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The Reading Test

- ▶ 60 minutes
- ▶ 40 questions
- ▶ Three texts
- ▶ Total length between 2,000 and 2,750 words

Locating specific information in a text



In this type of task, you have to find specific information in a text. The article is divided into sections, A - H. You have to find the section containing the information and write the letter next to the question.

You may have to find specific data or an example, or recognize an argument or a summary.



PHOTO: AFP

Pre-reading task



Spend one minute skimming the article (read the first line of each paragraph without worrying about any vocabulary you don't know) to get an idea of the overall topic.

On the basis of this, choose the most suitable title.

Titles



1. Olympics unite a nation during a difficult year
2. China's love-struck looking to Olympics for marriage luck
3. Lucky numbers bring Olympic success

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READING TEST

A) Beijing residents Zhang Jie and Ma Yue plan to be among the crush of love-struck Chinese getting married at the start of the Olympics despite a series of disasters that have cast doubt over the auspicious day.

B) The opening of the Beijing Games falls on the eighth day of the eighth month of 2008, which is no coincidence as the number eight is traditionally considered lucky in China due to it sounding like the word for wealth. "Eight is a number that brings good luck in China, and that's why the Chinese often choose the eighth to get married," said Zhang, 24, at a registry office in southwest Beijing as the couple booked their place to tie the knot.

C) But a succession of disasters in China — extreme bad weather in the south during Chinese New Year, violence in Tibet and the earthquake in Sichuan — has made some Chinese doubt the benefits of 2008. Some Chinese have even gone as far as to say the mascots of the Olympic Games are cursed.

D) Jingjing the panda, for them, represents the devastating 8.0 magnitude earthquake two months ago in Sichuan province, where the majority of the endangered animals live. Yingying the Tibetan antelope evokes this year's deadly unrest in Tibet, while Huanhuan is a flame that for many brings back memories of the protests that embarrassed China during the Olympic torch's international journey.

E) But Zhang emphatically rejected these bad omens surrounding number eight. "That's only superstition. When one portrays accidental events as inevitable, that's a form of superstition, isn't it?" the university student said.

F) Registration for weddings on Aug. 8 opened on June 20, and will last until Aug. 5 in registry offices as well as on the Internet, to avoid any last minute scrambles. "More than 100 people have registered so far, which is more than usual," said Zhao Yongfu, an official at the registry office, where the Chinese characters for "double happiness" hung on the walls. Around the country, thousands of people are also planning to get married on Aug. 8, with China's press carrying countless articles on the phenomenon.

G) Zhang and Ma's special day also carried an additional meaning for them, as they are both volunteers for the first ever Olympic Games organised in China. "Our work during the Games mainly involves welcoming the foreign sports delegations and to look after their living arrangements and daily needs," Zhang said.

H) The young couple said they would spare a few hours of their busy volunteering schedule on the eighth to get married, but the party would have to wait. "The eighth of Aug. is only the date to get our marriage certificate," Zhang said. "Our wedding ceremony, however, will not be this basic. We will organise it in 2009, but we must first devote all our efforts to the Olympic Games. The eighth of Aug. 2008 will be a lucky day. And the Olympic Games will be successful, and we are very proud of the event."

(AFP)

Sample questions 1- 8

▶ The article is divided into eight sections, A - H. Which sections contain the following information? Each section may contain more than one answer.

Task approach

- Read the question carefully and highlight any keywords
- Go back to the relevant section and re-read it to see if the information matches exactly
- Look for parallel expressions — the questions often use different words and expressions that mean the same thing as expressions in the article.

1. Official figures on wedding numbers ____
2. An explanation of Chinese lucky numbers ____
3. Details of unpaid workers duties ____
4. Reasons why this year is viewed negatively by some ____
5. Examples of problems associated with specific Olympic symbols ____
6. Future wedding plans ____
7. An argument both in favour of lucky numbers and against superstitious beliefs ____
8. Government measures to avoid a rush ____



A couple reacts immediately after an earthquake struck during their wedding photo shoot in Sichuan Province, China, on Monday May 12, 2008.

PHOTO: AP

Vocabulary builder: Guessing meaning from context

During the test you will not be able to use your dictionary, so you have to become skilled at guessing the likely meaning of any unknown words you think are important. This will also help you increase your reading speed in real life!

Look at the following words and expressions.

- Find them in the text
- By looking at the whole sentence, try and work out which part of speech they are (verb, noun, adjective etc.)
- Think of a possible meaning (e.g. Is it positive or negative?)
- Match it to the most likely definition

1. Auspicious	A. A person or an animal believed to bring good luck
2. Tie the knot	B. A disorderly rush or struggle
3. Mascot	C. An impressive, remarkable thing
4. Omen	D. Lucky, fortunate, prosperous
5. Scramble	E. To get married
6. Phenomenon	F. A sign that something either very good or disasterous will happen in the future.

Answers:

