IELTS Reading Strategies

TO SOLVE SUMMARY QUESTIONS

Summary Questions are different from a set of notes, as it consists of complete sentences that are connected grammatically. Many students are unable to figure out the words to fill in the gaps of the summary completion as they fail to understand the correct answer, as they are unable to locate the paragraphs on which the summary questions are based. With our tips & practise papers we are sure you're going to enjoy solving such question and get correct answers.

GUIDELINES TO SOLVE:

1. Skim read the passage to get the main idea of the passage.
2. Read the summary question paragraph. Focus on the sentences containing gaps carefully.
3. Read the relevant part of the passage in detail on which the summary paragraph is based.
4. The summary paragraph is usually based on either one or two paragraphs of the passage or it is focussed on the entire passage. The title of the summary will help you find the part of the passage you need to read in detail to find your answers.
5. Consider the grammatical features of the summary.
6. Summary questions focus on the interpretation of the text given in the passage. So, the sentences may not be entirely same as those given in the passage. Understand the intent of the passage.
7. Choose words from the passage that accurately completes the summary.

Let's look at the application of the above-mentioned guidelines for the following passage below.

Practise reading 1.1

Johnson's Dictionary

A

For the century before Johnson's *Dictionary* was published in 1775, there had been concern about the state of the English language. There was no standard way of speaking or writing and no agreement as to the best way of bringing some order to the chaos of English spelling. Dr Johnson provided the solution.

B

There had, of course, been dictionaries in the past, the first of these being a little book of some 120 pages, compiled by a certain Robert Cawdray, published in 1604 under the title *A Table Alphabeticall* 'of hard usuall English wordes'. Like the various dictionaries that came after it during the seventeenth century, Cawdray's tended to concentrate on 'scholarly' words; one function of the dictionary was to enable its student to convey an impression of fine learning.

C

Beyond the practical need to make order out of chaos, the rise of dictionaries is associated with the rise of the English middle class, who were anxious to define and circumscribe the various worlds to conquer – lexical as well as social and commercial. It is highly appropriate that Dr Samuel Johnson, the very model of an eighteenth-century literary man, as famous in his own time as in ours, should have published his *Dictionary* at the very beginning of the heyday of the middle class.

D

Johnson was a poet and critic who raised common sense to the heights of genius. His approach to the problems that had worried writers throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was intensely practical. Up until his time, the task of producing a dictionary on such a large scale had seemed impossible without the establishment of an academy to make decisions about right and wrong usage. Johnson decided he did not need an academy to settle arguments about language; he would write a dictionary himself; and he would do it single-handed. Johnson signed the contract for the *Dictionary* with the bookseller Robert Dosley at a breakfast held at the Golden Anchor Inn near Holborn Bar on 18 June 1764. He was to be paid £1,575 in instalments, and from this he took money to rent 17 Gough Square, in which he set up his 'dictionary workshop'.

James Boswell, his biographer, described the garret where Johnson worked as 'fitted up like a counting house' with a long desk running down the middle at which the copying clerks would work standing up.

Johnson himself was stationed on a rickety chair at an 'old crazy deal table' surrounded by a chaos of borrowed books. He was also helped by six assistants, two of whom died whilst the *Dictionary* was still in preparation.

E

The work was immense; filling about eighty large notebooks (and without a library to hand), Johnson wrote the definitions of over 40,000 words, and illustrated their many meanings with some 114,000 quotations drawn from English writing on every subject, from the Elizabethans to his own time. He did not expect to achieve complete originality. Working to a deadline, he had to draw on the best of all previous dictionaries, and to make his work one of heroic synthesis. In fact, it was very much more. Unlike his predecessors, Johnson treated English very practically, as a living language, with many different shades of meaning. He adopted his definitions on the principle of English common law – according to precedent. After its publication, his *Dictionary* was not seriously rivalled for over a century.

F

After many vicissitudes the *Dictionary* was finally published on 15 April 1775. It was instantly recognised as a landmark throughout Europe. 'This very noble work,' wrote the leading Italian lexicographer, 'will be a perpetual monument of Fame to the Author, an Honour to his own Country in particular, and a general Benefit to the republic of Letters throughout Europe.' The fact that Johnson had taken on the Academies of Europe and matched them (everyone knew that forty French academics had taken forty years to produce the first French national dictionary) was cause for much English celebration.

G

Johnson had worked for nine years, 'with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow'. For all its faults and eccentricities his two-volume work is a masterpiece and a landmark, in his own words, 'setting the orthography, displaying the analogy, regulating the structures, and ascertaining the significations of English words'. It is the cornerstone of Standard English, an achievement which, in James Boswell's words, 'conferred stability on the language of his country'.

H

The *Dictionary*, together with his other writing, made Johnson famous and so well esteemed that his friends were able to prevail upon King George III to offer him a pension. From then on, he was to become the Johnson of folklore.

I

Complete the summary

Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer. **The TWO Gaps below are solved for you.**

In 1764, Dr. Johnson accepted the contract to produce a dictionary. Having rented a garret, he took on a number of _____1_____, who stood at a long central desk. Johnson did not have a _____2_____ available to him, but eventually produced definitions of in excess of 40,000 words written down in 80 large notebooks. On publication, the Dictionary was immediately hailed in many European countries as a landmark. According to his biographer, James Boswell, Johnson's principal achievement was to bring _____3____ to the English language. As a reward for his hard work, he was granted a _____4_____ by the king.

Solved Examples

After reading the above summary text, it's clear that the summary is based on paragraphs E, F, H and I. The reference text to fill up the first gap includes, 'James Boswell, his biographer, described the garret where..... at which the ***copying clerks*** would work standing up.' Similarly, for the second gap the reference text belongs to paragraph F. 'The work was immense filling about eighty.....***without a library*** to hand).'

Practice Exercise 1.1

Complete the summary

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

In 1764, Dr. Johnson accepted the contract to produce a dictionary. Having rented a garret, he took on a number of 1(***copying clerks***) , who stood at a long central desk. Johnson did not have a 2(***library***) available to him, but eventually produced definitions of in excess of 40,000 words written down in 80 large notebooks. On publication, the Dictionary was immediately hailed in many European countries as a landmark. According to his biographer, James Boswell, Johnson's principal achievement was to bring _____3____ to the English language. As a reward for his hard work, he was granted a _____4_____ by the king.

Practice Reading 1.2

Sheet glass manufacture: the float process

Glass, which has been made since the time of the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, is little more than a mixture of sand, soda ash and lime. When heated to about 1500 degrees Celsius (°C) this becomes a molten mass that hardens when slowly cooled. The first successful method for making clear, flat glass involved spinning. This method was very effective as the glass had not touched any surfaces between being soft and becoming hard, so it stayed perfectly unblemished, with a 'fire finish'. However, the process took a long time and was labour intensive.

Nevertheless, demand for flat glass was very high and glassmakers across the world were looking for a method of making it continuously. The first continuous ribbon process involved squeezing molten glass through two hot rollers, similar to an old mangle. This allowed glass of virtually any thickness to be made non-stop, but the rollers would leave both sides of the glass marked, and these would then need to be ground and polished. This part of the process rubbed away around 20 per cent of the glass, and the machines were very expensive.

The float process for making flat glass was invented by Alistair Pilkington. This process allows the manufacture of clear, tinted and coated glass for buildings, and clear and tinted glass for vehicles. Pilkington had been experimenting with improving the melting process, and in 1952 he had the idea of using a bed of molten metal to form the flat glass, eliminating altogether the need for rollers within the float bath. The metal had to melt at a temperature less than the hardening point of glass (about 600°C), but could not boil at a temperature below the temperature of the molten glass (about 1500°C). The best metal for the job was tin.

The rest of the concept relied on gravity, which guaranteed that the surface of the molten metal was perfectly flat and horizontal. Consequently, when pouring molten glass onto the molten tin, the underside of the glass would also be perfectly flat. If the glass were kept hot enough, it would flow over the molten tin until the top surface was also flat, horizontal and perfectly parallel to the bottom surface. Once the glass cooled to 604°C or less it was too hard to mark and could be transported out of the cooling zone by rollers. The glass settled to a thickness of six millimetres because of surface tension interactions between the glass and the tin. By fortunate coincidence, 60 per cent of the flat glass market at that time was for six-millimetre glass.

Pilkington built a pilot plant in 1953 and by 1955 he had convinced his company to build a full-scale plant. However, it took 14 months of non-stop production, costing the company £100,000 a month, before the plant produced any usable glass. Furthermore, once they succeeded in making marketable flat glass, the machine was turned off for a service to prepare it for years of continuous production. When it started up again it took another four months to get the process right again. They finally succeeded in 1959 and there are now float plants all over the world, with each able to produce around 1000 tons of glass every day, non-stop for around 15 years.

Float plants today make glass of near optical quality. Several processes – melting, refining, homogenising – take place simultaneously in the 2000 tonnes of molten glass in the furnace. They occur in separate zones in a complex glass flow driven by high temperatures. It adds up to a continuous melting process, lasting as long as 50 hours, that delivers glass smoothly and continuously to the float bath, and from there to a coating zone and finally a heat treatment zone, where stresses formed during cooling are relieved.

The principle of float glass is unchanged since the 1950s. However, the product has changed dramatically, from a single thickness of 6.8 mm to a range from sub-millimetre to 25 mm, from a ribbon frequently marred by inclusions and bubbles to almost optical perfection. To ensure the highest quality, inspection takes place at every stage. Occasionally, a bubble is not removed during refining, a sand grain refuses to melt, a tremor in the tin puts ripples into the glass ribbon. Automated on-line inspection does two things. Firstly, it reveals process faults upstream that can be corrected. Inspection technology allows more than 100 million measurements a second to be made across the ribbon, locating flaws the unaided eye would be unable to see. Secondly, it enables computers downstream to steer cutters around flaws.

Float glass is sold by the square metre, and at the final stage computers translate customer requirements into patterns of cuts designed to minimise waste.

Practice Exercise 1.2

Complete the following summary.

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

The first successful method for making flat glass was _____1_____ which produced _____2_____ glass. The _____3_____process produced glass of any ____4_____ but left it marked. Pilkington came up with the idea of producing glass in 1952 using ____5_____ which used ____6____ metal. The factor which formed the basis for this process was ____7____. In this Process, defects _____8_____ can be rectified by Automated online inspection. Also, it allows computers _____9_____ to control imperfections.

IELTS Reading Strategies

ANSWER KEY

EXERCISE 1.1

1. Copying clerks
2. Library
3. Stability
4. Pension

EXERCISE 1.2

1. Spinning
2. Unblemished
3. Ribbon
4. Thickness
5. Float process
6. Tin
7. Gravity
8. Upstream
9. Downstream