



**NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC**
LEARNING

CREATING EFFECTIVE READING QUESTIONS

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AGENDA

Multiple-Choice Questions
True/False/Not Given
Assessment & The CEFR

THINK



PAIR



SHARE



1. On a **scale of 1-10**, how **confident** are you about developing your own **Multiple-Choice** and **True/False/NG** questions for **reading and listening** comprehensions?
2. What do you find **most** difficult? Why?

What are the pros and cons of multiple choice questions?

Advantages

- Can be used to measure a variety of learning levels (versatility)
- Can be used to assess basic recall, application, analysis and evaluation
- Reliable
- Easy to grade

Disadvantages

- Evaluate recognition rather than recall
- allow for guessing
- Fairly difficult to construct effectively



“Multiple-choice comprehension items are **notoriously difficult** to write.”

Caroline Krantz, How to Write Reading & Listening Activities

Why?



TWENTY-FIRST *century* COWBOYS

▶ 58

Cowboys have lived and worked in the west and south-west of the United States for over three centuries and they are a famous symbol of the USA. When you watch those old Hollywood cowboy films from the fifties and sixties, you don't see a job; you see a life of freedom and adventure. It's a romantic image which we love to believe in. However, the real job of an American cowboy has always been hard and sometimes dangerous; it's physical with long hours and low pay.

No one knows exactly how many people still do the job of a cowboy in the twenty-first century, but the number is probably between ten and fifty thousand. Life hasn't changed much for cowboys since the early days. The cattle walk across huge plains to eat the grass and the cowboy rides on his horse to bring them home. Like the cowboys of the past, a twenty-first century cowboy still gets up early on freezing cold mornings and makes breakfast over a fire. He can't take days or weekends off and there is no paid holiday. And when you are in the middle of nowhere, your mobile phone doesn't work, so you can't make a call to family or friends when you feel lonely.

So why does a man – because it is usually a man – become a cowboy? For some, it isn't a choice, because they are born into the life; men like Blaine and Tyrel. They are brothers and have worked with cows since they were children. Their mother had a ranch and they rode a horse before they could walk. Both Blaine and Tyrel have large moustaches and wear traditional cowboy clothes with

the famous hat and boots. They prefer the traditional cowboy culture: 'It's a real life about you, your horse and the open country.' Last winter, they looked after 2,300 cows. Every day from December until April, they rode across nearly 100,000 acres of land with only the cattle and the horses for company.

Unlike Blaine and Tyrel, some people choose the job later in life. Pat Crisswell had an office job with the US government. He made good money, but he didn't like city life and spending all day inside. He wanted to do something different. So one day, he gave up his job and moved to a ranch in Texas, earning much less money as a cowboy. He remembers his work colleagues in the city on the day he left. They all thought Pat was crazy, but he wanted job satisfaction. And for a cowboy, job satisfaction doesn't come from the money or a comfortable office; it comes from being free to wake up under the sky and being your own boss.

acre (n) /'eɪkə(r)/ measurement of land
good money /ɡʊd' mʌni/ expression meaning 'a lot of money' or 'well-paid'
middle of nowhere /'mɪd(ə)l əv 'nəʊweə(r)/ informal expression meaning a place far away from a town, city or other people
plain (n) /pleɪn/ grassy areas of open land
ranch (n) /rɑːntʃ/ large farm for cattle, horses or sheep

Features of a multiple-choice question

Options

Distractor

Key

Rubric

Stem

Read the following weather forecast and choose the correct option. **Rubric**

And now for the weather. We're going to see a rather cloudy start to the day today, with outbreaks of rain. These should clear by lunchtime bringing us a very dry, bright and sunny afternoon with temperatures reaching 28 degrees. Tomorrow, again, a cloudy morning, but without the showers, brightening up into another sunny afternoon, though a little cooler than today as there will be an easterly breeze.

Tomorrow the weather will be: **Stem**

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| A) Windier than this afternoon | } Options | Key |
| B) Wetter than this afternoon | | Distractor |
| C) Warmer than this afternoon | | Distractor |

Guidelines for writing multiple-choice questions

Turn

TALK

and

What **advice/rules** do you currently use when **constructing** multiple-choice questions?

Guidelines for writing multiple-choice questions

How to Write Reading & Listening Activities, Krantz, 2016

1. The stem and options should be as **short** as they can be. The stem should contain most of the information and be **meaningful** by itself.
2. The **language** in the stem and options should be **clear and easy to process**.
3. Make sure you **paraphrase** and don't use the same words as in the text.
4. Try to avoid **negative constructions** in the stem as it can be confusing for students.
5. The options should be roughly **equal length**.
6. Avoid any **overlap** between the options.
7. Check that the key isn't too **obviously right** or the distractors too **obviously wrong**.
8. Make sure that **world knowledge** isn't coming into play and easily guessable.
9. If using an unfinished sentence, the options should **follow on grammatically** from the stem.
10. Make sure that the key is **'true to text'** according to the text.
11. Items should be **spread throughout the text** and **in the order** in which they appear.
12. Make sure the answer isn't **always 'C'**.

Guidelines for writing multiple-choice questions

Which is the better question? Why?

Read the article and choose the correct option (a-d) to complete the sentence according to the article.

Good interpersonal skills **help you to:**

- A) make progress in your career
- B) choose the best way to communicate with people
- C) deal with all kinds of people and situations
- D) have better relationships

Good interpersonal skills:

- A) help you to make progress in your career
- B) always help you make the best decisions**
- C) help you to deal with all kinds of people and situations
- D) help you be more attractive to others**

5. Check that the key isn't too obviously right or the distractors too obviously wrong.

Guidelines for writing multiple-choice questions

Which is the better question? Why?

Read the article and choose the correct option (a-d) to complete the sentence according to the article.

The article says that 21st century employees want to work for or

- A) offer them a good career
- B) benefit the community or people in general
- C) **caring** about their employees
- D) will respect you as an individual and give you plenty of oppo

The article says that 21st century employees want to work for or

- A) offer them a good career
- B) benefit the community or people in general
- C) care about their employees
- D) will respect you as an individual

7. If using an unfinished sentence, the options should follow on grammatically from the stem.

Guidelines for writing multiple-choice questions

Which is the better question? Why?

Read the article and choose the correct option (a-d) according to the article.

Thinking critically is important because:

- A) there is so much information to process
- B) technology moves so fast
- C) a lot of information is visual
- D) it'll help you do better at school and university

Thinking critically is:

- A) important because there is so much information to process
- B) important because technology moves so fast**
- C) important because a lot of information is visual
- D) important because the information age is so fast-paced**

6. Avoid any overlap between the options.

Guidelines for writing multiple-choice questions

Which is the better question? Why?

Read the article and choose the correct option (a-d) according to the article.

What kind of growth does the speaker not promise?

- A) Strong growth
- B) Long-term growth
- C) Slow growth
- D) Fast growth

What kind of growth does the speaker not promise?

- A) Strong growth
- B) Long-term growth
- C) Relatively slow growth
- D) Fast growth in the first year and then slower growth a

5. Overly long option.

Look at this multiple-choice question. What's wrong with it? How would you improve it?

Question

According to the article
Annuals are _____.

- A) plants that live and bloom for multiple years
- B) plants that do not bloom
- C) plants living and blooming for one year
- D) plants blooming exclusively in cold climates

Problems

1. The stem is too vague
2. The response items repeat the same language unnecessarily
3. The options do not have parallel grammatical structures

Improved

Annuals are plants that _____.

- A) live and bloom for multiple years
- B) do not bloom
- C) live and bloom for one year
- D) bloom exclusively in cold climates

Look at this multiple-choice question. What's wrong with it? How would you improve it?

Question

1. According to the text, honey bees are most active...
 - A) during the day
 - B) in the morning
 - C) late in the afternoon
 - D) at night

Problems

1. A+D are opposites, which means one has to be wrong and so the other two options are invalid
2. Answer A overlaps with answers B+C
3. Answer D is too obviously wrong being general knowledge

Improved

- When are honey bees most active?
- A) Just after dawn
 - B) In the late morning
 - C) In the afternoon
 - D) In the evening

Look at this multiple-choice question. What's wrong with it? How would you improve it?

Question

1. When talking about her job, Laura insists that she isn't dissatisfied with...
 - A) the salary
 - B) the amount of holiday she gets
 - C) the amount of responsibility she's given
 - D) her manager treating her badly

Problems

1. There is a confusing double negative in the stem
2. Answer D is a negative, causing further confusion with the stem
3. Answer D is also rather unlikely

Improved

- When talking about her job, Laura insists that she is satisfied with...
- A) the salary that she earns
 - B) the amount of holiday she gets
 - C) the amount of responsibility she's given
 - D) the way she is treated by her manager

Your Turn!

Read the text and write **three** multiple choice questions to accompany it.

Also write **one** gist multiple choice question based on the text as a whole.

Remember the guidelines!

A PLACE TO BE

A 39 During adolescence, teenagers start to form independent adult identities of their own, and for many young people around the world, this means experimenting with different social groups. Deciding to join a particular group or sub-culture offers young people the opportunity to explore who they are and what they stand for. It allows them to start defining themselves outside their immediate family circle, and can provide both a sense of identity and of belonging too. In our increasingly interconnected world, membership of particular groups can mean contact not only with other like-minded people locally but also globally. However, while being part of a group can be an extremely positive thing, it can also attract abuse and bullying, especially of those who insist on challenging social norms. Here we look at four of the more remarkable youth cultures out there.

Some claim that the roots of Goth can be found in such 19th century literary classics as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, but the dyed black hair and black clothes, dark eyeliner and fingernails and intense dramatic post-punk music originated in England in the late 1970s. The style and sound have had a long-lasting appeal and nowadays there are large communities of goths everywhere from Chile to China. Many goths resent being stereotyped as sad or angry, and instead see themselves as romantic,

A man dancing in a nightclub wears long pointy boots.

creative, open-minded and able to find beauty in what others may see as dark or ugly.

Over recent years, a far more localized sub-culture has been developing in Mexico, where a style of music known as *Tribal Guarachero* has evolved, complete with its own remarkable fashions. More commonly known just as *Trival*, the hugely popular sound mixes traditional regional folk music with electronic dance. Young fans often identify themselves by combining futuristic elements with a basic farm worker look ... and wearing extremely long, pointy boots when dancing, often competitively against groups from other local towns. Believe it or not, some items of footwear have apparently reached one and a half metres in length!

Of course, sub-cultures that develop in a particular area can spread like wildfire in a matter of moments these days, thanks to the internet. This is what's happened with the Scraper Biker sub-culture. Originally the obsession of a small group of young people in the San Francisco Bay area, scraper bikes are simply ordinary bicycles that have been modified by their owners, typically with decorated wheels and bright body colours. Much of the decoration is done very cheaply, using tin foil, reused cardboard, sweet wrappers and paint! The craze went global after a hip-hop video featuring these creations went viral and scraper bikes can now be seen in cities all over the world.

If the internet helps some sub-cultures grow, for others it's their main home. Otherkin – people who identify to some degree as non-human – have a massive online presence that's growing all the time. While some otherkin believe themselves to actually be, say, dragons or lions or foxes, others simply feel special connections to certain creatures – and have found a space within which to explore these feelings.

It seems that, whatever you're going through and whatever your own personal enthusiasms, there's a worldwide community out there just waiting for you to find them – and to assure you that you belong!

What are the pros and cons of True/False/NG questions?

Advantages

- Easy to write
- Easy to grade

Disadvantages

- Only test factual information
- allow for a high probability of guessing if *only* T/F/(50%)
- Limit assessment to lower order thinking skills (knowledge and comprehension)



Guidelines for writing True/False/NG questions

Read the following statements and decide if they are True or False.

1. Avoid shades of grey. Be certain that the statement is entirely true or entirely false. **T**
2. Try to use the same language as in the text. **F**
3. It's a good idea to include more than one idea in the true/false statement. **F**
4. Make sure that world knowledge isn't coming into play and easily guessable. **T**
5. Avoid negatives - the false condition creates a confusing double negative. **T**
6. Use words demoting indefinite degree. Words like more, less and comparatives help test students understanding. **F**
7. Use absolutes such as 'none', 'never', 'always', 'all', 'impossible'; and qualifiers such as 'usually', 'generally', 'sometimes', 'often' where possible. **F**
8. Beware of detectable patterns (i.e. TFTFTFTFTF) and make sure there is roughly an equal number of each. **T**
9. If including Not Given answers, aim for 1 out of 4 or 5 being NG. **T**
10. For *Not Given* answers make sure it really is not given, but don't make it too obvious. **T**

Look at these questions. Which ones do you think are good/bad T/F/NG questions? Why?

1. CCTV camera are everywhere. 😞
2. Super-recognizers need to look at a face for a long time in order to identify it. 😊
3. The police use super-recognizers to stop violent situations developing and to help arrest people. 😞
4. If you are good at recognizing faces, you will probably have a good general memory. 😊
5. To become a super recognizer, you need years of training. 😊
6. CCTV images are always poor and people find them hard to identify. 😞
7. There are 152 super-recognizers employed by the London police. 😞
8. There are more CCTV cameras in London than New York. 😊



A real-life, crime-fighting superpower!

31 You are being watched.

Next time you're in a busy city centre, look up. The chances are there will be a CCTV * camera somewhere nearby. Many large cities have thousands of security cameras: on buildings, next to roads, even in public buses and trains. They are supposed to prevent crime, but there is a problem. No matter how many cameras are in place to catch people breaking the law, criminals can't always be identified. For one thing, the police can only put a name to a face if they have a file on that person. Also, even if the criminal is known to the police, the CCTV image is often so poor that it is impossible to recognize them.

Impossible for most people, that is, but not if you're a super-recognizer. These are people with the amazing ability to remember thousands of faces and pick them out from a crowded street, even if they only see them for a moment. At football matches, for example, the police must spot troublemakers immediately, before they start fighting, and this means acting fast. The 152 super-recognizers employed by the London police can do this, and they get results.

The police didn't need to worry, for example, when there was trouble in the streets in 2011. Officers sat in CCTV control centres, observing the scenes on TV and picking out known criminals for their colleagues on the ground.

Just one member of the team, Gary Collins, was able to identify a total of 190 troublemakers! The police later arrested many of them; others weren't allowed to go back on the streets.

You might think that with a memory this good, super-recognizers must be good at remembering lots of things, but Collins admits he can't even remember a shopping list 'I have to write that down,' he says. Scientists believe that the ability to recognize faces is different from other kinds of memory, and uses a special part of the brain. Damage to that area of the brain can cause 'face blindness', where people can't recognize faces at all. Having said that, most of us are really good at recognizing faces. We are even able to identify people we know from the back of their heads and from the way they walk, something computers are unlikely to do in the near future. However, we can't all do it as well as professionals like Gary Collins, who do it better than 99% of the population.

You might also be in the top one percent and not even know it. So, if you're looking for a job where you are allowed to watch TV all day, you should find out whether you're a super-recognizer and join the police!


CCTV closed-circuit television – a camera system used for watching activity in some places

Your Turn!

Read the text and write **three** T/F/NG questions to accompany it. Remember the guidelines!



NOTHING FOR A YEAR

 **44** How hard is it to live without spending money? Read these stories of two Canadian roommates and a British family who decided not to buy anything for a whole year.

THE ROOMMATES Geoffrey invited a friend to share his apartment. His new flatmate had to throw away a lot of things to squeeze into a smaller bedroom, and he, too, made room by getting rid of some of his possessions. They realized how much they owned and how little they actually needed.

They decided to do an experiment: could they live for a year without buying anything unnecessary? As well as having to create space, Geoffrey was worried about money, and they both felt uncomfortable with their consumerist* lifestyle. Would they be happier not buying so much? They started a blog to explain their plan and track their progress.

Of course, some things you just can't do without, such as food. But instead of occasionally going to a restaurant and having food prepared for them, now they always cooked at home. They stopped getting their hair cut professionally. And rather than taking public transport to work, they walked or cycled. They learned how to grow vegetables so they could eat fresh food for free.

It wasn't always easy. Geoffrey says that after a long day at work, preparing dinner was sometimes the last thing he wanted to do. But by sharing the experience with his roommate and their supporters online, and reminding themselves of the benefits of cooking, such as being creative and eating healthily, they learned to enjoy it.

consumerist *buying and having lots of things, often things that are not necessary*

THE FAMILY By the time her son William was three, Jen noticed how many plastic toys he had and how often he wanted new things. At the shops, he looked eagerly for colourful toys, expecting to take them home. She realized that she and her husband needed to teach their children that there are alternatives to new. So, they stopped buying anything apart from food and essential household items like toothpaste. If they needed something, they could find it second hand or make it themselves.

Jen started repairing holes in trousers, knitting winter hats and even making soap. Her husband Ben busily fixed toys and other objects. Jen also learned how to create a website, where she met people who were similarly anti-consumerist. They inspired her to keep going.

They tried not spending temporarily for a month before deciding to do it for a whole year. By doing this, they discovered that it would be easier than they expected. Ben already made his own bread and jam, so reducing what they needed from shops wasn't completely unfamiliar. They also agreed on a few exceptions to make things easier, like having the washing machine repaired if it ever broke down (it didn't). The hardest part was finding birthday presents for the children's friends. Jen found making bags and clothes for girls easy, but had to work hard to think of ideas for the boys.

They managed to save £2,000, and Jen says they are no longer 'drowning in plastic'. More importantly, they have changed their habits. She believes that 'Each time we make a more thoughtful choice, about what we buy, or don't buy, we are changing the world.'



Reading Assessment & the CEFR

What are the **six** defined CEFR reading descriptors categories?

Overall reading comprehension

Reading correspondence

Reading for orientation

Reading for information and argument

Reading instructions

Reading as a leisure activity



Reading Assessment & the CEFR

Generally speaking, which CEFR descriptors are appropriate for the type of reading assessment questions we've been looking at?

Overall reading comprehension

Reading for orientation

Reading for information and argument

(Reading as a leisure activity)



3 Read the article again. Choose the correct option (a–c).

- 1 Why was the invention of the printing press important?
 - a Because books became easy to produce.
 - b Because people had greater access to information.
 - c Because it was a powerful tool.
- 2 What is Wesch's main area of interest?
 - a Social networking
 - b Digital technology
 - c Internet videos
- 3 What does Wesch say about internet relationships?
 - a They are the same as family relationships.
 - b They are not like real relationships.
 - c He doesn't understand them.



Digital connections

Technology is connecting us in ways never seen before in human history. How will that change our societies, our relationships, ourselves?

That's the question that interests Michael Wesch. The last time communications technology had such a wide-ranging impact was 500 years ago with the invention of the printing press. Being able to print texts instead of writing them by hand transformed the world. It changed the way people could communicate with each other. Suddenly, multiple copies of books could be made quickly and easily. As more books became available, so ideas spread much more rapidly. But what will be the impact of digital technology, which is the most powerful connecting tool we have ever seen?

Wesch himself experienced the impact of digital media when he created and posted his own short video on YouTube. It attracted immediate attention and has been viewed millions of times. In his video he tells us that webpages get 100 billion hits a day and that a new blog is started every half second. He asks us to think about the power of this technology and how we use it. What could we do with it? What is its potential?

Wesch isn't interested in what new media was originally designed for but in how it can be used in other ways. For example, he describes how people organise social protests such as gathering signatures for online petitions via Facebook. He says that he tries to make sure his students end up in control of the technology, not vice versa.

Outside of university, in the real world, Wesch believes

Reading for orientation	Can scan quickly through long and complex texts, locating relevant details.	2
Overall reading comprehension	Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. Has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low frequency idioms.	3

Connecting to more and more people has no real value.

responsibility which you can turn on at any moment. So does it make sense to talk about a YouTube 'community'?

usually to ask for action by an authority
potential (n) /pə'tenʃ(ə)l/ what something could become in the future

7 According to the text, are these statements true (T) or false (F)? Or is there not enough information (N) to say if the statements are true or false?

- 1 Mass tourism has grown steadily and has now reached its peak.
- 2 Cruises have had a negative effect on penguins and other animals.
- 3 Non-industrial countries accept the negative effects of tourism.
- 4 Economic problems mean that construction on the Mediterranean coast has stopped.
- 5 There are less damaging ways of seeing the world than air travel.



THE REAL COST OF TRAVEL

Mass tourism is a relatively recent phenomenon. The tourism industry took off in the middle of the last century and it's been growing ever since. In the last ten years especially, more and more people have been travelling to remote places around the world. It's a wonderful thing to be able to travel to places we had previously only read about or seen on television, but what is the downside of it all? What kind of impact does tourism have on the planet?

A VOYAGE TO THE END OF THE EARTH?

A large cruise ship can carry as many as 6,000 passengers and there are upwards of 50 such ships currently sailing the seas. Cruise ships dump about 90,000 tons of waste into the oceans every year. Any harmful effects of this are made even worse by the fact that cruises tend to visit the same places over and over again, thus concentrating the waste in specific places. In Patagonia, this is now having a visible effect on wildlife. The population of animals such as these Magellanic penguins has been in decline for some years now and things show little sign of changing while cruise holidays continue to be so popular.



LITTER ON TOP OF THE WORLD

From remote ocean habitats to the world's highest mountain, our litter is everywhere. Despite the fact that far fewer people go climbing or trekking in the Himalaya than take a cruise, their impact is still felt. Tourism is vital to the economy of Nepal, as it is in many non-industrial countries. But for decades, climbers have been abandoning their unwanted equipment on Everest. For the last few years, clean-up teams have been organising expeditions just to pick up the rubbish. The teams are made up of local and international climbers. One group has brought over eight tons of waste down from the mountain! But their actions don't stop there. The Japanese teams, for example, have also been educating other climbers back home in Japan about being more responsible on the mountain.



WHEN MORE IS NOT BETTER

It's tourism of a different kind which is causing problems in Europe. Construction on the Mediterranean coast has been spiralling out of control for years. Beach resorts form an almost unbroken line from Gibraltar to Greece and natural habitats have disappeared under kilometres of concrete. And so we pollute the sea, the land – and the air. Low-cost air travel is booming, in spite of (or perhaps helped by) economic problems in so many countries. Many Europeans consider that low-cost flights are ideal, allowing them to take several short holidays over the course of a year. Yet curiously, short flights actually have a

Reading for information and argument

Can recognise the line of argument in the treatment of the issue presented, though not necessarily in detail.

7

damaging (adj) /ˈdæmɪdʒɪŋ/ destructive
decline (n) /drɪˈklaɪn/ a fall, a reduction
downside (n) /ˈdaʊnsaɪd/ the negative aspect
upwards of (adv) /ˈʌpwɔːrds ɒv/ more than



4 What are the effects of caffeine? Complete the table.

Beneficial effects
makes you less tired
makes you
relieves
reduces asthma
increases
Harmful effects
is mood-altering
is
raises
increases the of heart disease

A *caffeine* -fuelled world

Over the centuries, people have created many rituals to accompany the consumption of their favourite drinks, tea and coffee. Just think of the Japanese tea ceremony, British afternoon tea or the morning coffee ritual in countless societies. Why are these drinks so popular? The answer is their secret ingredient – caffeine. In the modern world, the new caffeine 'delivery systems' are canned 'energy' drinks. And the more modern our world gets, the more we seem to need caffeine. People have known for years that caffeinated drinks make you less tired and more alert. This dual power of caffeine to counteract physical fatigue and increase alertness is part of the reason why it is the world's most popular mood-altering drug. It is the only habit-forming psychoactive drug we routinely serve to our children (in all those soft drinks and chocolate bars). In fact, most babies in the developed world are born with traces of caffeine in their bodies.

Most people don't think twice about their caffeine intake. However, it raises blood pressure and thus increases the risk of heart disease. So the widespread use of caffeine is now a cause for concern among scientists and public health authorities. One result of this concern is that you are not allowed to sell energy drinks in France or Denmark. And in other European countries, manufacturers have to label cans with warnings. The

United States has no such rule, but many canned energy drinks sold in the USA carry warnings anyway. On the other hand, much of the research suggests that caffeine may have benefits for human health. Studies have shown it helps relieve pain, reduces asthma symptoms and increases reaction speed. Despite this, a study in Ireland recommended that children and pregnant women, among other groups, shouldn't drink energy drinks.

But we need coffee – or Diet Coke or Red Bull – to get us out of bed and back to work. 'For most of human existence, the pattern of sleeping and waking has followed sunrise and sunset,' explains Charles Czeisler, a neuroscientist at Harvard Medical School. 'Then, the way we work changed from a schedule built around the sun to an indoor job timed by a clock, and consequently humans had to adapt. Electric light, and caffeinated food and drink allowed people to follow a work schedule set by the clock, not by daylight or the natural sleep cycle.' Therefore, without caffeine, the 24-hour society of the developed world simply couldn't exist.

'Caffeine helps people try to override the human rhythm that is in all of us,' says Czeisler. 'Nevertheless,' he says solemnly, 'there is a heavy, heavy price to pay for all this extra wakefulness.' Without adequate sleep – the conventional eight hours out of each 24 is about right – the human body will not function at its best, physically, mentally, or emotionally, the doctor says.

According to Czeisler, the modern craving for caffeine is a 'Catch 22 situation'. 'The main reason that people want caffeine is to stay awake,' he says. 'But the main reason that people can't stay awake is they don't get enough regular sleep – because they use caffeine.'

counteract (v) /,kaʊn.tə'reɪkt/ to reduce the effect of something by acting against it
fatigue (n) /fə'ti:g/ the feeling of being extremely tired
traces (n) /'treɪsɪz/ very small amounts of something



Reading for information and argument

Can recognise the line of argument in the treatment of the issue presented, though not necessarily in detail.

7



Which Descriptor and Level?

In pairs look at the following descriptors and decide which reading descriptor area it comes from and what CEFR level (A2, B1, B2) it refers to.

Can scan through long and complex texts, locating relevant details.

Can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints.

Can identify specific information in simpler written material encountered, such as letters, brochures and short newspaper articles describing events.

Can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus, lists and timetables.

Can find and understand relevant information in everyday material, such as letters, brochures and short official documents.

Can recognise significant points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar topics.

Which Descriptor and Level?

In pairs look at the following descriptors and decide which reading descriptor area it comes from and what CEFR level (A2, B1, B2) it refers to.

Can scan through long and complex texts, locating relevant details. **B2 Orientation**

Can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints. **Information & Argument B2**

Can identify specific information in simpler written material encountered, such as letters, brochures and short newspaper articles describing events. **Information & Argument A2**

Can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus, lists and timetables. **A2 Orientation**

Can find and understand relevant information in everyday material, such as letters, brochures and short official documents. **B1 Orientation**

Can recognise significant points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar topics. **Information & Argument B1**

OVERALL READING COMPREHENSION

B2	Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. Has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low-frequency idioms.
B1	Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interests with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
A2	Can understand short, simple texts on familiar matters of a concrete type which consist of high frequency everyday or job-related language.
	Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items.

READING FOR ORIENTATION

B2	<p>Can scan quickly through several sources (articles, reports, websites, books etc.) in parallel, in both his/her own field and in related fields, and can identify the relevance and usefulness of particular sections for the task at hand.</p>
	<p>Can scan quickly through long and complex texts, locating relevant details.</p> <p>Can quickly identify the content and relevance of news items, articles and reports on a wide range of professional topics, deciding whether closer study is worthwhile.</p>
B1	<p>Can scan longer texts in order to locate desired information, and gather information from different parts of a text, or from different texts in order to fulfil a specific task.</p> <p>Can scan through straightforward, factual texts in magazines, brochures or in the web, identify what they are about and decide whether they contain information that might be of practical use.</p>
	<p>Can find and understand relevant information in everyday material, such as letters, brochures and short official documents.</p> <p>Can pick out important information about preparation and usage on the labels on foodstuffs and medicine.</p> <p>Can assess whether an article, report or review is on the required topic.</p>
	<p>Can understand the important information in simple, clearly drafted adverts in newspapers or magazines, provided that there are not too many abbreviations.</p>
A2	<p>Can find specific information in practical, concrete, predictable texts (e.g. travel guidebooks, recipes), provided they are written in simple language.</p> <p>Can understand the main information in short and simple descriptions of goods in brochures and websites (e.g. portable digital devices, cameras, etc.).</p>
	<p>Can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus, reference lists and timetables.</p> <p>Can locate specific information in lists and isolate the information required (e.g. use the 'Yellow Pages' to find a service or tradesman).</p>
	<p>Can understand everyday signs and notices etc. in public places, such as streets, restaurants, railway stations, in workplaces, such as directions, instructions, hazard warnings.</p>

READING FOR INFORMATION AND ARGUMENT

Can obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialised sources within his/her field.

Can understand specialised articles outside his/her field, provided he/she can use a dictionary occasionally to confirm his/her interpretation of terminology.

B2

Can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints.

Can recognise when a text provides factual information and when it seeks to convince readers of something.

Can recognise different structures in discursive text: contrasting arguments, problem-solution presentation and cause-effect relationships.

Can understand straightforward, factual texts on subjects relating to his/her interests or studies.

Can understand short texts on subjects that are familiar or of current interest, in which people give their points of view (e.g. critical contributions to an online discussion forum or readers' letters to the editor).

Can identify the main conclusions in clearly signalled argumentative texts.

Can recognise the line of argument in the treatment of the issue presented, though not necessarily in detail.

B1

Can recognise significant points in straightforward newspaper articles on familiar subjects.

Can understand most factual information that he/she is likely to come across on familiar subjects of interest, provided he/she has sufficient time for re-reading.

Can understand the main points in descriptive notes such as those on museum exhibits and explanatory boards in exhibitions.

READING FOR INFORMATION AND ARGUMENT

Can identify specific information in simpler written material he/she encounters such as letters, brochures and short newspaper articles describing events.

Can follow the general outline of a news report on a familiar type of event, provided that the contents are familiar and predictable.

Can pick out the main information in short newspaper reports or simple articles in which figures, names, illustrations and titles play a prominent role and support the meaning of the text.

Can understand the main points of short texts dealing with everyday topics (e.g. lifestyle, hobbies, sports, weather).

A2

Can understand texts describing people, places, everyday life, and culture, etc., provided that they are written in simple language.

Can understand information given in illustrated brochures and maps, e.g. the principal attractions of a city or area.

Can understand the main points in short news items on subjects of personal interest (e.g. sport, celebrities).

Can understand a short factual description or report within his/her own field, provided that it is written in simple language and does not contain unpredictable detail.

Can understand most of what people say about themselves in a personal ad or post and what they say they like in other people.

READING AS A LEISURE ACTIVITY

Can understand enough to read short, simple stories and comic strips involving familiar, concrete situations written in high frequency everyday language.

Can understand **the main points made in short magazine reports or guide** entries that deal with concrete everyday topics (e.g. hobbies, sports, leisure activities, animals).

A2

Can understand **short narratives and descriptions of someone's life** that are written in simple words.

Can understand what is happening in a photo story (e.g. in a lifestyle magazine) and form an impression of what the characters are like.

Can understand much of the information provided in **a short description of a person** (e.g. a celebrity).

Can understand the **main point of a short article reporting an event** that follows a predictable pattern (e.g. the Oscars), provided it is clearly written in simple language.

Can understand **a travel diary** mainly describing the events of a journey and the experiences and discoveries the person made.

Can follow the plot of stories, simple novels and comics with a clear linear storyline and high frequency everyday language, given regular use of a dictionary.

REVIEW QUIZ

1. Which of these is **NOT** a CEFR reading comprehension category?
 - A) Reading for leisure
 - B) Reading for understanding
 - C) Reading for orientation
2. When writing multiple-choice questions you should:
 - A) use negatives in the question stem
 - B) have more information in the options rather than the stem
 - C) paraphrase the original text in the stem
3. According to today's session, you should use distractors that are obvious. *T/F/NG*
4. According to today's session, writing multiple-choice questions is harder than writing short answer questions. *T/F/NG*.
5. According to today's session T/F/NG questions should be guessable from general knowledge. *T/F/NG*
6. Writing assessment questions for reading is quick and easy. *T/F/NG*



Time to Reflect...

How much more confident do you feel about writing test items for reading comprehension? Tell the person next to you 3 things you'll take away from today's session.

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Back to the future?

Curiosity allows us to embrace unfamiliar circumstances, brings excitement into our lives and opens up new possibilities. But how curious are we in the 21st century?

Curious explorers make their way through Rising Star Cave in South Africa.

23 Perhaps you've heard the old saying that claims 'curiosity killed the cat'. It's a phrase that's often used to warn people – especially children – not to ask too many questions. Yet it's widely agreed that curiosity actually makes learning more enjoyable and effective. Indeed, research has shown that curiosity is just as important as intelligence in determining how well students do at school.

Curiosity also allows us to embrace unfamiliar circumstances, brings excitement into our lives and opens up new possibilities. Being curious requires us to be both humble enough to know we don't have all the answers, and confident enough to admit it. Asking the questions that help us bridge the gap between what we already know and what we'd like to know can lead us to make unexpected discoveries.

In science, basic curiosity-driven research – carried out without pressure to produce immediate practical results – can have unexpected and incredibly important benefits. For example, one day in 1831, Michael Faraday was playing around with a coil and a magnet when he suddenly saw how he could generate an electrical current. At first, it wasn't clear what use this would be, but it actually made electricity available for use in technology, and so changed the world.

Unsurprisingly, there are chemical and evolutionary theories to explain why humans are such curious creatures. When we become curious, our brains release a chemical called dopamine, which makes the process of learning more pleasurable and improves memory. It is still not known why learning gives us such pleasure, but one theory is that we

may have developed a basic need to fight uncertainty – the more we understand about the world around us, the more likely we are to survive its many dangers!

However, curiosity is currently under threat like never before – and perhaps the biggest threat comes from technology! On one level, this is because technology has become so sophisticated that many of us are unable to think too deeply about how exactly things work anymore. While it may be possible for a curious teenager to take a toaster apart and get some sense of how it works, how far do you understand what happens when you type a website address into a browser? Where does your grasp of technology end and the magic begin for you?

In addition to this, there's the fact that we all now connect so deeply with technology, particularly our phones. The more we stare at our screens, the less we talk to other people directly. To make matters worse, all too often we accept the images of people that social media provides us with, and then feel we know enough about a person not to need to engage further with them.

The final – and perhaps most worrying – way in which technology stops us asking more is to do with algorithms, the processes followed by computers. As we increasingly get our news via social media, algorithms find out what we like and push more of the same back to us, meaning we end up inside our own little bubbles, and no longer meet ideas that challenge our pre-existing beliefs. Perhaps the real key to developing curiosity in the 21st century, then, is to rely less on the tech tools of our age.

