

C1 PREPARATION MATERIALS

C1 Reading & Use of English — Practice Exam 4

An eight-part practice exam covering Reading and Use of English.

Name: _____

Date: _____

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Part 1: The Growth of Urban Farming

Choose the word that best completes each gap. Focus on collocations, prepositions, and linkers.

Once dismissed as a hobby for enthusiasts with spare balconies, urban farming is now taken seriously by city planners and entrepreneurs alike. Rooftop greenhouses, vertical indoor farms and community allotments are appearing in neighbourhoods where fresh produce was previously hard to _____ (1) by. Proponents argue that growing food closer to consumers cuts transport emissions and reconnects people with the seasons.

Technology has accelerated the trend. LED lighting, hydroponic systems and climate-controlled environments allow crops to be cultivated year-round, _____ (2) of outdoor weather. Start-ups claim that carefully managed indoor farms can produce higher yields per square metre than conventional fields, though critics question whether the energy costs _____ (3) those gains.

Social benefits matter as much as efficiency. Shared gardens give residents a reason to cooperate and can improve access to nutritious food in areas described as 'food deserts'. Schools that introduce growing projects report greater pupil _____ (4) in science and environmental topics.

_____ (5), urban farming will not replace rural agriculture. Land and sunlight remain limited in dense cities, and staple crops still require open fields. Its real contribution may be to complement existing systems, shorten some supply chains, and remind urban populations that food does not simply _____ (6) on supermarket shelves.

1

- A. come
- B. get
- C. pass
- D. go

2

- A. regardless
- B. instead
- C. apart
- D. free

3

- A. outweigh
- B. overcome
- C. overtake
- D. override

4

- A. engagement
- B. involvement
- C. participation
- D. interest

5

- A. Even so
- B. Even though
- C. As though
- D. As well

6

- A. appear
- B. arise
- C. emerge
- D. occur

Part 2: The Life of Coral Reefs

Read the text below and think of the word which best fits each gap. Use only one word in each gap.

Coral reefs occupy only a tiny fraction of the ocean floor, yet they support an astonishing share of marine life. Built over centuries by colonies of tiny animals, reefs provide food, shelter and breeding grounds (1) countless species of fish, molluscs and crustaceans. For coastal communities, they also act as natural barriers that absorb wave energy and reduce the impact (2) storms.

In recent decades, however, reefs have come under intense pressure. Rising sea temperatures trigger bleaching events in (3) corals expel the algae they depend on for energy, often with fatal results. Pollution, destructive fishing practices and coastal construction add further stress. Scientists warn that without rapid cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, many of the world's most famous reefs could be unrecognisable (4) the end of the century.

Conservation efforts are underway on several fronts. Marine protected areas limit harmful activities, while researchers experiment with breeding heat-resistant coral strains and restoring damaged sections by hand. None of these measures will succeed in isolation; they must be matched (5) global action on climate change.

The fate of coral reefs is therefore bound up with decisions made far from the sea. (6) we reduce the carbon load in the atmosphere, even the most carefully managed local projects will struggle to keep pace with warming waters. Protecting reefs is not merely an environmental ideal (7) a practical necessity for food security and coastal safety worldwide.

Part 3: The Power of Habit

Complete each gap using a word derived from the base word in capitals. Write the correct form only, using one word for each gap.

Psychologists have long been interested in why certain behaviours become automatic. Habits form when repeated actions carve neural pathways that allow us to perform tasks with little conscious ⁽¹⁾ AWARE, freeing mental resources for other demands. This efficiency is usually helpful, but it can also lock people into patterns they later wish to change.

Breaking an unwanted habit is rarely a matter of willpower alone. Research suggests that ⁽²⁾ INTERVENE is more effective when the cue that triggers the behaviour is identified and replaced with a healthier routine. For example, someone who snacks whenever they feel stressed might learn a brief breathing exercise instead. The emotional need remains; the response becomes more ⁽³⁾ CONSTRUCT.

Building positive habits follows similar principles. Starting with small, realistic goals increases the likelihood of ⁽⁴⁾ SUCCEED, whereas ambitious targets often collapse within weeks. Tracking progress can strengthen ⁽⁵⁾ MOTIVATE, especially when improvements are visible over time.

Critics caution that popular advice sometimes oversimplifies the science, ignoring the role of environment, income and mental health. Still, a clearer understanding of habit formation offers a practical route to lasting ⁽⁶⁾ IMPROVE — provided people remain patient with the gradual nature of change and seek support when ⁽⁷⁾ DETERMINE alone is not enough.

Part 4: Key Word Transformation

For questions 1-6, complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between three and six words, including the word given.

1. I haven't received a reply from them yet.

STILL

I am _____ a reply from them.

2. The manager made them work overtime without extra pay.

WERE

They _____ overtime without extra pay.

3. It's possible that she missed the last train.

MIGHT

She _____ the last train.

4. He speaks French much better than he did before.

NEARLY

He used to speak French _____ as he does now.

5. I took a coat because I thought it might get cold.

CASE

I took a coat _____ cold.

6. Nobody has explained the delay to the passengers.

GIVEN

The passengers have _____ the delay.

Part 5: Multiple Choice Reading

Read the following article about silence in modern life and choose the best option (A, B, C, or D) for each question.

The Scarcity of Quiet

Silence was once an ordinary feature of daily existence. Agricultural work had its rhythms of noise and stillness; evenings dimmed into quiet as lamps were extinguished. Today, unbroken quiet has become something many people must actively seek and sometimes pay for. Open-plan offices hum with conversation and notification chimes. Public transport fills with podcasts leaking from ill-fitting earphones. Even rural landscapes are crossed by traffic drone and the distant whine of machinery. What previous generations inherited without effort, contemporary life treats as a luxury good.

Researchers studying the cognitive effects of noise have found that chronic low-level sound elevates stress hormones, fragments attention and impairs memory consolidation during sleep. The damage is rarely dramatic enough to notice day by day, which may explain why societies tolerate it. Yet over months and years, the cumulative load appears in irritability, poorer concentration and a restless inability to sit with unstimulated time. Silence, in this light, is not emptiness but a condition in which the nervous system can recover.

A parallel cultural shift has made quiet socially awkward. Pauses in conversation are hastily filled. Waiting rooms offer screens rather than stillness. Many people report discomfort when left alone without a device, as if silence itself were a problem requiring a fix. Tech companies have little incentive to reverse this pattern: engagement metrics rise when attention is continuously occupied. The result is an environment optimised against the very rest that sustained attention requires.

None of this means that noise is always harmful or that silence is morally superior. Cities thrive on energy and exchange; music, debate and laughter are essential pleasures. The argument is narrower and more practical: societies that erase every gap of quiet may be undermining the mental conditions on which deep work, reflection and even ordinary patience depend. Protecting silence — in libraries, parks, homes and designated hours — is less a nostalgic gesture than a form of cognitive infrastructure, as necessary in its way as clean air or safe streets.

1. What contrast does the writer draw in the first paragraph?
 - A** Between agricultural societies that hated noise and modern ones that enjoy it.
 - B** Between silence as a normal part of life in the past and a scarce commodity today.
 - C** Between rural areas that remain perfectly quiet and noisy modern cities.
 - D** Between people who pay for silence and those who prefer constant sound.
2. According to the second paragraph, chronic noise is particularly insidious because...
 - A** its effects are too sudden for people to adapt to them.
 - B** it only harms people during sleep and not while they are awake.
 - C** its gradual impact is easy to overlook in everyday life.
 - D** researchers still have no evidence linking it to stress.
3. What point does the writer make about technology companies in the third paragraph?
 - A** They are actively researching ways to help users tolerate more silence.
 - B** Their commercial goals align with keeping users continuously occupied.
 - C** They have agreed to reduce notification sounds across all devices.
 - D** They believe silence improves engagement metrics over time.

4. In the final paragraph, the writer argues that protecting silence is...

A mainly a sentimental wish to return to pre-industrial life.

B unnecessary because noise and energy make cities successful.

C a practical safeguard for mental capacities that society relies on.

D more important than providing clean air or safe streets.

Part 6: Should Homework Be Abolished?

Read the four experts' opinions below. For each question, choose the text (A, B, C, or D) whose writer expresses the stated opinion.

Text A

Ruth Keller — primary headteacher

At primary level I would scrap most homework tomorrow. Young children already spend long days learning; evenings should belong to play, family conversation and rest. The worksheets that go home often measure parental availability more than pupil understanding.

Where practice genuinely helps — reading aloud, simple number facts — it should be short, clear and optional enough that households under pressure are not shamed. Education does not improve when it colonises every hour of childhood.

Text B

Daniel Okoro — secondary maths teacher

I cannot teach complex problem-solving in five classroom hours a week and also give every student enough repetition. Homework, used sparingly and marked properly, extends learning time for those who need it most.

The problem is not homework itself but badly designed tasks: endless copying, vague projects, or work set only to satisfy school policy. Abolish the busywork by all means. Keep the deliberate practice that builds fluency. Throwing out both because some homework is pointless would be an overreaction.

Text C

Sofia Brandt — education psychologist

International comparisons show no simple link between hours of homework and higher achievement. Countries with moderate loads often outperform those that pile on evening work, especially once student wellbeing is taken into account.

What predicts success more reliably is the quality of feedback and the alignment between tasks and clear learning goals. Debates that fixate on abolishing or defending homework in the abstract miss this. Reform the purpose and the volume will often correct itself.

Text D

Luis Ferrer — parent and campaigner

In our house homework became a nightly source of conflict that damaged my child's relationship with learning. After we moved to a school with a minimal-homework policy, evenings became calmer and, crucially, my daughter began choosing to read on her own.

I am not against effort. I am against the assumption that childhood must be scheduled like a second shift. Schools that trust pupils to rest and pursue interests outside class often find motivation rises rather than collapses. Families should not need a campaign to reclaim dinner time.

1. Which writer argues that poorly designed tasks, not homework as such, are the real problem?

Answer: _____

2. Which writer links a reduction in homework to a better attitude to voluntary reading at home?

Answer: _____

3. Which writer focuses especially on protecting younger children's free time?

Answer: _____

4. Which writer says cross-country evidence does not support heavy homework loads as a route to success?

Answer: _____

Part 7: The Unexpected Benefits of Learning to Cook

Read the article and choose the paragraph (A-G) that fits each gap. One paragraph is extra.

Many people take up cooking for the most practical of reasons: to save money, to eat more healthily, or simply to avoid another evening of repetitive takeaways. What they often discover is that the kitchen delivers rewards that have little to do with the plate in front of them.

1

The first shift is psychological. Following a recipe from raw ingredients to a finished dish provides a rare experience of completion in lives filled with emails that never quite end. The feedback is immediate and sensory — aroma, texture, taste — which makes progress feel concrete rather than abstract.

2

Cooking also trains a kind of flexible attention. You learn to monitor several processes at once, adjust when something threatens to burn, and accept that not every experiment will succeed. Failure tastes unpleasant, but it is usually edible enough to teach a lesson without catastrophe.

3

There is a social dimension that solitary food delivery cannot match. Preparing a meal for others is a form of care that requires no grand speech. Friends who gather to cook together often talk more freely than they do across a restaurant table, because hands are busy and eyes are not locked in constant mutual scrutiny.

4

Nutrition knowledge deepens almost by accident. Once you have cooked beans from scratch or compared the salt in different stock cubes, packaged claims become easier to interpret. People who cook regularly tend to eat a wider range of ingredients, not because they are more virtuous, but because variety makes home cooking interesting.

5

None of this requires professional ambition. The aim is not to master restaurant techniques or photograph every plate. A handful of reliable dishes, cooked often enough to feel natural, can change the rhythm of a week.

In a culture that outsources so many basic skills, reclaiming the ability to feed yourself well is a quiet kind of independence — and one that happens to be delicious.

Missing paragraphs

Choose from the paragraphs A-G the one which fits each gap. There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

A Budget pressures have pushed many beginners toward batch cooking, which multiplies that sense of competence: one session of effort yields several future meals.

B Children who help in the kitchen, even with simple tasks like washing herbs or stirring pots, often carry those habits into adulthood with less anxiety around food.

C That tolerance for small mistakes transfers surprisingly well to other domains where perfectionism otherwise freezes action.

D Online video tutorials have lowered the barrier further, letting novices pause and rewind techniques that cookbooks once left mysterious.

E Hosts sometimes worry that imperfect food will disappoint guests, yet most people value the invitation more than flawless presentation.

F Of course, time remains the obstacle most often cited. Short recipes, shared household routines and accepting simple meals on busy nights matter more than elaborate weekend projects.

G Those who dismiss cooking as mere domestic chore may be missing how many modern hungers — for agency, craft and connection — a single evening at the stove can feed.

Gap 1: _____

Gap 2: _____

Gap 3: _____

Gap 4: _____

Gap 5: _____

Gap 6: _____

Part 8: Starting a Small Business

You are going to read four people talking about starting a small business. For each question, choose from the people (A-D). The people may be chosen more than once.

Section A

Leila Haddad — bakery owner

I spent ten years as a pastry chef in other people's kitchens before opening my own place. That experience meant I already understood production, but nothing prepared me for the loneliness of being the person who has to decide everything — suppliers, staffing, the tone of a social media reply at eleven at night.

Cash flow was the steepest lesson. Profitable on paper, I still had months when paying rent depended on a single catering order landing on time. A mentor from a local business network made me build a thirteen-week cash forecast, which sounds dull and saved me from panic more than once. I still love baking; I had to learn to love spreadsheets enough to survive.

Section B

Owen Griffiths — bicycle repair shop

I started with almost no capital, servicing bikes from a rented garage unit and reinvesting every spare coin. Growth was slow by design. Friends urged me to take loans and expand faster, but I wanted to understand demand before I owed anyone money.

What surprised me was how much of the job is conversation. Customers do not only want gears adjusted; they want to be heard about their commuting fears or their child's first bike. The technical skill got me started; the patience to listen keeps people coming back. I hire for attitude first now, and teach the mechanical side.

Section C

Priya Shah — online clothing label

I launched during evenings while still employed, which reduced financial risk but stretched my health. Looking back, I should have set a clearer stop time each night. The thrill of early orders masked how close I came to burnout before I finally resigned.

Sourcing ethically costs more, and I refuse to pretend otherwise in my marketing. Some customers accept higher prices when they understand the supply chain; others disappear to cheaper platforms. I would rather grow more slowly than dilute the reason I started. A small, loyal audience has proved more valuable than chasing every trend.

Section D

Mateo Alvarez — mobile coffee cart

Regulations nearly stopped me before I began. Health permits, street-trading licences and insurance took months, and each office seemed unaware of what the others required. I kept a folder of every email and eventually treated bureaucracy like a second product I had to deliver.

The best decision was choosing locations based on footfall data rather than guesswork — outside a station at dawn, near offices mid-morning. Weather still hurts trade, so I developed a simple pre-order system for regulars. Independence is real, but so is the knowledge that if I am ill, the cart does not open. Building a tiny team of trusted cover staff is my next goal.

1. Which person delayed expansion in order to avoid borrowing money?

Answer: _____

2. Which person found official paperwork unexpectedly time-consuming at the start?

Answer: _____

3. Which person received practical financial guidance from a more experienced contact?

Answer: _____

4. Which person continued another job while launching the business?

Answer: _____

5. Which person says customer service skills matter more than technical ability for retention?

Answer: _____

6. Which person refuses to lower standards even if that limits growth?

Answer: _____

7. Which person felt isolated by having to make every decision alone?

Answer: _____

8. Which person uses evidence about customer numbers to choose where to trade?

Answer: _____

9. Which person admits underestimating the personal cost of overwork in the early phase?

Answer: _____

10. Which person wants backup staff so the business can run during illness?

Answer: _____

Answer key and explanations

Part 1: The Growth of Urban Farming

1. A. come
2. A. regardless
3. A. outweigh
4. A. engagement
5. A. Even so
6. A. appear

Part 2: The Life of Coral Reefs

1. for / to
2. of
3. which
4. by
5. by / with
6. Unless
7. but

Part 3: The Power of Habit

1. **AWARE:** awareness
2. **INTERVENE:** intervention
3. **CONSTRUCT:** constructive
4. **SUCCEED:** success
5. **MOTIVATE:** motivation
6. **IMPROVE:** improvement
7. **DETERMINE:** determination

Part 4: Key Word Transformation

1. I am **still waiting for / still waiting to receive** a reply from them.
2. They **were made to work / were forced to work** overtime without extra pay.
3. She **might have missed / might well have missed** the last train.
4. He used to speak French **nowhere near as well / not nearly as well** as he does now.
5. I took a coat **in case it got / in case it should get** cold.
6. The passengers have **not been given an explanation for / not been given any explanation for / been given no explanation for** the delay.

Part 5: Multiple Choice Reading

1. **B.** Between silence as a normal part of life in the past and a scarce commodity today.
Correct. The writer contrasts ordinary inherited silence with contemporary quiet treated as a luxury.
2. **C.** its gradual impact is easy to overlook in everyday life.
Correct. The text says the damage is rarely dramatic enough to notice day by day, which explains tolerance of noise.
3. **B.** Their commercial goals align with keeping users continuously occupied.
Correct. The writer states engagement metrics rise when attention is continuously occupied, so companies have little incentive to reverse the pattern.
4. **C.** a practical safeguard for mental capacities that society relies on.
Correct. Silence is presented as cognitive infrastructure needed for deep work, reflection and patience.

Part 6: Should Homework Be Abolished?

1. **Text B**
Text B distinguishes busywork from deliberate practice and opposes abolishing useful homework along with pointless tasks.
2. **Text D**
Text D says after a minimal-homework policy, the writer's daughter began choosing to read on her own.
3. **Text A**
Text A argues primary evenings should belong to play, family and rest, and would scrap most homework at that level.
4. **Text C**
Text C notes international comparisons show no simple link between homework hours and higher achievement.

Part 7: The Unexpected Benefits of Learning to Cook

1. **Paragraph A**

After describing the psychological reward of completion, A extends it with batch cooking and a multiplied sense of competence.

2. **Paragraph C**

C follows the point about edible failure by explaining how tolerance for mistakes transfers beyond the kitchen.

3. **Paragraph E**

E develops the social/hosting theme by addressing anxiety about imperfect food for guests.

4. **Paragraph B**

B continues the wider food-habits discussion by noting how children's kitchen involvement shapes adult attitudes.

5. **Paragraph F**

F answers the practical barrier after the claim that only a handful of dishes is needed, focusing on time.

6. **Paragraph G**

G broadens the conclusion toward agency, craft and connection, bridging into the final line about independence.

Part 8: Starting a Small Business

1. **Section B**

Owen wanted to understand demand before owing anyone money and resisted friends' advice to take loans.

2. **Section D**

Mateo describes permits, licences and insurance taking months and conflicting offices.

3. **Section A**

Leila's mentor made her build a thirteen-week cash forecast.

4. **Section C**

Priya launched during evenings while still employed.

5. **Section B**

Owen says technical skill got him started but listening keeps people coming back, and he hires for attitude first.

6. **Section C**

Priya would rather grow slowly than dilute ethical sourcing, valuing a loyal audience over trends.

7. **Section A**

Leila says nothing prepared her for the loneliness of deciding everything herself.

8. **Section D**

Mateo chose locations based on footfall data rather than guesswork.

9. **Section C**

Priya says she should have set a clearer stop time and came close to burnout.

10. **Section D**

Mateo notes that if he is ill the cart does not open and aims to build cover staff.