

Help and hindrance in IELTS Academic Reading

Discuss the four questions below about the IELTS Academic, using any reading task(s) that you completed and/ or task(s) that you have in front of you to help.

What things about the task or tasks mean that they are difficult to complete?

How can you tackle those issues (= How can you make the task/ tasks possible despite those difficulties)?

What things about the task(s) help you to complete them successfully, i.e. mean that they are easier to answer than they could be?

How could you use those things to help you finish in time and get a good score?

Help and hindrance in IELTS Academic Reading

Decide if the things below help you or hinder you when you do an IELTS Academic reading paper and put a plus mark (+) or minus mark (-) next to them:

+ = good news/ things which make the task easier (than it could be)/ things that help you
- = bad news/ things which make the task more difficult/ things that hinder you

Some things could be considered both a help and a hindrance, in which case you should put both marks (+ -).

All parts of IELTS Reading

1. Some IELTS texts are actually quite interesting.
2. The texts are semi-academic style, so are not taken from referenced academic papers from actual academic journals.
3. There will be some specialist academic vocabulary in the texts, but it will either not be needed to answer the questions or it will be explained in the text.
4. You are expected to know some academic vocabulary that an educated native speaker with no specialist knowledge of the topic would usually know, e.g. “ecological” or “neuroscientist”.
5. You can write anything you like on the question sheet (underlining etc).
6. There are around ten different kinds of IELTS Reading question (true/ false/ not given, multiple choice, matching headings, etc).
7. All questions apart from matching tasks are in the same order as the text.
8. Any of the three texts could have any of the question types with it.
9. One text usually has three different kinds of questions with it (e.g. matching headings to paragraphs, then Yes/ No/ Not given, then summary completion).
10. When there are two different tasks with one text, the answers to the second task usually come after the answers to the first task.
11. When there are two or more different tasks with one text, they are usually already in the most obvious order to do them in. In other words, the first task given is probably the best task to do first.
12. Each answer can usually be found in between a few words and two sentences of text (rather than in a whole paragraph or spread through the whole text).
13. If you are going to read through the text first, you don't have more than three minutes to do so.
14. If you are going to read through the text first, it should only be to find out where the information is, so you can skip to the next paragraph as soon as you know the topic of the one that you are reading.
15. You can identify the topic of most paragraphs from the first one or two sentences.
16. The information to answer the questions is not spread evenly through the text (meaning there might be two answers very close to each other and then a big gap before the next answer).
17. The wording of most questions is different from the wording in the text.
18. The examiner doesn't look at your question paper, but only at your answer sheet.
19. You have to transfer all your answers during the 60 minutes of the test – there is no extra time at the end.

Multiple choice tasks (choosing A, B or C)

20. The right option is worded differently in the question and in the text.
21. You usually only need to underline a few words, half a sentence or one sentence (not two or three sentences) to identify the correct option.
22. Most wrong options are incorrect because there is something in the text that has a different meaning from that option, which you can underline.
23. Some of the wrong options have completely different or opposite meanings of what is said in the text.
24. Some of the wrong options only have slightly different meanings from what is said in the text.
25. Some options are incorrect because that thing is not mentioned in the text.
26. If you can't find the right option, you can almost always cross off the two wrong options and then just choose the one option which is left.
27. Some multiple choice questions test your understanding of the whole text.
28. Some multiple choice questions test your understanding of the writer's point of view.
29. Even if you have specialist knowledge of the topic, it is impossible to guess any answers before reading the text.

True/ False/ Not given tasks

30. "False" always means that there is something written in the text which contradicts what is written in the question, i.e. shows you clearly that the statement is not true.
31. "Not given" usually means that there is something written in the text on a (slightly) different topic to the subject of the question (which you could underline).
32. "Not given" sometimes means that there is nothing similar to the question in the text, meaning that topic is not mentioned at all.

Matching tasks (matching headings to paragraphs, matching statements to speakers, matching headings to parts of a diagram, matching statements to the different paragraphs or topics, etc)

33. Matching headings tasks are usually given before the text.
34. In matching tasks there is always an example question (question 0 matched to one of the options), so you should cross off that option.
35. In matching tasks, there are extra options which you don't need.
36. In matching tasks, the extra options which you don't need are always wrong and cannot be matched to any of the places in the text (i.e. they are not just less good options).
37. Some of the extra things which you don't need are similar to the correct options.

Gap filling tasks (table completion, sentence completion, short answers to questions, etc)

38. In some tasks there are no options given and so you need to write your own choice of words and/ or numbers from the text in the gaps.
39. Gapfilling tasks have fewer tricks than other kinds of tasks such as multiple choice.
40. The number of words and/ or numbers which you should write in the gaps can vary from task to task and from test to test.
41. It's very important to notice if the task says "or" or "and/ or", as in "two words or a number" or "two words and/ or a number".

42. Gaps can be filled with words taken directly from the text, without needing to make any changes to those words.
43. The words around a gap in the question will be different from the words around the answer word(s) in the text.
44. There are no half marks. Any mistake (e.g. grammar mistake, spelling mistake or punctuation mistake) means no mark.
45. If you are not sure about the correct use of capital letter, it's probably okay to write answers in all capitals ("E-CAR" etc).

Summary questions

46. There is sometimes a question about the topic of the whole text.
47. There is sometimes a question about the attitude of the writer.
48. You won't have time to read the whole text again to answer the summary question.

Check as a class or with the suggested answers. Some are debateable, so please check if you classified something differently.

Discuss how you can use the things that make the exam easier and tackle the things that make the exam more difficult.

Suggested answers

Brackets () mean an answer is less common, e.g. only true for a few people.

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4. You are expected to know some academic vocabulary that an educated native speaker with no specialist knowledge of the topic would usually know, e.g. “ecological” or “neuroscientist”. -
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6. There are around ten different kinds of IELTS Reading question (true/ false/ not given, multiple choice, matching headings, etc). -
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8. Any of the three texts could have any of the question types with it. -
9. One text usually has three different kinds of questions with it (e.g. matching headings to paragraphs, then Yes/ No/ Not given, then summary completion). -
10. When there are two different tasks with one text, the answers to the second task usually come after the answers to the first task. +
11. When there are two or more different tasks with one text, they are usually already in the most obvious order to do them in. In other words, the first task given is probably the best task to do first. +
12. Each answer can usually be found in between a few words and two sentences of text (rather than in a whole paragraph or spread through the whole text). +
13. If you are going to read through the text first, you don't have more than three minutes to do so. -
14. If you are going to read through the text first, it should only be to find out where the information is, so you can skip to the next paragraph as soon as you know the topic of the one that you are reading. +
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23. Some of the wrong options have completely different or opposite meanings of what is said in the text. +
24. Some of the wrong options only have slightly different meanings from what is said in

the text. -

- 25. Some options are incorrect because that thing is not mentioned in the text. -
- 26. If you can't find the right option, you can almost always cross off the two wrong options and then just choose the one option which is left. +
- 27. Some multiple choice questions test your understanding of the whole text. -
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- 51. "Not given" sometimes means that there is nothing similar to the question in the text, meaning that topic is not mentioned at all. -

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