

Reading Comprehension – Test 2

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Score: / 20



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Read each text carefully and choose the best answer (A, B, C or D) for each question.

Part 1: Opinion article

Read the article and answer questions 1–7.

In Praise of Doing Nothing

A few weeks ago, I found myself standing in a queue at the post office without my phone. I had left it charging at home, and for the first two minutes I felt almost physically uncomfortable. My hand kept reaching for my pocket. Then something unexpected happened: I started noticing things. The elderly man in front of me was humming a song I hadn't heard in years. A child near the door was carefully arranging leaflets by colour. By the time I reached the counter, I had come up with the solution to a work problem that had been bothering me for days.

This small experience made me curious, so I began reading about boredom. It turns out that researchers have been studying it for decades, and many of them have reached a surprising conclusion. Rather than being a waste of time, boredom may be one of the mind's most useful states. When we have nothing to focus on, the brain does not simply switch off. Instead, it starts to wander, making connections between ideas that would never meet during a busy, focused day. Several studies have found that people who were first given a dull task, such as copying numbers from a phone book, later came up with more creative ideas than those who went straight to the creative task.

The problem is that most of us no longer allow ourselves to be bored. Every gap in the day, however short, is instantly filled with messages, videos or news. We treat empty moments as something to be fixed rather than something to be enjoyed. As a result, our minds rarely get the chance to drift.

I am not suggesting that we throw away our phones. They are useful, and I would hate to be without mine for long. But I have started to build small pockets of boredom into my week. I walk to the shops without headphones. I sit on the train and look out of the window. At first, it felt like a loss. Now it feels more like a luxury.

So next time you are waiting for the kettle to boil, resist the urge to fill the silence. You might be surprised by what turns up.

- Which title best summarises the writer's main argument?

A Why phones are damaging our brains	B The hidden value of being bored
C How to solve problems at work	D The science behind creative people
- How did the writer feel when they first realised they did not have their phone?

A Relieved to have a break from it	B Worried about missing messages from work
C Uncomfortable and restless	D Curious about the people nearby

3. According to the research described, what happens in the brain when we are bored?
- A It wanders and links ideas that are not usually connected.
 - B It switches off in order to rest.
 - C It concentrates more closely on a single problem.
 - D It forgets information it has recently learned.
4. Why does the writer mention copying numbers from a phone book?
- A To show that old-fashioned jobs required creativity
 - B To suggest a way for readers to improve their memory
 - C To explain why most people dislike routine work
 - D To give an example of a dull task used in research
5. In paragraph 3, the writer says our minds rarely get the chance to "drift". This means the mind is _____.
- A moving freely from one thought to another
 - B falling asleep during the day
 - C losing important memories
 - D concentrating deeply on one thing
6. What is the writer's attitude towards mobile phones?
- A They should be avoided completely.
 - B They are useful, but we use them to fill too many quiet moments.
 - C They help people become more creative.
 - D They are mainly a problem for young people.
7. "At first, it felt like a loss. Now it feels more like a luxury." What does this show about the writer?
- A They regret giving up their headphones.
 - B They find their new habits expensive.
 - C They now value time without distractions.
 - D They still find quiet moments difficult.

Part 2: Information notice

Read the notice and answer questions 8–14.

Hillside Community Garden – Plot Allocation: Information for Applicants

Thank you for your interest in renting a plot at Hillside Community Garden. Because of the high number of applications we received last year, we have made some changes to the way plots are allocated. Please read the following information carefully before completing the application form.

Who can apply

Applications are open to anyone living in the Hillside and Marsh Lane areas. Each household may submit one application only. Schools, youth groups and local charities are also welcome to apply for one of our four shared plots, which are larger and located near the main gate for easier access.

How plots are allocated

In previous years, plots were given out on a first-come, first-served basis. This led to long queues outside the office on the opening day and was unfair to residents who work during the day. This year, all applications received between 3 and 21 March will be treated equally, and plots will be allocated by random draw on 28 March. Current plot holders who wish to keep their plot do not need to enter the draw, provided that they have paid this year's fee by 1 March.

Your responsibilities

Plot holders are expected to keep their plot in good condition throughout the growing season. Plots that appear neglected for more than six weeks will receive a written warning. If no improvement is seen within a further month, the plot may be offered to the next person on the waiting list. We understand that illness or family circumstances can make gardening difficult at times. If this applies to you, please let us know and we will do our best to be flexible.

Fees and tools

The annual fee is €35 for a standard plot, reduced to €15 for students and residents over 65. Basic tools can be borrowed free of charge from the shed, but they must be returned by the end of the same day.

How to apply

Application forms are available from the garden office (open Saturdays, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.) or can be downloaded from the community noticeboard website. Completed forms can be posted through the office letterbox at any time.

8. Who is this notice mainly written for?
A People who would like to rent a garden plot
B Volunteers who help to run the garden
C Residents who have complained about the garden
D Staff who work in the garden office
9. Why has the way of allocating plots been changed?
A There were not enough plots for schools and charities.
B Too many people were neglecting their plots.
C The office had to close on the opening day.
D The old system was unfair to people who work during the day.
10. What must current plot holders do if they want to keep their plot without entering the draw?
A Send a new application between 3 and 21 March
B Pay this year's fee by 1 March
C Attend the draw on 28 March
D Prove that their plot is in good condition
11. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a group that can apply for a shared plot?
A Schools **B** Youth groups **C** Local charities **D** Sports clubs
12. What will happen if a plot looks neglected for more than six weeks?
A It will immediately be given to someone on the waiting list.
B The plot holder will have to pay a fine.
C The plot holder will be sent a written warning.
D Garden staff will tidy the plot themselves.
13. When the organisers say they "will do our best to be flexible", they mean they will _____.
A try to make exceptions for people with genuine difficulties
B change the rules for all plot holders every year
C offer a larger plot to anyone who asks
D stop sending warnings about neglected plots

14. A student borrows a spade from the shed on a Saturday morning. What must she do?

- A Pay a small fee for using it
- B Return it by the end of Saturday
- C Return it before the office closes at 1 p.m.
- D Ask the office for permission first

Part 3: Short story

Read the story and answer questions 15–20.

The Recipe Box

When her grandmother moved into a care home, Mei was given the job nobody else wanted: clearing out the kitchen. Her brothers had taken the furniture and the old car. What was left were cupboards full of chipped plates, mysterious jars and a small wooden box that rattled when she picked it up.

Inside were dozens of recipe cards, each written in her grandmother's neat, sloping handwriting. Mei had expected instructions for the dishes she remembered from childhood: the sesame noodles, the ginger biscuits that were always slightly burnt at the edges. Those were there. But many of the cards had notes added at the bottom, in a different pen and clearly written years later.

"Made this for Arun's first day at school. He refused to eat it," said one. "Too much salt. Tom said nothing, bless him," said another. On the card for a plum cake, the note simply read: "The day the letter came. Baked it anyway."

Mei sat down on the kitchen floor and read every card twice. She had always thought of her grandmother as a practical, rather quiet woman who did not waste words. Now she found herself holding forty years of small jokes, disappointments and private victories, hidden between measurements for flour and sugar.

She did not know which letter the plum cake card referred to, and the thought of asking made her nervous. Her grandmother's memory was unreliable these days, and Mei worried that the question might upset her.

That weekend, she baked the plum cake and took a slice to the care home. Her grandmother tasted it slowly, frowning slightly as if checking it for mistakes.

"You used too much cinnamon," she said at last. Then, after a long pause, she added, "Your grandfather always said the same thing. Even on the day he was offered the job abroad and we thought he would have to leave us."

Mei waited, but nothing more came. Her grandmother simply took another bite, looked out of the window and smiled.

Mei did not ask again. She decided that some stories were meant to arrive in their own time, like the notes at the bottom of the cards.

15. Why did Mei end up clearing out the kitchen?

- A She was the only grandchild living nearby.
- B Her grandmother had asked her to do it.
- C Nobody else in the family wanted to do it.
- D She wanted to keep the recipe box for herself.

16. What surprised Mei about the recipe cards?
- A** Many of them had personal notes added years later.
 - B** None of them were for dishes she remembered.
 - C** They were written in several different people's handwriting.
 - D** The recipes contained serious mistakes.
17. Why did the grandmother write "bless him" about Tom?
- A** Tom had helped her to cook the meal.
 - B** Tom had refused to eat the food.
 - C** Tom had added too much salt himself.
 - D** Tom had kindly not complained, even though the food was too salty.
18. How did reading the cards change Mei's view of her grandmother?
- A** She realised her grandmother had been a much better cook than she thought.
 - B** She saw that her grandmother had a rich inner life she had kept private.
 - C** She discovered that her grandmother had been unhappy for most of her life.
 - D** She understood why her grandmother had always been so practical.
19. Why did Mei feel nervous about asking about the letter?
- A** She thought her brothers already knew the answer.
 - B** She was afraid her grandmother would be angry about the box.
 - C** She worried that the question might upset her grandmother.
 - D** She did not want to admit she had read the cards.
20. Why does Mei compare some stories to "the notes at the bottom of the cards"?
- A** Because both are shared slowly, when the moment is right
 - B** Because both are written down and kept in a box
 - C** Because both contain mistakes that need correcting
 - D** Because both were meant to be kept secret forever

Answer key – Reading Comprehension – Test 2

1 B	2 C	3 A	4 D	5 A	6 B	7 C	8 A	9 D	10 B
11 D	12 C	13 A	14 B	15 C	16 A	17 D	18 B	19 C	20 A

Explanations

- B** – The article argues that boredom is useful and that we should allow ourselves more of it.
- C** – The writer says they felt 'almost physically uncomfortable' and their hand kept reaching for their pocket.
- A** – The text says the brain 'starts to wander, making connections between ideas that would never meet'.
- D** – It is given as an example of the boring task people did before the creative task in the studies.
- A** – 'Drift' here describes the mind wandering without a fixed direction, which matches the idea of wandering in paragraph 2.
- B** – The writer says phones are useful but criticises filling every gap in the day with them.
- C** – The change from 'loss' to 'luxury' shows the writer has come to enjoy and value these quiet moments.
- A** – The notice is addressed to applicants and explains how to apply for a plot.
- D** – The notice says first-come, first-served 'was unfair to residents who work during the day'.
- B** – They keep their plot 'provided that they have paid this year's fee by 1 March'.
- D** – Only schools, youth groups and local charities are listed; sports clubs are not mentioned.
- C** – The first step is a written warning; the plot is only offered to someone else if there is still no improvement a month later.
- A** – The phrase follows the mention of illness or family circumstances, so it means making allowances in such cases.
- B** – Tools are free but 'must be returned by the end of the same day'.
- C** – The story says she was given 'the job nobody else wanted'.
- A** – She expected only recipes but found notes 'clearly written years later' at the bottom of many cards.
- D** – 'Bless him' shows affection for Tom's politeness in saying nothing about the salty food.
- B** – Mei had seen her as quiet and practical but found 'forty years of small jokes, disappointments and private victories'.
- C** – Because her grandmother's memory was unreliable, Mei 'worried that the question might upset her'.
- A** – The notes were added over the years, just as Mei accepts that her grandmother's story will come out gradually, in its own time.

Notes for teachers: Each section can be set as a separate lesson task, or the whole test can be done in one session of about 35 minutes. The distractors target common B2 reading errors: choosing an option because it repeats words from the text, mixing up what is stated with what is merely plausible, and applying a rule to the wrong case (for example the deadlines in the garden notice). For follow-up, ask students to underline the evidence for each answer. Learners could also write a short reply to the opinion article or continue the story from the grandmother's point of view.