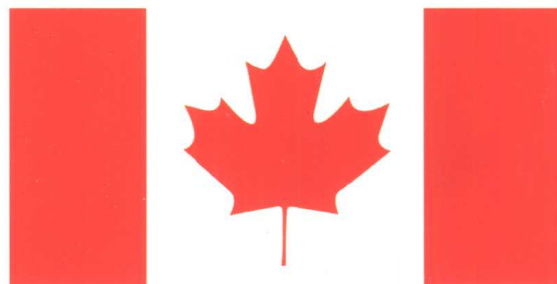


雅思考试

(IELTS)学术类阅读理解



胡 敏 主编

[英] Paul White 著
[加] Nevin Blumer

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胡敏 新东方学校执行校长、雅思培训创始人，著名英语教学与测试专家，文学硕士，留英学者。19岁英语本科毕业，28岁破格晋升副教授，

原北京国际关系学院英文系副主任、英语专业硕士生导师。从事高校英语教育

事业近二十年，多次获优秀教师称号、青年教师讲课比赛优胜奖，荣获北

京市第五届哲学社会科学优秀成果二等奖，在全国各种英语语言文学专业学

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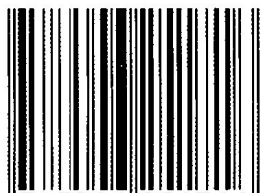
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主 编: 胡 敏

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Tips and Hints to Help You Raise Your Score

At first glance, the reading comprehension section of the IELTS examination may seem difficult, nearly impossible. The test is filled with a startling amount of concrete data and lots of very specific terminology. At first this may all seem very scary. Yet, the IELTS test is in fact very simple. You see, although specific passages and questions may change, there is a formula to how the IELTS test is made. Once you begin to understand a few basic principles—the so-called “golden rules”—taking the IELTS no longer seems difficult at all. After you understand these basic rules and begin to apply them, you can quickly and easily raise your test score. Our goal then is to reveal these principles and help you master the IELTS.

I . Article Choice

Primarily, we should briefly discuss the sorts of articles used in the IELTS exam. The articles of the IELTS examination all have a business, social science, or hard science focus. IELTS test makers love to choose very, very specific topics. Perhaps the students will have no background knowledge in these topics. Yet, as we shall see later, there is no need for such knowledge. In fact, if you try to rely on your background knowledge while answering IELTS questions, you will often find yourself in trouble. So if you encounter a topic you know little about, do not worry. Soon you will know how to deal with such a topic and make the correct answer.

Additionally, the IELTS test makers love to fill their test passages with a lot of numbers, dates, and special terminology. IELTS tests are extremely specific. This may seem overwhelming to the test taker. But as we shall soon find out, these dates, numbers, and data results are actually our tools. These are our

friends. You do not need to memorize or master the entire content of an IELTS article. In fact, since the IELTS test makers like to focus their attention on specific details, there is little need to understand the “main idea” of the reading passages. Most questions are related to specific information written explicitly in the text. The answers are all right there before you! There is little need to reason on your own. Once you know how to read properly, finding these answers becomes extremely easy. Once the answers are located, the test should pose no trouble at all, and your score will rise.

II . Main Problems Test Takers May Have and How to Deal With Them

Since, as we have said and will explain at detail in a moment, all the test answers are right there in front of you, the trick is simply finding them. This would not be a problem if we had all day to take the test. Unfortunately, our time is limited; we only have a total of one hour to take the test. The problem of time is very important. The way *not* to deal with this is to get nervous and flustered. Instead, you should simply apply some of our golden rules as you read the test passage. Knowing what to look for as you read—a method we will explain below—will solve this problem. Again, relax and don't try to read too quickly. Read *well*.

Another potential problem students may have is vocabulary. As we have said, the vocabulary used in the IELTS examination is very specific and sometimes appears very tricky. Although this is so, the problem is very easily solved. All the words essential to understanding the text will actually be defined within the text itself. If it is not defined for you, the word is probably not important. Even if a question is asked about a word you are unfamiliar with, there are ways to deal with it, as we shall see below.

III . Structure of the Test

The reading comprehension section of the IELTS test consists of three short reading sections one or two pages in length. Each reading passage is followed by thirteen to fourteen questions. These questions are normally one of eight types, although there is some variation. These eight types are as follows: Sentence

Completion, Multiple Choice, True/False/Not Given (Yes/No/Not Given), List of Headings, Table Completion, Summary and Matching. There are specific methods of dealing with each of these sections. There are additionally some basic principles that can be applied to all of the sections. We will at first discuss these basic principles, the “golden rules,” and then discuss each individual section at greater length.

IV. Universal Principles

A. The Answers Are All in Front of You

Unlike other standardized tests, the GRE for example, the IELTS tests language alone. What does this mean to you the test taker? This means that IELTS test questions do not test your ability to reason. The IELTS test makers *will not* give you information and then ask you to draw a conclusion based upon this information. Instead, they will give you information and ask you about that information. Basically, they will ask you to repeat that information they just gave you. The answers are all in front of you!

How does this work?

Well, although you may be occasionally asked a question about the main idea of a passage or asked to choose a “suitable title” for the passage, most questions will concern very specific information given in the text. Yet, you will not be asked to do much more than repeat this information back to the test makers. You will not be asked to draw a conclusion based upon this information. Take the following excerpt for example:

“Research in Britain has shown that ‘green consumers’ continue to flourish as a significant group amongst shoppers. This suggests that politicians who claim environmentalism is yesterday’s issue may be seriously misjudging the public mood.” Based upon this passage, you will never be asked a question like:

“There has been a continued presence of ‘green consumers’ in the British market because of...”

A. rise of the Green party.

B. concern with global warming.

C. fear of Mad Cow Disease.

D. concern with general state of environment.

None of these answers are given in the text. Thus, the IELTS test makers would not ask such a question.

Instead, they ask questions like:

"Politicians may have 'misjudged the public mood' because..."

A. they are pre-occupied with the recession and financial problems.

B. there is more widespread interest in the environmental agenda than they anticipated.

C. consumer spending has increased significantly as a result of 'green' pressure.

D. shoppers are displeased with government policies on a range of issues.

As the text clearly states, politicians who believe that consumers are no longer concerned with environmental issues have misjudged the public mood. The answer is right there before us. This is how the IELTS test works. The right answer is "B".

There are a few exceptions to this rule, as we shall see in a bit. But at least we now know our task. Our task is *not* to master or memorize the information before us; it *is* to know what sort of information the IELTS test makers are looking for. Since we know all the answers will be there before us, we just need to know how to look for them as we read. If we know what to look for as we read, we can find answers before we even know what the questions are.

B. Vocabulary—Context Is Key

Due to the very specific nature of the IELTS articles there is bound to be much vocabulary unfamiliar to the reader. This should not be a cause for concern. In fact, the IELTS test makers seem to have designed the test so that vocabulary does not become a problem at all. Once we know a few certain principles about dealing with vocabulary, these test passages will not seem difficult at all.

Of course, the best way to prepare for this examination is to increase your vocabulary level. An excellent way for doing this is to read extensively. Since the IELTS sources are all business or science oriented, study of business journals, newspapers, and articles on specific societal trends is ideal. Yet, our time is too

limited to read all the time. We cannot master the *entire* English vocabulary.

A much simpler method is to use another one of our golden rules to deal with the IELTS vocabulary. This rule is: **context is key**. One of the features of the IELTS test is that, in reality, the vocabulary used in a certain text does not need to be mastered. All of the information necessary to deal with unfamiliar words will be given within the reading passage itself.

For example, the IELTS test makers love to introduce a difficult word as part of the topic of one of the reading passages. Take the word “biometrics” for example. Very few English speakers know this word, as it is relatively new and not very frequently used. Yet, the test makers do not simply give us this word with no explanation. “Biometrics” is defined within the text for us. We are told that it is a “little-known but fast-growing technology that involves the use of physical or biological characteristics to identify individuals.” Thus, the meaning is given to us. If we pay close attention and don’t forget our golden rule—context is key—we will always be able to find the definitions of these potentially unfamiliar words. It is as if the IELTS test makers are being nice to us.

Take an article about port cities for example. Again, most English speakers can probably not distinguish between a port and a harbour. These words might be potentially problematic. But what will the IELTS test makers do to make it easier? They will clearly define the two terms within the article. “Harbour is a physical concept, a shelter for ships; port is an economic concept, a center of land-sea exchange which requires good access to a hinterland even more than a sea-linked foreland.” The two confusing terms are cleared up before any questions about either are asked. The IELTS test makers would not give us words so important to the text without defining them for us. The test taker should not worry. Just read carefully, find these definitions from context, and there will be no problems.

There are times, it must be admitted, when very specific questions concerning tricky vocabulary are asked. Here, too, the IELTS test makers are merciful. This sort of question is best illustrated through example. In the following excerpt we read:

“The genetic inheritance a baby receives from its parents at the moment of conception fixes much of its later development, determining characteristics as varied as whether it will have blue eyes or suffer from a life-threatening

illness such as cystic fibrosis... In 1986, American researchers identified the genetic defect underlying one type of muscular dystrophy. In 1989, a team of American and Canadian biologists announced that they had found the site of the gene which, when defective, gives rise to cystic fibrosis."

If we are asked to complete the following sentence:

"The second success of research into genetic defect was to find the cause of..." As the passage states, the missing word in this sentence is "cystic fibrosis". Although we may have no idea what "cystic fibrosis" is, we don't need to. (In fact the term is defined earlier in the article.) All we need to do is understand the context surrounding the word. We can treat "cystic fibrosis" as if it were the variable x in a mathematic equation. We don't need to know what it is or how to define it. Knowing how it relates to other words is important enough.

The IELTS test makers would never ask us something like, *"Why is cystic fibrosis a genetic defect?"* This would require us to master the word. Instead, the IELTS examination tests our ability to understand things in context. Once we understand this golden rule we won't get nervous when we see a new word. We know that it will either be defined for us, or we will only need to understand it within context. Knowing this, we can read and answer questions confidently.

This principle—context is key—can also be applied in one other way. The IELTS test makers sometimes use difficult expressions or even colloquial terms that will not be tested directly. Still, these terms are essential to understanding the passage as a whole. For example, in the following passage, we are told:

"The consumer research manager for Mintel, Angela Hughes, said it (environmental consumerism) has become firmly established as a mainstream market. She explained that as far as the average person is concerned environmentalism has not 'gone off the boil'. In fact, it has spread across a much wider range of consumer groups, ages and occupations."

The term "gone off the boil" is only used in Britain. It is unfamiliar to many English and probably will be so to the test taker. But, as in our previous examples, context lets us understand this term.

By paying close attention to the conjunctions and words around the phrase we can guess its meaning. The phrase *"in fact"* is a good clue. In this sentence for

example, the phrase “in fact” lets us know that what we expected did not happen. Instead, what happened was the growth of environmental consumerism. So what was expected to happen, therefore, must have been the decline of interest in environmental consumerism. Without fully understanding the term “off the boil”, we now know that it means the lessening of interest (in environmental causes).

This method of looking at context is not limited to use with colloquial expressions. Whenever we see expressions like “but”, “however”, “on the other hand”, and “instead”, we know that what was just stated is now being contradicted or denied. When we see terms like “as well”, “in addition”, and “moreover”, we know that support is being given to the previous phrase. Pay close attention to the word choice of a sentence. Context is key. With this principle, everything will become clear.

C. What Are the Answers—Hotspots

Lists, survey data, experiment results, numbers, dates and other such information are the “hotspots” of an IELTS test. In other words, when we encounter these things within a text, we should immediately take note. These will be our tools for tracking down the answers to particular questions. Typically IELTS test questions will ask you to do no more than repeat information provided in the text. It is not essential to remember this information. There is too much to remember anyway. All we must do is to find this information. Yet, in the process of finding it, there are certain methods that are faster than others.

Primarily, we should use things like dates, numbers, and symbols (things like \$,&, etc.). These things really stand out as you look at a page and are thus easily located. If you see a reference in one of the questions to the figure “\$ 444,000”, you now know the answer to this question will be located next to that same figure in the text. If you find that number, you have found the answer to this question. This fact is what makes these hotspots so important. If you see a reference in the question to “1937”, for example, this date will be very easy to find in the article. Next to this date, you will find the answer. This method works so well because the test questions of the IELTS are so specific.

Take the following except for example:

“The changing awareness has been most marked in English-speaking

countries, where the revelation has gradually dawned that by no means everyone in the world knows English well enough to negotiate in it. This is especially a problem when English is not an official language of public administration, as in most parts of the Far East, Russia, Eastern Europe, the Arab world, Latin America and French-speaking Africa."

Once we see this list of country names, a typical hotspot, we should immediately take note. Why should we take note? Although there are no numbers or data, there are many proper nouns. These proper nouns, in this case, country names, are very easy to find in the text. The surrounding words may be hard to scan—you might have to stop and read them to make sense of them—but hotspots are very easy to find. Here there are far too many countries to remember. We don't have to, however. In fact, we might not even read this section. We will scan our text and our questions for hotspots, and then use them to find the answers.

Sure enough, here is a question asking, "*An example of a part of the world where people may have difficulty in negotiating in English is...*" Reading this question, we are immediately aware they are looking for a country name. Since we have already noted our potential hotspot, it is no trouble to turn the page and find it. Any country will do. We fill in the blank with "Latin America," for example, and are done. Using our hotspot method, we guessed the answer before we even knew the question.

This method of finding hotspots will be even clearer after we discuss our next golden rule—Scan, Scan, Read, Read.

D. Reading Methods—Scan, Scan, Read, Read

The articles used in the IELTS examination are very difficult and very time consuming. The test taker may not be able to completely finish the entire passage in the given amount of time. Do not worry. There are certain tips that can be used to guide you through the text to the right answers. Let us explain this to you as we walk you through the IELTS test.

What should you do immediately after beginning the reading comprehension section of the IELTS examination? First, briefly scan the passage. Look for things that do not change, things that stand out, like dates, numbers, and place names.

These specific things—our hotspots—are very easy to see on the page. A number, “\$ 444,000” for example, is very easy to see. First glance at all of these areas and try to retain an idea of where they are located within the text. Do not *read* the text at this point. Simply *scan* it. By this we mean, just glance over it, spending a few brief moments to pick out the most visible details and making a note indicating where they lay.

Next, scan over the questions. Are any numbers or dates included in these questions? If there are, the answer should be easy to find. Let us review very briefly. Using the unchanging elements of the questions—things like dates, amounts of money, and proper names—we can locate the answer. Some people like to call this the “nutcracker” method. If we can find unchanging elements of the reading passages, we can use them to crack open the figurative “nut”. This nut is our answer. These unchanging elements are our hotspots, easily recognized in the text and effortlessly found.

After you scan the questions, return to the reading passage. Here we actually *read* the passage. However, we still do not take the time to read the *entire* passage. This time simply read the first and last sentence of each paragraph. This will give us a very good idea where information is to be located in an article. We will now know which paragraph deals with this particular topic, and all information concerning that topic will be found there. This means that we can now locate answers easily within the text. We will discuss this more in just a bit.

Now, having read the first and last sentence of each paragraph, we return to the questions. This time we do more than scan the questions; we read them. After reading the questions, we know exactly what they relate to. Knowing this, we can begin to find the answers. After all, the answers are all there in front of us. Our hotspots and familiarity with the main topic of each paragraph should help us find these answers with ease.

Even if we still cannot find the answer through our hotspots method, we now have a pretty good idea where it may be. Although we may still have to look for that particular answer, we by now should know which paragraph it is located in. Having read the first and last sentence of each paragraph should allow us to do this easily. If the information is not given in the first or last sentence of a paragraph, then next examine the example given in that paragraph. This is an extremely

important step, in most cases, the information will be given here. So if you see a reference to a particular company, country, or even individual, begin by inspecting that section; the answer is likeliest to be found there.

If, after having read the first sentence, the last sentence, and the example of a paragraph, you still have not found the answer, only then should you read the entire paragraph. Importantly, this is the first time we actually read an entire section of the passage. Actually reading the entire text is a last resort step. Since we know our time is limited, and we have no need to actually read the entire test passage, we should only resort to this step if we still haven't found the answer. Even here, we do not read the entire reading passage. We simply read the relevant paragraph, which we will have found through our examinations of the examples.

It should be emphasized that most questions will be of a specific nature and most likely found through the use of our hotspots. If the question is of a broader nature, the question will typically indicate to you the paragraphs it is referring to. Thus first read the opening and concluding sentences of the paragraph, then the example, and, only if still needed, the entire paragraph. On a larger scale, however, the best method is scan the text, scan the questions, read the first and last sentences of each paragraph, and then read the questions. Scan, scan, read, read.

E. Mental Map

Another method of dealing with the extremely large amount of information given in each IELTS reading passage is to make a mental map. By "mental map", we mean that as you scan the text try to remember where certain topics are located. You construct for yourself a mental image of where these topics were raised. Then when you later have to answer a specific question about this topic, you can easily find the area in the text that the topic is mentioned in. Since there is simply no method to memorize all the information given, even for a native English speaker, this principle in use with the other principles already introduced will aid us in finding information. Although we have identified many hotspots that will help us find answers, we should still remind ourselves to get an overall picture of the text.

In order to answer the test questions, one will need to make constant