IELTS Academic Reading Practice Test 5

Original Britfluency Practice Paper

This is an original IELTS-style Academic Reading practice test, not an official IELTS paper. It contains three reading passages and 40 questions.

Instructions for students

You should spend 60 minutes on this test.

There are three reading passages and 40 questions.

Write your answers as you complete the test. In the real IELTS Reading test, there is no extra transfer time, so you must write your final answers within the 60 minutes.

Each correct answer receives 1 mark.

Do not use a dictionary.

Reading Passage 1

Why Restaurants Are Getting Louder

A Many diners have noticed that some modern restaurants are surprisingly noisy. Conversation competes with music, kitchen sounds and the voices of other customers. The change is not accidental. Over recent decades, restaurant design has often moved away from carpets, curtains and padded furniture towards hard floors, exposed brick, metal chairs and open kitchens. These materials may look stylish and easy to clean, but they also reflect sound. As a result, a room can become uncomfortable even before it is completely full.

B Sound behaves differently in different spaces. Soft materials absorb sound energy, while hard surfaces bounce it back into the room. When sound reflects repeatedly, it creates reverberation: the persistence of sound after the original source has stopped. A little reverberation can make a room feel lively, but too much reduces speech clarity. People then raise their voices to be heard, which increases the overall noise level and forces others to speak louder as well. Acoustic engineers sometimes call this the cafe effect.

C Noise does not affect all customers equally. People with hearing loss may find it particularly difficult to separate speech from background sound. Older diners, people using a second language and customers with sensory sensitivities may also struggle. Even people with normal hearing can become tired after an hour of effortful listening. For restaurants that want to attract families, older customers or business diners, excessive noise can therefore be a commercial problem as well as a comfort issue.

D Some owners deliberately create a loud atmosphere because it signals energy and popularity. A quiet restaurant may feel empty, while a lively one can suggest that people are enjoying themselves. Music can also influence the pace of dining. Faster, louder music may encourage customers to eat and leave more quickly, increasing table turnover. However, this strategy can backfire if customers avoid returning because they cannot relax or hold a conversation.

E Reducing noise does not necessarily mean making restaurants silent. Designers can add acoustic panels that look like decorative features, install sound-absorbing ceilings or use softer materials in selected areas. Plants, upholstered seating and curtains can also help, although they must be chosen with hygiene and maintenance in mind. The key is balance: restaurants need atmosphere, but they also need intelligibility, the ability for people to understand speech without excessive effort.

F Measuring restaurant noise is more complicated than simply checking the loudest moment. A brief crash from the kitchen may be annoying, but constant background noise is often more tiring. The position of tables, the height of ceilings and the shape of the room all affect how sound spreads. Some review websites now include noise ratings, and a few cities have considered guidance for public venues. Whether regulation becomes common or not, customer expectations are changing. For many people, good food is no longer enough if the room makes conversation impossible.

G There is also a psychological dimension to restaurant sound. People do not judge noise only by its volume. A steady background hum may be easier to tolerate than sudden sharp sounds, even if both produce similar readings on a meter. Control matters as well: customers who choose a busy bar may accept loudness, while diners who book a restaurant for conversation may feel misled. For this reason, some venues now describe their atmosphere more honestly online or create quieter areas away from speakers and open kitchens. Better acoustic design begins with recognising that sound is part of hospitality, not an afterthought.

H Some acoustic consultants recommend testing a room before it opens, rather than trying to fix problems after customers complain. Small changes at the planning stage, such as varying ceiling surfaces or placing absorbent materials near the loudest zones, can be cheaper than later renovation. This makes acoustics a practical design issue, not a luxury.

I Staff are affected too. Waiters may struggle to hear orders accurately, and kitchen teams may use louder signals when background noise rises. Over a long shift, this can increase fatigue. A quieter room can therefore improve working conditions as well as customer experience.

Questions 1-5

Complete the notes below. Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

1. Modern restaurant design often uses hard floors, exposed brick, metal chairs and _____
2. Hard surfaces _____ sound back into the room.
3. Too much reverberation reduces _____
4. Some restaurants use noise to create a feeling of energy and _____
5. Restaurants need atmosphere, but also _____ so that speech is easy to understand.

Questions 6-10

Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage 1? Write TRUE if the statement agrees with the information. Write FALSE if the statement contradicts the information. Write NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this.

6. Soft materials tend to absorb sound energy. _____
7. All restaurant owners want their restaurants to be as quiet as possible. _____
8. People using a second language may find noisy restaurants difficult. _____
9. Faster, louder music may help increase table turnover. _____
10. The passage says every city has introduced legal limits on restaurant noise. _____

Questions 11-13

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

11. What is the cafe effect?

    A. The process by which people speak louder as background noise rises.
    B. The tendency for restaurants to serve coffee after meals.
    C. The use of soft furniture to absorb sound.
    D. The legal measurement of kitchen noise.

12. Why might excessive noise become a commercial problem?

    A. It always lowers food quality.
    B. It may discourage some groups of customers from returning.
    C. It prevents restaurants from cleaning hard surfaces.
    D. It makes table turnover impossible.

13. What does the writer suggest about reducing restaurant noise?

    A. Restaurants must remove all atmosphere.
    B. Only government regulation can improve the problem.
    C. Selected design changes can improve comfort without silence.
    D. Music should always be banned.

Reading Passage 2

The Return of Night Trains

A For much of the late twentieth century, night trains in Europe seemed to be disappearing. Budget airlines offered cheap flights, high-speed daytime trains shortened journeys between major cities, and railway companies struggled with the cost of maintaining sleeper carriages. In recent years, however, interest has returned. New routes have been announced, older services have been upgraded and travellers who once flew automatically are reconsidering the slower overnight option.

B Environmental concern is one reason for this revival. A single flight can produce far more carbon emissions per passenger than a rail journey over the same distance, especially when the train uses electricity from low-carbon sources. For travellers trying to reduce their environmental impact, a night train can replace a short-haul flight while also saving a hotel night. The climate argument is powerful, though it is not the only factor affecting demand.

C Time use also matters. A flight may take only two hours in the air, but the full journey includes travel to distant airports, security queues, boarding, baggage collection and travel from the arrival airport into the city. A night train often leaves from one city centre and arrives in another. Passengers can sleep through much of the journey and begin the next day close to their destination. For some routes, the overnight train is not faster, but it can be more convenient.

D Running night trains is operationally difficult. Sleeper carriages carry fewer passengers than ordinary seated trains, which makes them more expensive per person. They require staff overnight, cleaning at unusual hours and access to tracks across national borders. Timetables are complicated because freight trains often use the same tracks at night. A delayed night train can also disrupt morning commuter services. These challenges explain why enthusiasm from passengers does not automatically create profitable routes.

E Comfort is another issue. Some passengers imagine a romantic journey in a private cabin, while others fear cramped beds, noise or shared facilities. Operators now offer a range of choices, from reclining seats to couchettes and private sleepers with bathrooms. This variety allows different prices, but it also makes booking more complex. Travellers need to understand what kind of accommodation they are buying, otherwise disappointment can damage the reputation of the service.

F Governments have started to play a larger role. Some support international coordination, invest in rolling stock or reduce charges for using rail infrastructure. Without public help, operators may focus only on the most profitable routes, leaving gaps in the network. Critics argue that subsidies should not support services used mainly by tourists. Supporters respond that rail systems have always required planning and investment, and that night trains can contribute to wider climate and transport goals.

G The future of night trains will probably depend on reliability as much as romance. Travellers may accept a longer journey if it is comfortable, clearly priced and likely to arrive on time. They are less likely to accept confusing booking systems, poor sleep and missed connections. The night train is unlikely to replace every short flight, but it could become an important option between cities that are too far for daytime rail and too close to justify routine flying.

H Ticketing remains a major obstacle. International rail journeys may involve different operators, reservation systems and refund rules. A passenger comparing a flight and a night train may find the rail option harder to understand even when it is environmentally preferable. Some campaigners argue that booking systems need to become as simple as airline websites if night trains are to reach a wider market. Others point out that railways must coordinate not only prices but also stations, border rules and connections with daytime services. The revival of night trains therefore depends on administrative cooperation as well as public enthusiasm.

I There is also a social question about who night trains are for. Premium sleepers may appeal to tourists with higher budgets, but seated overnight travel can be uncomfortable. If the service is to be more than a niche product, operators must balance privacy, price and basic rest. Otherwise the environmental alternative may remain attractive mainly to those who can afford comfort.

J The availability of suitable carriages is another constraint. Sleeper trains need vehicles that meet modern safety standards and can operate across different national systems. Building new stock takes years, so announcements of new routes may move more slowly than public interest suggests.

Questions 14-18

The reading passage has ten paragraphs, A-J. Choose the correct heading for paragraphs B-F from the list below. Write the correct number, i-viii. You do not need to use all the headings.

List of Headings

i. Government involvement and disagreement over support
ii. Environmental reasons for renewed interest
iii. Why sleeper services are hard to operate
iv. The complete disappearance of air travel
v. The importance of using travel time differently
vi. Different levels of comfort and possible misunderstanding
vii. Why night trains are always cheaper than flights
viii. The history of railway dining cars

14. Paragraph B _____
15. Paragraph C _____
16. Paragraph D _____
17. Paragraph E _____
18. Paragraph F _____

Questions 19-23

Reading Passage 2 has ten paragraphs, A-J. Which paragraph contains the following information? Write the correct letter, A-J.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

19. a reason why passenger enthusiasm may not be enough for commercial success _____
20. a description of older sleeper services being improved _____
21. a comparison between airport travel time and city-centre rail travel _____
22. the idea that clear pricing and punctuality may matter more than nostalgia _____
23. an objection to using public money for night trains _____

Questions 24-26

Complete the summary below. Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

24. Night trains can appeal to travellers who want to reduce their _____ impact.
25. Operators may offer reclining seats, couchettes and private sleepers with _____.
26. Night trains may be most useful between cities too far for daytime rail and too close for _____ flying.

Reading Passage 3

Citizen Science and the Biodiversity Data Gap

A Around the world, scientists are trying to understand how biodiversity is changing. Some species are declining, others are moving into new areas, and many remain poorly studied. Professional researchers cannot monitor every forest, beach, garden and roadside. This has created interest in citizen science: projects in which volunteers record observations of plants, animals or fungi. A photograph of a butterfly or a note about a flowering date may seem minor, but when millions of observations are combined, they can become scientifically valuable.

B The growth of smartphone apps has transformed this work. Volunteers can now upload photographs, locations and dates within seconds. Some platforms use artificial intelligence to suggest an identification, while other users or experts confirm it later. This creates huge datasets at relatively low cost. It also allows researchers to detect changes quickly, such as the arrival of an invasive species or the earlier appearance of spring flowers in warmer years.

C However, citizen science data are uneven. Observations are concentrated in places where volunteers live, walk or take holidays. Rare species in remote areas may be under-recorded, while attractive birds and butterflies may receive far more attention than small insects or fungi. This does not make the data useless, but it means researchers must understand the bias before drawing conclusions. A map showing many records in one region may reflect many observers, not many organisms.

D Identification accuracy is another challenge. Some species are easy to recognise, while others require microscopes, expert knowledge or genetic testing. Incorrect records can create false patterns. Platforms deal with this problem in different ways. Some require photographs; others use expert review, community voting or confidence scores. The best systems do not assume that every volunteer is correct, but they also avoid discouraging beginners. Learning is part of the process.

E Citizen science can also influence conservation policy. Records may help identify important habitats, track migration timing or show where protected species occur. Local groups have used volunteer data to argue against development in sensitive areas or to support habitat restoration. Policymakers, however, often need evidence that is consistent and verifiable. For this reason, projects with clear methods and quality control are more likely to be taken seriously.

F There are ethical questions as well. Sharing the exact location of a rare orchid, nesting bird or valuable reptile may put it at risk from collectors or disturbance. Many platforms now hide the precise coordinates of sensitive species. Volunteers also need guidance on behaviour in the field: recording wildlife should not involve trampling habitats, handling animals unnecessarily or entering private land without permission.

G Some critics worry that citizen science allows governments to reduce funding for professional research. If volunteers provide free data, official agencies may feel less pressure to employ specialists. Others argue that this is the wrong comparison. Citizen science works best when it complements experts, not when it replaces them. Professionals design methods, validate difficult records and analyse trends, while volunteers expand the reach of observation.

H The biodiversity data gap will not be closed by technology alone. More observations are helpful, but they must be collected, checked and interpreted carefully. Citizen science can make nature visible in places scientists rarely visit and can build public support for conservation. Its greatest value may be this combination of evidence and engagement: it produces information while reminding people that biodiversity is not an abstract global issue, but something present in local streets, parks and fields.

I Another unresolved issue is participation. Many volunteers are already interested in nature and have the time, confidence and equipment to make records. Communities with fewer parks, less free time or limited internet access may be under-represented, even though their local environments also matter. Some projects have responded by running training sessions in schools, libraries and community centres, or by lending equipment for short surveys. If citizen science is to improve biodiversity knowledge fairly, it must pay attention not only to the number of records collected, but also to whose observations are included.

J Long-term projects face the additional challenge of keeping volunteers engaged. People may enthusiastically record observations for a few weeks and then stop. Feedback is therefore essential. Maps, newsletters and local meetings can show contributors that their records matter. Without this response, even well-designed platforms may lose the human commitment on which they depend.

K Even with careful design, citizen science cannot answer every ecological question. Some studies require controlled sampling, specialist equipment or repeated visits by trained observers. Recognising these limits makes volunteer data more credible, not less, because it shows where public observation is strong and where professional surveys remain essential.

Questions 27-31

Classify the following statements according to the area of concern they describe. Write the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

A. Sampling bias B. Identification accuracy C. Ethics and species protection D. Relationship with professional research

27. Records may be concentrated where volunteers live or travel. _____

28. Some organisms may be harmed if exact locations are shared. _____

29. Some species cannot be reliably recognised without specialist methods. _____

30. Volunteer projects should support experts rather than replace them. _____

31. Popular birds may be recorded more often than less noticeable organisms. _____

Questions 32-35

Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in Reading Passage 3? Write YES if the statement agrees with the claims of the writer. Write NO if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer. Write NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this.

32. Citizen science observations can become valuable when collected in large numbers. _____

33. The writer believes volunteer records are useless because they contain bias. _____

34. Projects with clear methods and quality control are more likely to influence policy. _____

35. All citizen science platforms use exactly the same review system. _____

Questions 36-40

Complete the flow chart below. Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

How citizen science observations can become useful evidence

36. Volunteers upload photographs, locations and _____.

37. AI, other users or experts may help confirm an _____.

38. Platforms may use expert review, community voting or _____.

39. Researchers analyse trends after considering possible _____.

40. Useful projects combine evidence with public _____.