

BEFORE YOU TAKE THE TEST

1. Read as much as you can in English.
2. Keep a notebook of the words you learn.
3. Try to write these words in a sentence and put these sentences into a paragraph.
4. Learn words in context-not from a word list.
5. Know the types of questions found on the IELTS test.
6. Know the type of information sought on the IELTS test.
7. Know how to make predictions.
8. Know how to skim and scan, to look quickly for information.

DURING THE TEST

1. Read the title and any headings first. Make predictions about the topic.
2. Look over the questions quickly. Make predictions about content and organization.
3. Read the passage at a normal speed. Don't get stuck on parts you don't understand.
4. When you answer the questions, don't spend too much time on the ones you don't feel sure about. Make a guess and go on.
5. After you have answered all the questions, you can go back and check the ones you aren't sure about.
6. Don't spend more than 20 minutes on each passage.

IELTS Reading Skills

In order to understand a reading passage, you need to understand the context of a passage. You need to have a clue about the topic. When you pick up a paper to read, you scan the headlines and choose an article that interests you. The clues in the newspaper (headlines, graphics, photos) catch your eye and give you a context.

A passage on the IELTS is given to you; you did not choose to read it. There are few clues. You do not know what it is about. It may or may not interest you. Yet in order to understand it, you need some clues to help you understand the passage. Without the clues, you will not understand it very well. To score well on the IELTS, you should determine what you know and what you need to know.

When you look at a passage, you must make some predictions about the passage.

What is the passage about?

What is the main idea?

Who are the characters?

When are things taking place?

Where is it happening?

Why is it important?

You want to know who, what, when, where, and why.

In this section you will learn how the following can give you the answers to: *Who? What? When?*

Where? and *Why?*

Using the first paragraph

Using the topic sentences Using specific details
Using the questions and answers

Using the First Paragraph to Make Predictions

The first paragraphs of a passage can help you make predictions about the context of a passage.

The first paragraph often contains

- the topic sentence (a summary of the main idea of the passage)
- a definition of the topic
- the author's opinion
- clues to the organization of the passage

If you understand the first paragraph, you will understand the topic, the author's opinion (if any), and where to look for information within the passage.

Read this first paragraph of a passage on the illness, obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCR) is clinically diagnosed as an anxiety disorder. This disorder affects up to 4 percent of adults and children. People who suffer from this debilitating disorder have distressing and obsessive thoughts, which usually cause them to perform repetitive behaviors' such as counting silently or washing their hands. Though OCR sufferers understand that their obsessions are unrealistic, they find it stressful to put these intrusive thoughts out of their minds. Those who suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder develop strict behavioral' patterns that become extremely time-consuming and begin to interfere with daily routines. Many people with OCR delay seeking treatment because they are ashamed of their own thoughts and behavior.

Topic Sentence

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is clinically diagnosed as an anxiety disorder.

Definition of Topic

People who suffer from this debilitating disorder have distressing and obsessive thoughts, which usually cause them to perform repetitive behaviors.

Author's Opinion

None given.

Organizational Clues

The author may discuss

- Obsessive behavior,
- Stress of sufferers, and/or
- Treatment

▶▶ PRACTICE 1

Read these introductory paragraphs to other passages. Make predictions about the topics using these first paragraphs.

1. The spread of wildfire is a natural phenomenon that occurs throughout the world and is especially common in forested areas of North America, Australia, and Europe. Locations that receive plenty of rainfall but also experience periods of intense heat or drought are particularly susceptible to wildfires. As plant matter dries out, it becomes brittle and highly flammable. In this way, many wildfires are seasonal, ignited by natural causes, most specifically lightning. However, human carelessness and vandalism also account for thousands of wildfires around the globe each year. To gain a clear understanding of how wildfires spread, it is necessary to analyze what it takes to both create and control these fires.

2. The term "bird brain" has long been a common means of expressing doubts about a person's intelligence. In reality, birds may actually be a great deal more intelligent than humans have given them credit for. For a long time, scientists considered birds to be of lesser intelligence because the cerebral cortex, the part of the brain that humans and other animals use for intelligence, is relatively small in size. Now scientists understand that birds actually use a different part of their brain, the hyperstriatum, for intelligence. Observations of different species of birds, both in the wild and in captivity, have shown a great deal of evidence of high levels of avian intelligence.

3. In 1834, a little girl was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts. She would grow up to become one of the richest women in the world. Her name was Petty Green, but she was known to many as the Witch of Wall Street.

Answer Key for Target-1

1. Topic Sentence. The spread of wildfire is a natural phenomenon that occurs throughout the world and is especially common in forested areas of North America, Australia, and Europe.

Definition of Topic. Locations that receive plenty of rainfall but also experience periods of intense heat or drought are particularly susceptible to wildfires.

Author's Opinion. None given.

Organizational Clues. Author may discuss

- How wildfires start
- How to control wildfires
- Wildfires as a global problem

2. Topic Sentence. In reality, birds may actually be a great deal more intelligent than humans have given them credit for.

Definition of Topic. For a long time, scientists considered birds to be of lesser intelligence because the cerebral cortex, the part of the brain that humans and other animals use for intelligence, is relatively small in size.

Author's Opinion. None given.

Organizational Clues. Author may discuss

- Misunderstandings about the intelligence of birds . The anatomy of a bird's brain
- Evidence of avian intelligence

3. Topic Sentence. She would grow up to become one of the richest women in the world.

Definition of Topic. Her name was Petty Green, but she was known to many as the Witch of Wall Street. Author's Opinion. None given.

Organizational Clues. Author may discuss

- Petty Green's early years
- How Petty Green got rich
- Why Petty Green had a nickname

IELTS Reading - Target #2

Using the Topic Sentence to Make Predictions

Every paragraph has a key sentence called a topic sentence. This topic sentence explains what a paragraph is about. If you understand the general idea, you can look for the specific details which support the idea.

Read the second paragraph of the passage on OCR. The first sentence happens to be the topic sentence.

OCR sufferers experience worries that are both unreasonable and excessive and that act as a constant source of internal tension. Fear of dirt and contamination are very common obsessive thoughts. The obsession with orderliness and cleanliness is also common. In other cases, persistent thoughts are centered on doubts, such as whether or not a door is locked or a window is off. Impulses, such as the urge to swear in public or to pull a fire alarm, are other types of OCR symptoms. If a person diagnosed with OCR, a sufferer must exhibit obsessions and/or compulsions that take up a considerable amount of time (usually one hour per day).

Topic Sentence

OCR sufferers experience worries that are both unreasonable and excessive and that act as a constant source of internal tension.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What are unreasonable worries?
- What are excessive worries?

▶▶ PRACTICE 2

Read these paragraphs. Underline the topic sentence. Ask one or two questions about the Topic sentence.

1. To combat excessive thoughts and impulses, most OCR sufferers perform certain repetitive rituals that they believe will reduce their anxiety. These compulsions can be either mental or behavioral in nature. Common rituals include excessive checking and praying. Over time, OCR sufferers attach strict rules to their compulsions. For example, a woman who is obsessed with cleanliness might wash her hands three times before having a meal in order to get the thought of the dirty dishes or silverware out of her mind. However, in many cases, the compulsions aren't related to the obsession at all. A man obsessed with the image of himself might count silently up to 500 or touch a specific chair over and over in order to block the images. Holding onto objects that are discarded, such as newspapers and empty containers, is another common compulsion.

2. OCR symptoms generally begin between the age of 10 and 24 and continue indefinitely until a person seeks treatment. Childhood upbringing does not seem to be part of the cause of the disorder, though stress can make the symptoms stronger. Thousands of studies of OCR have been researched greatly and point to a number of different genetic factors. While studies show that

anxiety disorders are often passed down through families, the specific symptoms for each family member are not. For example, a mother who is obsessed with order may have a son who can't stop thinking about a single word or number.

3. Research on OCR sufferers has found certain physiological trends. In particular, many studies show an overactivity in certain areas of the brain. As a result of this increase in blood flow, the serotonergic system, which regulates emotion, does not function effectively. Studies have also shown that OCR sufferers have less serotonin than the average person. This trend is also observed in Tourette syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. People who developed tics as children are more susceptible to OCR as well. Many reports of OCR point to infections that can trigger the disorder, namely streptococcal infections. It is believed that a case of childhood strep throat can elicit a response from the immune system that produces certain anxiety disorders, such as OCR.



Answer Key

1. Topic Sentence. To combat excessive thoughts and impulses, most OCR sufferers perform certain repetitive rituals that they believe will relieve their anxiety.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What types of rituals do they perform?
- How does this help them?

2. Topic Sentence. A child's upbringing does not seem to be part of the cause of the disorder, though stress can be a stronger factor.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Was the disorder present at birth?
- Are there outside factors involved?
- What leads parents to seek treatment?

3. Topic Sentence. Research on OCR sufferers has found certain physiological trends.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What part of the body does it affect?
- What are some common trends?
- What can parents look for?

IELTS Reading - Target

#3

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Looking for Specific Details

When you read, you first want to know the general idea. Next you read for specific ideas. The author supplies specific details to support his or her ideas. Knowing where to look for these supporting statements will help you answer questions on the IELTS.

When you identified the topic sentences in Practice 2, you found the general idea of the paragraph. When you asked your questions about the topic sentence, you expected the specific details would be the answers.

Read the second paragraph of a passage. The specific details follow the topic sentence.

OCR sufferers experience worries that are both unreasonable and excessive and that act as a constant source of internal stress. Fear of dirt and contamination are very common obsessive thoughts. The obsession with orderliness and symmetry is also common. In other cases, persistent thoughts are centered on doubts, such as whether or not a door is locked or a stove is turned off. Impulses, such as the urge to swear in public or to pull a fire alarm, are other types of OCR symptoms. In order to be diagnosed with OCD, a sufferer must exhibit obsessions and/or compulsions that take up a considerable amount of time (at least one hour per day).

Topic Sentence

OCD sufferers experience worries that are both unreasonable and excessive and that act as a constant source of internal stress.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What are unreasonable worries?
- What are excessive worries?

Supporting Details

- Fear of dirt and contamination
- The obsession with orderliness and symmetry
- Persistent doubts
- Impulses

▶▶ PRACTICE 3

Read these paragraphs again. Pay attention to the topic sentence. Underline the details that support the topic sentence.

1. To combat excessive thoughts and impulses, most OCR sufferers perform certain repetitive rituals that they believe will relieve their anxiety. These compulsions can be either mental or behavioral in nature. Common rituals include excessive checking, washing, counting, and praying. Over time, OCR sufferers attach strict rules to their compulsions. For example, a woman who is obsessed with cleanliness might wash her hands three times before having a meal in order to get the thought of the dirty dishes or silverware out of her mind. However, in many cases, the compulsions aren't related to the obsession at all. A man obsessed with the image of dead animals might count silently up to 500 or touch a specific chair over and over in order to block the images. Holding onto objects that would normally be discarded, such as newspapers and empty containers, is another common compulsion.

2. OCR symptoms generally begin between the age of 10 and 24 and continue indefinitely until a person seeks treatment. A child's upbringing does not seem to be part of the cause of the disorder, though stress can make the symptoms stronger. The underlying causes of OCR have been researched greatly and point to a number of different genetic factors. While studies show that OCR and its related anxiety disorders are often passed down through families, the specific symptoms for each family member are rarely the same. For example, a mother who is obsessed with order may have a son who can't stop thinking about a single word or number.

3. Research on OCR sufferers has found certain physiological trends. In particular, many studies show an overactivity of blood circulation in certain areas of the brain. As a result of this increase in blood flow, the serotonergic system, which regulates emotions, is unable to function effectively. Studies have also shown that OCR sufferers have less serotonin than the average person. This type of abnormality is also observed in Tourette syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. People who developed tics as children are found to be more susceptible to OCR as well. Many reports of OCR

point to infections that can trigger the disorder, namely streptococcal infections. It is believed that a case of childhood strep throat can elicit a response from the immune system that produces certain neuropsychiatric disorders, such as OCR.

Answer Key

1. Supporting Details

- Compulsions can be mental or physical
- Examples include: checking, hand washing, disturbing images
- Compulsions and obsessions may or may not be related

2. Supporting Details

- Most cases are genetic
- Stress can add to the problem
- Many members of the family may have OCR

3. Supporting Details

- Over activity of blood in the brain
- Less serotonin
- Linked to other disorders such as Tourette Syndrome and ADHD

IELTS Reading - Target #4

Analyzing the Questions and Answers

You made predictions about the content based on the first paragraph, the topic sentences, and the specific tails. Now let's look at how the questions or statements in your Reading test booklet can help you narrow these predictions and choose the correct answer.

To help you answer the questions in your Reading test booklet, take a few seconds to look over the questions or statements. Sometimes the questions are before the passage; sometimes they come after the passage. Ask yourself: Who? What? When? Where? and Why? By looking for the answers to these general questions, you will discover what you know and what you need to know. When you read the passage, you can test the predictions you made.

As you look at the question or statement and answer options, look for the key words. Key words may give you a clue to the context. They may help you predict what the passage is about. Look at these typical IELTS comprehension questions.

Questions 1-8

Complete the summary of the reading passage below.

Choose your answers from the box below and write them in boxes 1-8 on your answer sheet. There are more words than spaces so you will not use them all.

checking	doctor	upbringing	inherited	reduce	cause
treatment	throw away	unreasonable			
obsession	control	compulsive	diagnosis	counting	

1 thoughts, doubts, and fears that they cannot 2 OCR sufferers develop certain ways of acting in order to 3 their fears. For example, being afraid of dirt is a common 4, which may lead to excessive hand washing. Or, an OCR sufferer who worries about a locked door may engage in excessive 5 Some OCR sufferers keep things that other people would 6 Research shows that OCR may be a disorder that is 7 though members of the same family don't always show the same symptoms. It is also possible that certain infections may 8 the disorder.

First identify the key words. (These with red background.) Then look for these words in the passage. You will know where to look because you have made predictions using topic sentences and specific details.

Notice the words close to the circled words in the passage. Do they help you complete the summary above?

▶▶ PRACTICE 4

Identify the key words in these questions and circle them in the questions and in the reading passage on the next page. Notice the words close to the circled words in the passage. Do they help you complete the questions below?

Questions 9-16

Do the following statements agree with the information in the reading passage?

In boxes 9-16 write

TRUE if the statement is true according to the passage
FALSE if the statement contradicts the passage
NOT GIVEN if there is no information about this in the passage

- 9 OCR often results from the way a child is raised.
- 10 Stress can have an effect on OCR.
- 11 OCR sufferers are deficient in serotonin.
- 12 Obsessive-compulsive disorder usually begins after the age of 17.
- 13 Many OCR patients prefer psychotherapy to medication.
- 14 OCR is very difficult to treat.

15 Many OCR sufferers keep their problem a secret.

16 Antibiotics can be used to treat OCR.

You should spend 20 minutes on Questions 9-16, which are based on the reading passage below.

Obsessive-compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCR) is clinically diagnosed as an anxiety disorder and affects up to 4 percent of adults and children. People who suffer from this debilitating disorder have distressing and obsessive thoughts, which usually cause them to perform repetitive behaviors such as counting silently or washing their hands. Though OCR sufferers understand that their obsessions are unrealistic, they find it stressful to put these intrusive thoughts out of their minds. Those who suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder develop strict behavioral patterns that become extremely time-consuming and begin to interfere with daily routines. Many people with OCR delay seeking treatment because they are ashamed of their own thoughts and behavior.

OCD sufferers experience worries that are both unreasonable and excessive and that act as a constant source of internal stress. Fear of dirt and contamination are very common obsessive thoughts. The obsession with orderliness and symmetry is also common. In other cases, persistent thoughts are centered on doubts, such as whether or not a door is locked or a stove is turned off. Impulses, such as the urge to swear in public or to pull a fire alarm, are other types of OCR symptoms. To be diagnosed with OCR, a sufferer must exhibit obsessions and/or compulsions that take up a considerable amount of time (at least one hour per day).

To combat excessive thoughts and impulses, most OCR sufferers perform certain repetitive rituals that they believe will relieve their anxiety. These compulsions can be either mental or behavioral in nature. Common rituals include excessive checking, washing, counting, and praying. Over time, OCR sufferers attach strict rules to their compulsions. For example, a woman who is obsessed with cleanliness might wash her hands three times before having a meal in order to get the thought of the dirty dishes or silverware out of her mind. However, in many cases, the compulsions aren't related to the obsession at all. A man obsessed with the image of dead animals might count silently up to 500 or touch a specific chair over and over in order to block the images. Holding onto objects that would normally be discarded, such as newspapers and empty containers, is another common compulsion.

OCR symptoms generally begin between the age of 10 and 24 and continue indefinitely until a person seeks treatment. A child's upbringing does not seem to be part of the cause of the disorder, though stress can make the symptoms stronger. The underlying causes of OCR have been researched greatly and point to a number of different genetic factors. While studies show that OCR and its related anxiety disorders are often passed down through families, the specific symptoms for each family member are rarely the same. For example, a mother who is obsessed with order may have a son who can't stop thinking about a single word or number.

Research on OCR sufferers has found certain physiological trends. In particular, many studies show an overactivity of blood circulation in certain areas of the brain. As a result of this increase in blood flow, the serotonergic system, which regulates emotions, is unable to function effectively. Studies have also shown that OCR sufferers have less serotonin than the average person. This type of abnormality is also observed in Tourette syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. People who developed tics as children are found to be more susceptible to OCR as well. Many reports of OCR point to infections that can trigger the disorder, namely streptococcal infections. It is believed that a case of childhood strep throat can elicit a response from the immune system that produces certain neuropsychiatric disorders, such as OCR.

Because OCR sufferers tend to be so secretive about their symptoms, they often put off treatment for many years. The average OCR sufferer waits about 17 years before receiving medical attention. As with many anxiety disorders, early diagnosis and proper medication can lessen many of the symptoms and allow people to live fairly normal lives. Most treatment plans for OCR involve a combination of

medication and psychotherapy. Both cognitive and behavioral therapies are used to teach patients about their disorder and work through the anxiety. Serotonin reuptake inhibitors are prescribed to increase the brain's concentration of serotonin. This medication successfully reduces the symptoms in many OCR sufferers in a short amount of time. For cases when OCR is linked to streptococcal infection, antibiotic therapy is sometimes all that is needed.

Answer Key

Key Words in Statements 9-16: (Answers may vary.) child, stress, serotonin, age 17, psychotherapy, medication, treat, secret, antibiotics

- 2.** unreasonable. Paragraph 1 states that, "OCR sufferers understand that their obsessions are unrealistic."
- 3.** control. Paragraph 1 states that "they find it stressful to put these intrusive thoughts out of their minds."
- 4.** reduce. The first sentence of paragraph 3 states: "To combat excessive thoughts and impulses, OCR sufferers perform certain repetitive rituals that they believe will relieve their anxiety."
- 5.** obsession. Paragraph 2 states that "Fear of dirt and contamination are very common obsessive thoughts."
- 6.** checking. Paragraph 3 states that "Common rituals include excessive checking."
- 7.** throw away. The last sentence in paragraph 3 states that, "Holding onto objects that would normally be discarded, such as newspapers and containers, is another common compulsion."
- 8.** inherited. Paragraph 4 states that "a number of different genetic factors" have been found as underlying causes of the disease.
- 9.** cause. Paragraph 5 gives an example of an illness (steep throat) that is thought to be the cause behind some OCR cases.
- 10. False.** Paragraph 4 states: "A child's upbringing does not seem to be part of the cause of the disorder though stress can make the symptoms stronger. The underlying causes of OCR have been researched greatly, and point to a number of different genetic factors."
- 11. True.** Paragraph 4 states: "A child's upbringing does not seem to be part of the cause of the disorder though stress can make the symptoms stronger."
- 12. True.** Paragraph 5 states: "Studies have also shown that OCR sufferers have less serotonin than average person."
- 13. False.** Paragraph 4 states: "OCR symptoms generally begin between the age of 10 and 24 and continue indefinitely until a person seeks treatment."
- 14. Not Given.** Paragraph 6 mentions both psychotherapy and medication but does not discuss which one patients prefer.
- 15. False.** Paragraph 6 discusses different treatment options, and states that, "early diagnosis and proper medication can lessen many of the symptoms and allow people to live fairly normal lives."
- 16. True.** Paragraph 6 begins with this sentence: "Because OCR sufferers tend to be so secretive about their symptoms, they often put off treatment for many years."
- 17. True.** The final sentence in Paragraph 6 indicates that antibiotics can be used in special cases of

OCD "Foe cases when OCR is linked to streptococcal infection, antibiotic therapy is sometimes all that needed."

IELTS Reading - Target #5

Identifying the Tasks

There are many types of questions on the IELTS Reading Test. It is important to know what the question is asking you to do.

Question types:

- Multiple-choice questions
- Short-answer questions
- Completing sentences
- Completing notes, summary, tables, flowcharts
- Labeling a diagram
- Choosing headings for paragraphs or sections of a text
- Choosing three or four answers from a list
- Yes, No, True, False, or Not Given questions
- Classifying information
- Matching lists or phrases

The questions for the practice reading passages on the next page are labeled. Be familiar with the question types so you can quickly complete the task and answer the question correctly.

▶▶ Answer Key

Topic Sentence. The South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, more commonly referred to as the Zulu Kingdom, is named after the Zulu people who have inhabited the area since the late 1400s.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Who are the Zulu people?
- What is the history behind this clan?
- What are they known for?

Supporting Details

- Large South African ethnic group
- Region explored by Europeans
- Zulu wear traditional jewelry/jewelry and clothing
- Beadwork is important to the culture

Analyzing the Questions

1. Where?
2. Where?
3. Who?
4. Where?
5. When?
6. How many?
7. Who? Where? **Key Words:** British
8. What? **Key Words:** Henry Frances Flan
9. What? **Key Words:** precious stones

10. What? Why? **Key Words:** daily lives

11. What? Why? **Key Words:** gourds