you can rate the Web sites. The more ratings you give, the more it learns about your tastes. It's taken me to some great sites which I've added to my favourites.

Nick: I'm studying Japanese and I've found a really good site called www.japanesepod101.com. It's got loads of free lessons you can download as podcasts and listen to on your MP3 player. If you pay, you can download PDFs of the lessons. It's also got audioblogs which are totally in Japanese. You can post comments in the chat rooms and connect with other students.

Barney: One of my favourite Web sites at the moment is the music social-network site www.last.fm. It's basically a way of discovering new music and finding other people with similar tastes to you. The way it works is really simple. You log in and put the name of a band you like into its search engine. It'll then find music by the band on the Internet for you to listen to. Then it gets interesting: after this the site will list bands which are similar to the band you've chosen. Click on the hyperlink and it will find tracks by those bands for you to listen to. You can also create your own profile on the site and post a blog about yourself.

Evelyn, Adam Nick and Barney have all chosen completely different kinds of Web sites to talk about, but they all know good computer terminology to describe them.

Tip: Make sure you have a wide enough vocabulary to describe all the things you like.

READING

Reading: Wikipedia to publish a print version

Key Vocabulary:

Redundant: Fax machines are almost completely redundant. Everyone e-mails documents now.
Unconventional: My friend wore a frilly shirt and purple flared trousers today. He's a really unconventional dresser.
Zeitgeist (German): The Rolling Stones records really captured the zeitgeist of the 1960s — the spirit of the times.
Browse: I love browsing in bookshops, but I hardly ever buy anything.
Monopolise: Microsoft has been accused of monopolising the computer industry because they're far bigger than their rivals.
Incongruous: My 25-year-old Austin Allegro looks incongruous beside the BMWs and Mercedes in the British Council car park .

Wikipedia to be converted to a book in Germany

A. Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia written by volunteers, is to be published in Germany as a book for people who prefer turning pages to clicking links, publishing multinational Random House said. Editors will distil 50,000 of the most popular entries in the German version of Wikipedia into the 1,000-page volume to go on sale in September. When begun, Wikipedia was perceived as making books redundant, with no future for printed encyclopaedias.

B. The book will draw on the Wikipedia community's unconventional ideas of what knowledge people want, rather than prescriptions by scholars. There will be entries for Carla Bruni (the French first lady), Playstation 3 and Donald Duck's fellow characters. Football stadiums or the US television series Dr House will rate as entries alongside the more usual nations and statesmen.

C. Random House, part of the Bertelsmann group of Germany, said the selection of 50,000 headwords would be based on the most common terms searched by the 15 million monthly users of Wikipedia in German.

D. "It's a document of the zeitgeist," said Beate Varnhorn, chief of the Bertelsmann Lexicography Institute, adding that professional editors would check the facts and edit out incongruous passages. She said the volume would appeal to homes that had no permanent Internet connection, since books are always available, but could also be bought by people who just like to browse for interesting facts.

E. Arne Klempert, a spokesman for Wikipedia Germany, said the definitions would only be short summaries of the Wikipedia articles and there was no breach of the rights of Wikipedia contributors. Commercial republication is allowed under the Wikipedia rules accepted by the site's users. Those rules also applied to Random House, which would not be allowed to claim copyright over the book.

F. "They can't re-monopolise it," said Klempert, who said Random House had taken the initiative and proposed the idea to Wikipedia. "This will demonstrate that open-source writing also offers publishing houses opportunities for commercial development."

G. The German Wikipedia is second in size to the English Wikipedia. It was once calculated that it would take at least 750 thick volumes to print all 2.3 million articles in the English-language version.

Task 1: Locating information

The reading passage contains seven paragraphs, A - G. Which paragraph contains the following information? (Write the letter in the space provided)

▶ Tip: Skim each paragraph to get the main gist. Then compare it against the choices to see which one matches best.

1. How articles will be chosen ___

2. An explanation of the legal rights ownership ___

3. Details on the size and length of the book ___

4. Some examples of the book's content ___

5. A new area for development in publishing ___

6. The kinds of people the book is aimed at ___

PHOTO: MICHAEL KEARNEY, TAIPEI TIMES

Task 2: Sentence completion

▶ Complete the sentences below by writing words from the article in the spaces. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

▶ Tip: You should now know how the text is organised. Read the question, find the relevant paragraph and scan to find the keyword(s).

7. The content of the Web site has been created by _____ .

8. Many people thought books would be made _____ when the Web site first started.

9. The Web site's contributors have different ideas about what people want compared with _____ who write other encyclopaedias.

10. The book will contain only _____ of the original Web site entries.

11. The Web site's contributors accept the _____ of their work.

12. The publishing company originally _____ the project to the Web site.

Answers
1. C   2. E   3. A   4. B   5. F   6. D
7. volunteers   8. redundant   9. scholars   10. (short) summaries   11. (commercial) republication   12. proposed

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