

CREDIT: JOHN ANDERSON, THE BRITISH COUNCIL, TAIPEI



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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

One of the tasks you may have to complete on the IELTS Reading Test is to complete a summary of an article. You will sometimes be asked to use words from the text, and sometimes be given words in a box to choose from.



Young people practice parkour in Moscow, on April 30, 2007. Parkour involves finding new ways of crossing an urban landscape — vaulting, leaping and climbing, with a grace and fluidity of movement more akin to dance than sport. PHOTO: AFP

Read the article and do the tasks

Free runners hit the streets in urban craze

Having already won over the Royal Marines and featured in James Bond, free running is booming this year among young Britons. In response to the trend, councils (local government) have started looking at ways to take the activity into schools or even to create free run parks, similar to those used by skateboarders. Major companies, meanwhile, are pushing to have their brands associated with the increasingly fashionable pursuit.

The activity derives most of its moves, style and philosophy from the parkour tradition which originated in Paris in the nineties and involves getting between two points as efficiently as possible by using nothing but the human body.

Free running, which places greater emphasis on freedom of expression, took off in Britain after the documentaries *Jump London* and *Jump Britain* showcased the athletes against some of the most spectacular backdrops in the country. Free running network Urban Freeflow has provided training to the London Metropolitan Police and Royal Marine commandos.

Urban Freeflow estimates there are around 15,000 people who practise free running in Britain and that 98 percent are male, with the Internet playing a large part in spreading the craze. It runs an academy in Kensal Rise, north London, where twice a week around 50 people, ranging from eight-year-olds to 55-year-olds, each pay £5 for two hours of tuition. Thirty free runners will show off their skills and host workshops at a special structure at the mayor's Thames Festival near the London Eye in September and a dedicated parkour site has even been proposed in Westminster.

Not everyone is so supportive, however, pointing to a lack of regulation and formal coaching qualifications. Alarms have been raised when videos turned up on YouTube showing young people leaping on roofs, trespassing or putting themselves in danger. The Safer Guildford Partnership, a coalition including the borough council, Surrey police and the Youth Justice Service, discourages free running after incidents in which people were swinging across a local river using a road bridge, then crossing three lanes of traffic.

Tina Griffiths, a community safety sergeant, said: "We are not trying to ruin people's fun, but this is a really dangerous activity, which could potentially cause injury to innocent passers-by as well as those who take part. We have already spoken to a number of people involved in parkour and given them advice about moving on." So what is the appeal of this peculiar sport in the urban jungle? Urban Freeflow director, Paul Corkery, 34, explained: "It's absolute freedom of movement, being able to use your body to go anywhere any time. You don't have to spend any money, you just need a pair of trainers and your imagination."

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READING TASK

Task 1

► In this task, please use a word or word(s) (up to 3) from the text.

Parkour **1** from a French tradition, started over a decade ago. It has since been taken up by Royal Marines, and even **2** movies. It was in the UK that it first really **3**, though, after two documentaries were aired featuring the sport. There are now 15,000 people practicing the **4** in Britain, and upcoming developments include the possible opening of a **5** site and free-running events at the mayor's Thames Festival in September. The Safer Guildford Partnership is just one of several groups who are not **6** of free-running. Many feel it is a **7** sport and actively **8** it. However, this is unlikely to kill off what has been described as just needing "a pair of trainers and your imagination."

Task 2

Another task is to complete a sentence with words from the text. In many tasks the order of questions is the same as the order of information in the text, but the task below has been made more difficult by not following this order.

► Complete the sentences below with words taken from the reading passage. Use NO MORE THAN THREE words for each answer.

- Free running is most popular with...
- Urban Freeflow is a...
- The dangerous effects of free running were seen on...
- Events will take place at a ... in London.
- Many companies think it would be profitable to... free running.
- Compared to parkour, free running is more about...
- One benefit of free running is that there is no need to...

ANSWERS

- derives
- featured in
- took off
- craze
- dedicated
- supportive
- dangerous
- discourage
- young Britons/males
- free running network
- YouTube
- special structure
- associate with
- freedom of expression



David Belle, bottom, of France who is the world's leading practitioner of parkour, watches as Adam Krohn, of Houston, auditions to perform with him in the New Yorker Festival, on Oct. 6, 2007, in New York. Parkour, an import from France, is a graceful race through urban settings, where runners vault, climb and career their way along, letting no obstacle stop their progress. PHOTO: AP