IELTS Academic Reading Practice Test 6

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

The Second Life of Old Buildings

A For much of the twentieth century, the standard response to an obsolete building was simple: demolish it and construct something new. That approach is now being questioned. Architects, planners and developers increasingly use the term adaptive reuse for projects that give an existing structure a new purpose. Warehouses become offices, railway buildings become markets and former schools are converted into housing. The attraction is not nostalgia alone. Reuse can preserve a recognisable part of a neighbourhood while avoiding some of the material and environmental costs of starting again.

B The environmental case begins with what engineers call embodied carbon: the greenhouse-gas emissions associated with producing materials and constructing a building. Concrete, steel, brick and glass all require energy to manufacture and transport. When a sound structure is demolished, much of that earlier investment is effectively discarded, and a replacement creates a second demand for materials. Reuse cannot erase the emissions already produced, but it can reduce the need for new structural components and limit demolition waste. This advantage is strongest when substantial parts of the original building can genuinely be retained rather than merely the facade.

C Before designers decide what can be retained, they need an unusually detailed survey. An old building may have been altered several times, and the surviving drawings can be incomplete. Engineers inspect the structural frame, surveyors trace moisture, specialists test for asbestos and building-services teams assess outdated wiring, ventilation and plumbing. The purpose is not simply to discover defects. It is to identify which parts can carry a new use, which must be repaired and which would be unsafe or uneconomic to keep. Discovering such constraints late in a project can be extremely expensive.

D A building that is structurally sound may still resist conversion. Offices need different daylight, ventilation and circulation patterns from factories; apartments need privacy, kitchens and bathrooms that a warehouse was never designed to provide. Deep floor plates can leave central areas far from windows. Old staircases may not satisfy current accessibility standards, and fire regulations can require additional escape routes. These conflicts explain why adaptive reuse is a design problem rather than a simple exercise in preservation.

E One strategy is to separate new work clearly from old. Designers may insert lightweight stair cores, service shafts or internal partitions that touch the historic structure as little as possible. Such interventions are sometimes made reversible, meaning that a later owner could remove them without destroying important original fabric. This can be valuable when a building may change use again. It also allows the contrast between old and new materials to remain visible instead of creating a false impression that every element belongs to the same period.

F The cost of reuse can be difficult to predict. Avoiding demolition can save money, but hidden defects, specialist repairs and custom-made components can quickly absorb those savings. On the other hand, planning incentives, tax relief or grants for heritage work may improve the financial case. Location matters as well: an awkward old structure in a desirable district may be viable because the finished space can command a high

value. For this reason, reuse is not automatically cheaper than new construction, but neither should it be judged only by the initial building cost.

G The social effects are equally mixed. Keeping a familiar building can preserve local memory and give a new development an identity that would be difficult to manufacture. Yet successful conversions can also contribute to rising rents and displacement if an old industrial district becomes fashionable. Community groups therefore sometimes argue that reuse should include affordable workspaces, public facilities or housing rather than simply turning every historic shell into an expensive destination. Preserving a building and preserving the community around it are not necessarily the same thing.

H Adaptive reuse is therefore best understood as one option in a wider decision process, not as a universal rule. Some buildings have severe structural failure, contamination that is impractical to remove or layouts that cannot meet essential safety requirements. In such cases, demolition may be the more responsible choice. Where the existing fabric is robust and adaptable, however, reuse can combine environmental savings, cultural continuity and inventive design. Its success depends on careful diagnosis at the beginning and a willingness to accept that old buildings impose limits as well as opportunities.

Questions 1-5

Complete each sentence with the correct ending, **A-G**, below.

Write the correct letter, **A-G**, for questions 1-5. You do not need to use all the endings.

1. Retaining a substantial part of an old building can _____

2. A detailed survey carried out before design work can _____

3. Reversible alterations are useful because they can _____

4. The financial case for reuse may become stronger when _____

5. Demolition may be preferable if a building has _____

A. be removed later without destroying significant original material.

B. guarantee that the conversion will cost less than a new building.

C. reduce demand for new structural materials and limit demolition waste.

D. planning incentives or heritage grants are available.

E. make fire regulations unnecessary.

F. reveal constraints before they become expensive surprises.

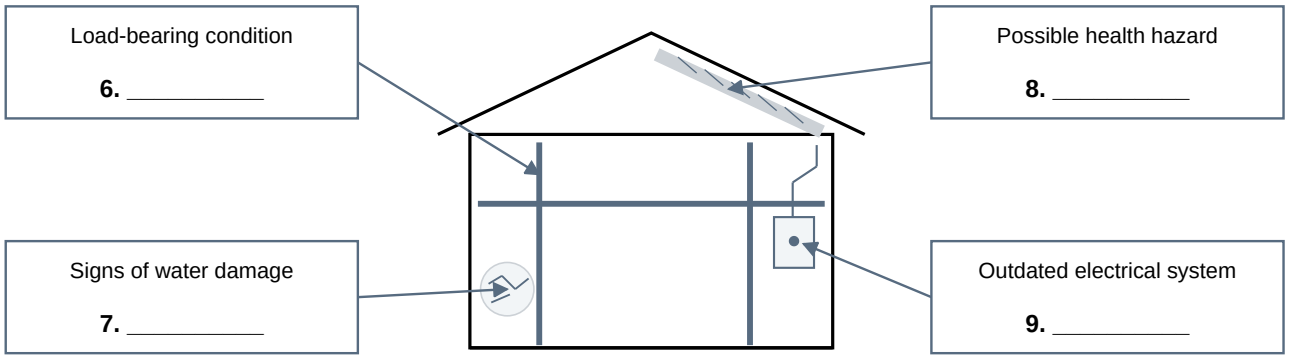
G. severe failure or contamination that cannot practically be dealt with.

Questions 6-9

Complete the diagram below.

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.

PRE-DESIGN BUILDING SURVEY



Questions 10-13

Choose **TWO** letters, **A-E**, for questions 10 and 11.

Which TWO benefits of adaptive reuse are mentioned in the passage?

A. It can preserve part of a neighbourhood's identity.

B. It can reduce the need for specialist repair work.

C. It can reduce demolition waste.

D. It can make compliance with modern safety rules easier.

E. It can preserve more of the original internal layout.

10. _____

11. _____

Choose TWO letters, A-E, for questions 12 and 13.

Which TWO difficulties with adaptive reuse are mentioned in the passage?

A. Access restrictions may make the initial survey more difficult.

B. Hazardous materials such as asbestos may be present.

C. Modern services may increase the building's energy use after conversion.

D. Local residents may object to visible contrasts between old and new materials.

E. The original layout may not suit the new purpose.

12. _____

13. _____

Reading Passage 2

How Seeds Survive Time

A A seed can appear inactive while remaining biologically alive. Inside its protective coat is an embryo and, in many species, a reserve of stored food. Under suitable conditions the embryo resumes growth, but the length of time a seed can survive varies enormously. Some remain viable for decades; others deteriorate within months. This variation has practical importance because seed banks - facilities that store seeds for future use - have become an important part of efforts to conserve plant diversity.

B The easiest seeds to store are often called orthodox seeds. They can be dried to a low moisture content and then kept at a low temperature without serious injury. Drying slows many chemical reactions, and cooling slows them further. For such species, a reduction of only a few degrees can substantially extend storage life. Wheat, rice and many other crops behave broadly in this way, which is one reason conventional seed banks can preserve large collections of agricultural varieties in relatively small spaces.

C Not all plants cooperate with this method. Recalcitrant seeds are damaged if they are dried too far, and many are also injured by freezing. They are common among some tropical trees and other species whose seeds naturally develop in warm, moist environments. Because the usual seed-bank conditions would kill them, conservationists may have to maintain living plants, store embryos in specialised cultures or use cryopreservation of selected tissues. These techniques are more expensive and labour-intensive than storing dry seed in a freezer. Like orthodox seeds, recalcitrant seeds can also lose viability over time, although their storage problems are different.

D Even orthodox seeds do not remain viable indefinitely. Before storage, technicians clean a collection and reduce its moisture content under controlled conditions. Samples are then sealed in containers and placed in cold rooms or freezers. At intervals, staff remove a small number of seeds and conduct germination tests. If too few grow, the collection may need regeneration: stored seeds are planted, the resulting plants are allowed to reproduce, and a fresh generation of seed is returned to storage.

E Regeneration solves one problem while creating another. A stored collection is intended to represent the genetic diversity of the original population. If only a few plants survive cultivation, or if some individuals produce much more seed than others, the new sample can become genetically narrower. Cross-pollinating species pose additional difficulties because plants may need large growing populations to maintain variation. Seed-bank managers therefore try to regenerate before viability falls too low and to grow enough individuals to reduce accidental genetic change.

F The value of a seed collection depends on its documentation as well as its biological condition. A packet labelled only with a species name is less useful than one linked to the place, date and habitat in which it was collected. Researchers may also record altitude, soil conditions or traits such as drought tolerance. These data allow future users to ask more precise questions. A variety collected from a dry hillside, for example, may contain characteristics that become valuable if farming conditions become hotter or less predictable.

G Seed banks serve several purposes. Plant breeders can use stored diversity when developing crops with resistance to disease or environmental stress. Ecologists may need seed for habitat restoration after fire, mining or construction. Collections can also provide insurance against the loss of a wild population. However, a bank is not a replacement for conserving plants in their natural habitats. A frozen sample does not preserve the insects, soils, competitors and evolutionary processes that shape a living population.

H There are also practical limits to what can be collected. A rare plant may produce very few seeds, and removing too many could damage the population the bank is meant to protect. Some species flower unpredictably or grow in inaccessible places. Political borders and rules on genetic resources can affect who is allowed to collect material and how it may later be used. For these reasons, the contents of seed banks reflect opportunity and policy as well as biological importance.

I The popular image of a seed bank as a vault in which biodiversity is simply frozen in time is therefore misleading. Collections require repeated testing, accurate records, careful regeneration and decisions about which species deserve scarce resources. Their strength lies in buying options for the future: a stored seed may support research or restoration decades after it was collected. But those options remain useful only if the collection is actively managed and combined with conservation beyond the freezer door.

Questions 14-18

Match each statement with the correct seed category, **A-C**.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

A. Orthodox seeds **B.** Recalcitrant seeds **C.** Both categories

14. They can usually tolerate substantial drying before storage. _____

15. They may be damaged by the low-moisture conditions used in conventional seed banks. _____

16. Their ability to germinate can decline during storage. _____

17. They are stored as dry seed in cold rooms or freezers. _____

18. They include species whose seeds naturally develop in warm, moist environments. _____

Questions 19-23

Complete the summary below using the list of words, **A-H**.

Write the correct letter, **A-H**, for questions 19-23.

Before orthodox seeds are stored, technicians reduce their 19. _____. The samples are then kept at a low 20. _____. Staff later carry out 21. _____ tests to check whether the seeds are still viable. If performance falls too far, plants are grown to produce a fresh 22. _____. During this process, managers try to protect the genetic 23. _____ of the original collection.

A. diversity **B.** germination **C.** fertiliser **D.** moisture

E. dormancy **F.** temperature **G.** generation **H.** altitude

Questions 24-26

Do the following statements agree with the information in Reading Passage 2?

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.

24. The same low-temperature, low-moisture method is suitable for every seed species. _____

25. The writer says seed banks should replace conservation of plants in natural habitats. _____

26. The passage identifies the oldest seed that has ever been successfully germinated. _____

Reading Passage 3

When Maps Become Arguments

A Maps are often treated as neutral containers of geographical facts. A road is shown here, a river there, and a boundary between them. Yet no map can include everything. The mapmaker must decide what to select, what to omit, how to classify features and which scale to use. These choices do not make maps dishonest; without selection, a map would be unreadable. They do mean, however, that a map is better understood as an argument about what matters than as a perfect copy of the world.

B The first unavoidable choice is geometric. The Earth is curved, while most maps are flat. Any projection - a mathematical method for transferring the globe onto a plane - distorts some combination of shape, area or distance. A projection that preserves angles and local shapes can greatly enlarge regions near the poles. Another may represent area more faithfully but make familiar coastlines look stretched. There is no projection that is best for every purpose, so the technical decision about projection also affects what users notice.

C Political boundaries appear equally definite on paper. In reality, some are disputed, temporary or interpreted differently by neighbouring states. A solid line can make a contested arrangement look natural and settled. Place names raise similar questions. Using one language rather than another, or choosing between competing names for the same city, sea or region, may signal a political position even when the mapmaker's stated goal is purely practical. Digital services have discovered that the same map may need different labels in different countries.

D Classification introduces another layer of judgement. Consider a map of household income. The underlying data may be continuous, but the map must often divide values into colour categories. The numerical thresholds between those categories, known as class breaks, can alter the pattern that appears. With one set of breaks, a city may seem sharply divided between rich and poor districts; with another, the transition may look gradual. Neither map necessarily changes the data. What changes is the visual argument made from them.

E Historically, mapping has also been linked to administration. Governments have mapped land in order to tax it, record ownership, plan roads and organise military movement. Such maps can improve coordination, but they can also impose official categories on places that local communities understand differently. A seasonal grazing area, for example, may become a fixed parcel with a single owner once it enters a cadastral system - a formal register of land boundaries. The map does not merely describe a legal order; it can help create one.

F Statistical maps add further risks. During a disease outbreak, a map showing cases can reveal clusters and guide investigation. But raw counts may be misleading if districts have very different population sizes. Rates per person can correct one problem while creating others when the numbers in small areas fluctuate sharply. Colour choice matters too: a dramatic palette can make modest differences appear alarming. Responsible mapping therefore requires decisions about denominators, scale and uncertainty, not simply accurate plotting.

G Digital navigation seems to reduce the mapmaker's influence because users can zoom, search and request routes for themselves. In fact, algorithms introduce new selections. A recommended route may depend on estimated travel time, road restrictions, data availability or commercial priorities. The user sees a clean line and a predicted arrival time, but not necessarily the criteria that produced them. Personalisation can make a map more useful while also making it harder for two people to know whether they are being shown the same geographical picture.

H Uncertainty is particularly difficult to map because conventional cartography rewards clean boundaries and confident symbols. Scientists may know that a flood-risk line is an estimate rather than a precise edge, or that the location of an animal population is based on incomplete observations. Some maps respond by using faded colours, ranges, confidence bands or annotations that explain data quality. These techniques can make a map less visually simple, but they prevent precision in the graphic from being mistaken for certainty in the evidence.

I One response to these problems is participatory mapping, in which residents contribute local names, routes, hazards or culturally important places. This can reveal information missing from official datasets and challenge categories imposed from outside. Participation does not remove disagreement: communities contain different interests, and the loudest participants may still dominate. Nevertheless, bringing users into the mapping process makes the choices behind a map more visible and can expose assumptions that professional cartographers might otherwise overlook.

J The appropriate conclusion is not that maps are manipulative and should be distrusted. Modern life depends on them, from emergency response to scientific research and everyday travel. The more useful lesson is that map literacy includes asking how a representation was constructed. Which projection was chosen? What was counted? Where were categories divided? What information is uncertain or absent? A skilled map reader does not

reject the image. Instead, the reader treats it as a powerful model whose clarity comes from choices that deserve examination.

Questions 27-31

Reading Passage 3 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.

27. an explanation of why a flat map must distort the globe in some way _____

28. an example of names on maps carrying political meaning _____

29. a reason two users may receive different digital representations of the same area _____

30. methods for showing that geographical information is uncertain _____

31. an approach in which local residents contribute to the mapping process _____

Questions 32-35

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

32. What is the main point made in Paragraph A?

A. Maps become misleading when too much information is omitted.

B. Maps necessarily reflect choices about what to show and how to show it.

C. The scale chosen for a map is the main factor determining its neutrality.

D. The usefulness of a map depends mainly on the amount of detail it contains.

33. Why can changing class breaks alter the impression created by an income map?

A. They change the geographical scale at which income is displayed.

B. They determine which neighbourhoods are included in the dataset.

C. Different thresholds can make the same data appear more or less divided.

D. They alter the population size used to calculate household income.

34. What concern does the writer raise about digital route recommendations?

A. Recommended routes may encourage users to ignore familiar local roads.

B. Estimated travel time may be weighted more heavily than physical distance.

C. Personalised maps may prioritise routes based on a user's previous journeys.

D. The criteria behind the suggested route may not be visible to the user.

35. What is the writer's overall view of maps?

A. Maps are most reliable when their technical choices are made explicit.

B. They are useful models that should be interpreted critically.

C. Showing uncertainty is sufficient to prevent a map from being misleading.

D. Participatory mapping is preferable whenever local knowledge is available.

Questions 36-40

Answer the questions below.

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

36. Which three geographical properties may be distorted by a map projection? _____

37. What can a solid boundary line make a disputed arrangement appear? _____

38. What does the passage call the visual groups created from different numerical ranges?
_____

39. What type of priorities may influence a digital route recommendation? _____

40. What skill does the writer say includes questioning how a map was constructed? _____