

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 137 - The Motor Car

READING PASSAGE 137

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 14-26 which are based on Reading Passage 137 below.



The Motor Car

A There are now over 700 million motor vehicles in the world - and the number is rising by more than 40 million each year. The average distance driven by car users is growing too - from 8 km a day per person in western Europe in 1965 to 25 km a day in 1995. This dependence on motor vehicles has given rise to major problems, including environmental pollution, depletion of oil resources, traffic congestion and safety.

B While emissions from new cars are far less harmful than they used to be, city streets and motorways are becoming more crowded than ever, often with older trucks, buses and taxis, which emit excessive levels of smoke and fumes. This concentration of vehicles makes air quality in urban areas unpleasant and sometimes dangerous to breathe. Even Moscow has joined the list of capitals afflicted by congestion and traffic fumes. In Mexico City, vehicle pollution is a major health hazard.

C Until a hundred years ago, most journeys were in the 20 km range, the distance conveniently accessible by horse. Heavy freight could only be carried by water or rail. The invention of the motor vehicle brought personal mobility to the masses and made rapid freight delivery possible over a much wider area. Today about 90 per cent of inland freight in the United Kingdom is carried by road. Clearly the world cannot revert to the horse-drawn wagon. Can it avoid being locked into congested and polluting ways of transporting people and goods?

D In Europe most cities are still designed for the old modes of transport. Adaptation to the motor car has involved adding ring roads, one-way systems and parking lots. In the United States, more land is assigned to car use than to housing. Urban sprawl means that life without a car is next to impossible. Mass use of motor vehicles has also killed or injured millions of people. Other social effects have been blamed on the car such as alienation and aggressive human behaviour.

E A 1993 study by the European Federation for Transport and Environment found that car transport is seven times as costly as rail travel in terms of the external social costs it entails such as congestion, accidents, pollution, loss of cropland and natural habitats, depletion of oil resources, and so on. Yet cars easily surpass trains or buses as a flexible and convenient mode of personal transport. It is unrealistic to expect people to give up private cars in favour of mass transit.

F Technical solutions can reduce the pollution problem and increase the fuel efficiency of engines. But fuel consumption and exhaust emissions depend on which cars are preferred by customers and how they are driven. Many people buy larger cars than they need for daily purposes or waste fuel by driving aggressively.

Besides, global car use is increasing at a faster rate than the improvement in emissions and fuel efficiency which technology is now making possible.

G One solution that has been put forward is the long-term solution of designing cities and neighbourhoods so that car journeys are not necessary - all essential services being located within walking distance or easily accessible by public transport. Not only would this save energy and cut carbon dioxide emissions, it would also enhance the quality of community life, putting the emphasis on people instead of cars. Good local government is already bringing this about in some places. But few democratic communities are blessed with the vision - and the capital - to make such profound changes in modern lifestyles.

H A more likely scenario seems to be a combination of mass transit systems for travel into and around cities, with small 'low emission' cars for urban use and larger hybrid or lean burn cars for use elsewhere. Electronically tolled highways might be used to ensure that drivers pay charges geared to actual road use. Better integration of transport systems is also highly desirable - and made more feasible by modern computers. But these are solutions for countries which can afford them. In most developing countries, old cars and old technologies continue to predominate.

Questions 14-19

Reading Passage 39 has eight paragraphs (**A-H**). Which paragraphs concentrate on the following information?

Write the appropriate letters (**A-H**) in boxes 14-19 on your answer sheet.

NB You need only **write ONE letter** for each answer.

14 a comparison of past and present transportation methods

15 how driving habits contribute to road problems

16 the relative merits of cars and public transport

17 the writer's own prediction of future solutions

18 the increasing use of motor vehicles

19 the impact of the car on city development

Questions 20-26

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 2? In boxes 20-26 on your answer sheet write

YES if the statement agrees with the information

NO if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this in the passage

20 Vehicle pollution is worse in European cities than anywhere else.

21 Transport by horse would be a useful alternative to motor vehicles.

22 Nowadays freight is not carried by water in the United Kingdom.

23 Most European cities were not designed for motor vehicles.

24 Technology alone cannot solve the problem of vehicle pollution.

25 People's choice of car and attitude to driving is a factor in the pollution problem.

26 Redesigning cities would be a short-term solution.

Answer:

14. C

15. F

16. E

17. H

18. A

19. D

20. NOTGIVEN

21. NO

22. NOTGIVEN

23. YES

24. YES

25. YES

26. NO

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 138 - Implementing the Cycle of Success

READING PASSAGE : 138

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1-13 which are based on Reading Passage 138 below :

IMPLEMENTING THE CYCLE OF SUCCESS: A CASE STUDY

Within Australia, Australian Hotels Inc (AHI) operates nine hotels and employs over 2000 permanent full-time staff, 300 permanent part-time employees and 100 casual staff. One of its latest ventures, the Sydney Airport hotel (SAH), opened in March 1995. The hotel is the closest to Sydney Airport and is designed to provide the best available accommodation, food and beverage and meeting facilities in Sydney's southern suburbs. Similar to many international hotel chains, however, AHI has experienced difficulties in Australia in providing long-term profits for hotel owners, as a result of the country's high labour-cost structure. In order to develop an economically viable hotel organisation model, AHI decided to implement some new policies and practices at SAH.

The first of the initiatives was an organisational structure with only three levels of management - compared to the traditional seven. Partly as a result of this change, there are 25 per cent fewer management positions, enabling a significant saving. This change also has other implications. Communication, both up and down the organisation, has greatly improved. Decision-making has been forced down in many cases to front-line employees. As a result, guest requests are usually met without reference to a supervisor, improving both customer and employee satisfaction.

The hotel also recognised that it would need a different approach to selecting employees who would fit in with its new policies. In its advertisements, the hotel stated a preference for people with some 'service' experience in order to minimize traditional work practices being introduced into the hotel. Over 7000 applicants filled in application forms for the 120 jobs initially offered at SAH. The balance of the positions at the hotel (30 management and 40 shift leader positions) were predominantly filled by transfers from other AHI properties.

A series of tests and interviews were conducted with potential employees, which eventually left 280 applicants competing for the 120 advertised positions. After the final interview, potential recruits were divided into three categories. Category A was for applicants exhibiting strong leadership qualities, Category C was for applicants perceived to be followers, and Category B was for applicants with both leader and follower qualities. Department heads and shift leaders then composed prospective teams using a combination of people from all three categories. Once suitable teams were formed, offers of employment were made to team members.

Another major initiative by SAH was to adopt a totally multi-skilled workforce. Although there may be some limitations with highly technical jobs such as cooking or maintenance, wherever possible, employees at SAH are able to work in a wide variety of positions. A multi-skilled workforce provides far greater management flexibility during peak and quiet times to transfer employees to needed positions. For example, when office staff are away on holidays during quiet periods of the year, employees in either food or beverage or housekeeping departments can temporarily fill the most crucial way, however, of improving the labour cost structure at SAH was to find better, more productive ways of providing customer service. SAH management concluded this would first require a process of 'benchmarking'. The prime objective of the benchmarking process was to compare a range of service delivery processes across a range of criteria using teams made up of employees from different departments within the hotel which interacted with each other. This process resulted in performance measures that greatly enhanced SAH's ability to improve productivity and quality.

The front office team discovered through this project that a high proportion of AHI Club member reservations were incomplete. As a result, the service provided to these guests was below the standard promised to them as part of their membership agreement. Reducing the number of incomplete reservations greatly improved guest perceptions of service.

In addition, a program modeled on an earlier project called 'Take Charge' was implemented. Essentially, Take Charge provides an effective feedback loop from both customers and employees. Customer comments, both positive and negative, are recorded by staff. These are collated regularly to identify opportunities for improvement. Just as importantly, employees are requested to note down their own suggestions for improvement. (AHI has set an expectation that employees will submit at least three suggestions for every one they receive from a customer.) Employee feedback is reviewed daily and suggestions are implemented within 48 hours, if possible, or a valid reason is given for non-implementation. If suggestions require analysis or data collection, the Take Charge team has 30 days in which to address the issue and come up with recommendations.

Although quantitative evidence of AHI's initiatives at SAH are limited at present, anecdotal evidence clearly suggests that these practices are working. Indeed AHI is progressively rolling out these initiatives in other hotels in Australia, whilst numerous overseas visitors have come to see how the program works.

[This article has been adapted and condensed from the article by R. Carter (1996), 'Implementing the cycle of success: A case study of the Sheraton Pacific Division', Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 34(3): 111-23. Names and other details have been changed and report findings may have been given a different emphasis from the original. We are grateful to the author and Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources for allowing us to use the material in this way.]

Questions 1-5

Choose the appropriate letters A-D and write them in boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet.

1 The high costs of running AHI's hotels are related to their

- A management.
- B size.
- C staff.
- D policies.

2 SAH's new organisational structure requires

- A 75% of the old management positions.
- B 25% of the old management positions.
- C 25% more management positions.
- D 5% fewer management positions.

3 The SAH's approach to organisational structure required changing practices in

- A industrial relations.
- B firing staff.
- C hiring staff.
- D marketing.

4 The total number of jobs advertised at the SAH was

- A 70.
- B 120.
- C 170.
- D 280.

5 Categories A, B and C were used to select.....

- A front office staff.
- B new teams.
- C department heads.
- D new managers.

Questions 6-13

Complete the following summary of the last four paragraphs of Reading Passage 38 using **ONE OR TWO WORDS** from the Reading Passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 6-13 on your answer sheet.

WHAT THEY DID AT SAH

Teams of employees were selected from different hotel departments to participate in a (6) exercise. The information collected was used to compare (7) processes which, in turn, led to the development of (8)that would be used to increase the hotel's capacity to improve (9).....as well as quality. Also, an older program known as (10) was introduced at SAH. In this program,..... (11).....is sought from customers and staff. Wherever possible (12)suggestions are implemented within 48 hours. Other suggestions are investigated for their feasibility for a period of up to (1 3)

Answer:

1 C

2 A

3 C

4 B

5 B

6 benchmarking

7 (a range of) service delivery

8 (performance) measures

9productivity

10(') Take Charge (')

11 feedback

12 employee(s) / staff

13 30 days

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 139 - Glass Capturing the Dance of Light

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1-13 which are based on Reading Passage 139 below:

GLASS

Capturing the dance of light

A Glass, in one form or another, has long been in noble service to humans. As one of the most widely used of manufactured materials, and certainly the most versatile, it can be as imposing as a telescope mirror the width of a tennis court or as small and simple as a marble rolling across dirt. The uses of this adaptable material have been broadened dramatically by new technologies: glass fibre optics — more than eight million miles — carrying telephone and television signals across nations, glass ceramics serving as the nose cones of missiles and as crowns for teeth; tiny glass beads taking radiation doses inside the body to specific organs, even a new type of glass fashioned of nuclear waste in order to dispose of that unwanted material.

B On the horizon are optical computers. These could store programs and process information by means of light - pulses from tiny lasers - rather than electrons. And the pulses would travel over glass fibres, not copper wire. These machines could function hundreds of times faster than today's electronic computers and hold vastly more information. Today fibre optics are used to obtain a clearer image of smaller and smaller objects than ever before - even bacterial viruses. A new generation of optical instruments is emerging that can provide detailed imaging of the inner workings of cells. It is the surge in fibre optic use and in liquid crystal displays that has set the U.S. glass industry (a 16 billion dollar business employing some 150,000 workers) to building new plants to meet demand.

C But it is not only in technology and commerce that glass has widened its horizons. The use of glass as art, a tradition spins back at least to Roman times, is also booming. Nearly everywhere, it seems, men and women are blowing glass and creating works of art. «I didn't sell a piece of glass until 1975,» Dale Chihuly said, smiling, for in the 18 years since the end of the dry spell, he has become one of the most financially successful artists of the 20th century. He now has a new commission - a glass sculpture for the headquarters building of a pizza company - for which his fee is half a million dollars.

D But not all the glass technology that touches our lives is ultra-modern. Consider the simple light bulb; at the turn of the century most light bulbs were hand blown, and the cost of one was equivalent to half a day's pay for the average worker. In effect, the invention of the ribbon machine by Corning in the 1920s lighted a nation. The price of a bulb plunged. Small wonder that the machine has been called one of the great mechanical achievements of all time. Yet it is very simple: a narrow ribbon of molten glass travels over a moving belt of steel in which there are holes. The glass sags through the holes and into waiting moulds. Puffs of compressed

air then shape the glass. In this way, the envelope of a light bulb is made by a single machine at the rate of 66,000 an hour, as compared with 1,200 a day produced by a team of four glassblowers.

E The secret of the versatility of glass lies in its interior structure. Although it is rigid, and thus like a solid, the atoms are arranged in a random disordered fashion, characteristic of a liquid. In the melting process, the atoms in the raw materials are disturbed from their normal position in the molecular structure; before they can find their way back to crystalline arrangements the glass cools. This looseness in molecular structure gives the material what engineers call tremendous “formability” which allows technicians to tailor glass to whatever they need.

F Today, scientists continue to experiment with new glass mixtures and building designers test their imaginations with applications of special types of glass. A London architect, Mike Davies, sees even more dramatic buildings using molecular chemistry. “Glass is the great building material of the future, the «dynamic skin»,’ he said. “Think of glass that has been treated to react to electric currents going through it, glass that will change from clear to opaque at the push of a button, that gives you instant curtains. Think of how the tall buildings in New York could perform a symphony of colours as the glass in them is made to change colours instantly.” Glass as instant curtains is available now, but the cost is exorbitant. As for the glass changing colours instantly, that may come true. Mike Davies’s vision may indeed be on the way to fulfilment.

[Adapted from “Glass: Capturing the Dance of Light” by William S. Ellis, National Geographic.]

Questions 1-5

Reading Passage 1 has six paragraphs (**A-F**). Choose the most suitable heading/or each paragraph from the list of headings below. Write the appropriate numbers (**i-x**) in boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet. Paragraph A has been done for you as an example.

NB There are more headings than paragraphs so you will not use all of them. You may use any heading more than once.

Example	Answer
Paragraph A	X

List of Headings

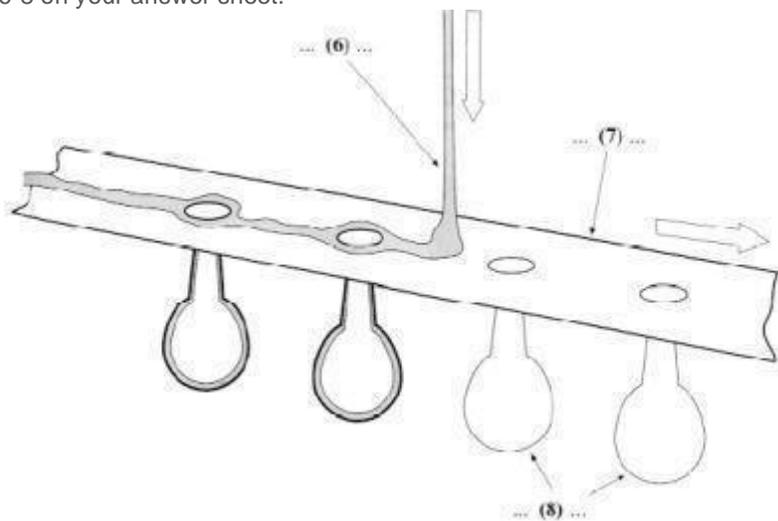
- i** Growth in the market for glass crafts
- ii** Computers and their dependence on glass
- iii** What makes glass so adaptable
- iv** Historical development of glass
- v** Scientists’ dreams cost millions
- vi** Architectural experiments with glass
- vii** Glass art galleries flourish
- viii** Exciting innovations in fibre optics

- ix A former glass technology
 - x Everyday uses of glass
-

- 1 Paragraph B
- 2 Paragraph C
- 3 Paragraph D
- 4 Paragraph E
- 5 Paragraph F

Questions 6-8

The diagram below shows the principle of Comings' ribbon machine. Label the diagram by selecting **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the Reading Passage to fill each numbered space. Write your answers in boxes 6-8 on your answer sheet.



Questions 9-13

Look at the list below of the uses of glass. According to the passage, state whether these uses exist today, will exist in the future or are not mentioned by the writer.

In boxes 9-13 write

- A if the uses exist today
- B if the uses will exist in the future
- C if the uses are not mentioned by the writer

09 dental fittings

10 optical computers

11 sculptures

12 fashions

13 curtains

Answer:

1 viii

2 i

3 ix

4 iii

5 vi

6 molten glass/ ribbon of glass/ molten glass ribbon

7 belt of steel/ steel belt/ moving belt

8 (lightbulb) moulds

9 A

10 B

11 A

12 C

13 A

IELTS Academic Reading Sample 140 - Moles happy as homes go underground

READING PASSAGE : 140

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 13-26 which are based on Reading Passage 140 below.

Moles happy as homes go underground

A The first anybody knew about Dutchman Frank Siegmund and his family was when workmen tramping through a field found a narrow steel chimney protruding through the grass. Closer inspection revealed a chink of sky-light window among the thistles, and when amazed investigators moved down the side of the hill they came across a pine door complete with leaded diamond glass and a brass knocker set into an underground building. The Siegmunds had managed to live undetected for six years outside the border town of Breda, in Holland. They are the latest in a clutch of individualistic homemakers who have burrowed underground in search of tranquillity.

B Most, falling foul of strict building regulations, have been forced to dismantle their individualistic homes and return to more conventional lifestyles. But subterranean suburbia, Dutch-style, is about to become respectable and chic. Seven luxury homes cosseted away inside a high earth-covered noise embankment next to the main Tilburg city road recently went on the market for \$296,500 each. The foundations had yet to be dug, but customers queued up to buy the unusual part-submerged houses, whose back wall consists of a grassy mound and whose front is a long glass gallery.

C The Dutch are not the only would-be moles. Growing numbers of Europeans are burrowing below ground to create houses, offices, discos and shopping malls. It is already proving a way of life in extreme climates; in winter months in Montreal, Canada, for instance, citizens can escape the cold in an underground complex complete with shops and even health clinics. In Tokyo builders are planning a massive underground city to be begun in the next decade, and underground shopping malls are already common in Japan, where 90 percent of the population is squeezed into 20 percent of the landscape.

D Building big commercial buildings underground can be a way to avoid disfiguring or threatening a beautiful or 'environmentally sensitive' landscape. Indeed many of the buildings which consume most land -such as cinemas, supermarkets, theatres, warehouses or libraries -have no need to be on the surface since they do not need windows.

E There are big advantages, too, when it comes to private homes. A development of 194 houses which would take up 14 hectares of land above ground would occupy 2.7 hectares below it, while the number of roads would be halved. Under several metres of earth, noise is minimal and insulation is excellent. "We get 40 to 50 enquiries a week," says Peter Carpenter, secretary of the British Earth Sheltering Association, which builds similar homes in Britain. "People see this as a way of building for the future." An underground dweller himself, Carpenter has never paid a heating bill, thanks to solar panels and natural insulation.

F In Europe the obstacle has been conservative local authorities and developers who prefer to ensure quick sales with conventional mass produced housing. But the Dutch development was greeted with undisguised relief by South Limburg planners because of Holland's chronic shortage of land. It was the Tilburg architect Jo Hurkmans who hit on the idea of making use of noise embankments on main roads. His twofloored, four-bedroomed, twobathroomed detached homes are now taking shape. "They are not so much below the earth as in it," he says. "All the light will come through the glass front, which runs from the second floor ceiling to the ground. Areas which do not need much natural lighting are at the back. The living accommodation is to the front so nobody notices that the back is dark."

G In the US, where energy-efficient homes became popular after the oil crisis of 1973, 10,000 underground houses have been built. A terrace of five homes, Britain's first subterranean development, is under way in Nottinghamshire. Italy's outstanding example of subterranean architecture is the Olivetti residential centre in Ivrea. Commissioned by Roberto Olivetti in 1969, it comprises 82 one-bedroomed apartments and 12 maisonettes and forms a house/ hotel for Olivetti employees. It is built into a hill and little can be seen from outside except a glass facade. Patnzia Vallecchi, a resident since 1992, says it is little different from living in a conventional apartment.

H Not everyone adapts so well, and in Japan scientists at the Shimizu Corporation have developed "space creation" systems which mix light, sounds, breezes and scents to stimulate people who spend long periods below ground. Underground offices in Japan are being equipped with "virtual" windows and mirrors, while underground departments in the University of Minnesota have periscopes to reflect views and light.

I But Frank Siegmund and his family love their hobbit lifestyle. Their home evolved when he dug a cool room for his bakery business in a hill he had created. During a heatwave they took to sleeping there. "We felt at peace and so close to nature," he says. "Gradually I began adding to the rooms. It sounds strange but we are so close to the earth we draw strength from its vibrations. Our children love it; not every child can boast of being watched through their playroom windows by rabbits.

Questions 13-20

Reading Passage 2 has nine paragraphs (A-I). Choose the most suitable heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below.

Write the appropriate numbers (i-xii) in boxes 13 -20 on your answer sheet. Paragraph A has been done for you as an example.

NB *There are more headings than paragraphs so you will not use all of them.*

List of Headings

- i** A designer describes his houses
- ii** Most people prefer conventional housing
- iii** Simulating a natural environment
- iv** How an underground family home developed
- v** Demands on space and energy are reduced

- vi The plans for future homes
- vii Worldwide examples of underground living accommodation
- viii Some buildings do not require natural light
- ix Developing underground services around the world
- x Underground living improves health
- xi Homes sold before completion
- xii An underground home is discovered

- 13 Paragraph B
- 14 Paragraph C
- 15 Paragraph D
- 16 Paragraph E
- 17 Paragraph F
- 18 Paragraph G
- 19 Paragraph H
- 20 Paragraph I

Questions 21-26

Complete the sentences below with words taken from the reading passage. Use **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer. Write your answers in boxes 21-26 on your answer sheet.

- 21 Many developers prefer mass-produced houses because they
- 22 The Dutch development was welcomed by
- 23 Hurkmans' houses are built into
- 24 The Ivrea centre was developed for
- 25 Japanese scientists are helping people underground life.
- 26 Frank Siegmund's first underground room was used for

Answer:

13 xi

14 ix

15 viii

16 v

17 i

18 vii

19 iii

20 iv

21 sell (more) quickly

22 (South Limberg) planners

23 (road/ noise) embarkments

24 (Olivetti) employees

25 adapt to

26 his bakery busmess / a cool room