Reading Comprehension – Test 4

Name: Class: Date: Score: / 20

Take this test online and check your answers instantly

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

Part 1: Magazine article

Read the article about note-taking and answer questions 1-7.

Pen versus Keyboard: Why Your Notes Might Be Holding You Back

Walk into any university lecture hall and you will see rows of glowing screens. Most students now type their notes, and it is easy to see why. Typing is faster, the notes are neat and searchable, and nothing gets lost in a pile of paper. Yet a growing body of research suggests that this speed may come at a price.

In a series of experiments, psychologists asked two groups of students to watch the same recorded talks. One group took notes on laptops and the other by hand. Shortly afterwards, both groups were tested on simple facts, and they performed similarly. But when they were asked questions that required them to apply ideas or compare concepts, the handwriting group did noticeably better.

The explanation, researchers believe, lies in what happens when we cannot keep up. Most people write far more slowly than a lecturer speaks, so a student with a pen is forced to make choices. What is essential? What can be left out? How can a long explanation be squeezed into a few words? This constant filtering means the material is processed as it is recorded. Typists, by contrast, tend to capture lectures almost word for word, acting more like transcription machines than active listeners.

Not everyone is convinced. Dr Helena Strand, who studies learning technology, argues that the problem may be the habit rather than the tool. "Students who type can be trained to summarise rather than copy," she says. "And for learners with conditions that make handwriting painful or slow, a keyboard is not a luxury but a necessity." She also warns against drawing sweeping conclusions from studies that often last only a single afternoon.

What, then, should students do? Strand's advice is practical. Whatever the method, notes should be a conversation with the material, not a recording of it. That might mean pausing to write a question in the margin, sketching a quick diagram, or closing the laptop for the last five minutes of a lecture to jot down the three main points from memory. The pen, it seems, is not magic. But the thinking it forces upon us might be.

1. Which question is the article mainly trying to answer?
   A Why do most students today prefer typing to writing by hand?
   B Should universities stop students from bringing laptops to lectures?
   C Does the way students take notes affect how well they understand the material?
   D How can students learn to write faster during lectures?

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2. According to the experiments described, how did the two groups of students compare?
   A They remembered facts equally well, but the handwriting group was better at using the ideas.
   B The typing group remembered more facts, but the handwriting group understood less.
   C The handwriting group did better in every type of test.
   D Both groups did equally well on all of the questions.

3. Why, according to researchers, does writing slowly help students learn?
   A It gives students more time to listen to the lecturer.
   B It makes students decide what is important and put it into their own words.
   C It means students have fewer notes to revise later.
   D It helps students remember the exact words the lecturer used.

4. In paragraph 4, Dr Strand warns against "sweeping conclusions". These are conclusions that are _____
   A carefully tested over many years
   B based on what students themselves report
   C impossible to prove or disprove
   D very general and based on too little evidence

5. What is Dr Strand's main point about laptops?
   A They should only be used by students who cannot write by hand.
   B They are always less effective than pens for taking notes.
   C What matters is how students use them, not the device itself.
   D They are useful for facts but not for understanding ideas.

6. When Dr Strand says notes should be "a conversation with the material, not a recording of it", she means that students should _____
   A think actively about the ideas instead of simply copying them down
   B discuss their notes with other students after the lecture
   C record lectures so they can listen to them again later
   D write down the lecturer's words as accurately as possible

7. What does the final paragraph suggest about the writer's own view?
   A Students should stop using laptops completely.
   B Handwriting is useful mainly because of the mental effort it requires.
   C The research on note-taking is not worth taking seriously.
   D Handwritten notes are better because they are easier to read.

Part 2: Formal email

Read the email to an arts centre and answer questions 8-14.

Subject: Feedback on the Advanced Photography Weekend

Dear Mr Okafor,

I am writing about the Advanced Photography Weekend that I attended at Harbourside Arts Centre on 12-13 April. I should begin by saying that I have taken several courses with you over the past three years and have always recommended the centre to friends. That is partly why I feel this course deserves more than a quick comment on the feedback form.

The course was advertised as being for "experienced photographers who want to develop a personal style". In practice, most of Saturday morning was spent explaining how to change the basic settings on a camera, something that I, and I suspect most of the group, learned years ago. When

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two participants politely asked whether we could move on, the tutor agreed, but then returned to the same basics after lunch. I understand that groups are rarely perfectly matched, but the course description set clear expectations which were not met.

Sunday was a different story. The outdoor session at the old docks was genuinely inspiring, and the individual feedback on our portfolios was thoughtful and honest. Had the whole weekend been like this, I would be writing to thank you.

I would also like to mention a practical issue. The joining instructions stated that lunch would be provided, so many of us brought nothing with us. On Saturday, the sandwiches ran out before the second half of the group had been served, and several people had to leave the building to find food, missing the start of the afternoon session.

I am not asking for a full refund, as I did gain something from the course. However, I would appreciate either a partial refund or a credit towards a future course. More importantly, I would suggest that participants complete a short questionnaire about their experience before a course begins, so that tutors can plan accordingly.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Farida Haddad

8. Why does Farida mention that she has taken several courses at the centre before?
   A To explain why she is an expert in photography
   B To complain that the quality of all the courses has fallen
   C To ask for a discount on her next course
   D To show that she is a loyal customer whose feedback deserves attention

9. What was Farida's main problem with Saturday morning?
   A The tutor did not explain the camera settings clearly.
   B The content was too basic for the level the course had advertised.
   C Too many participants asked questions.
   D The session started later than planned.

10. What can be inferred about the tutor on Saturday?
    A He refused to listen to the participants' requests.
    B He was not qualified to teach an advanced course.
    C He tried to respond to the group's request but did not keep to it.
    D He changed the plan for the afternoon because of the lunch problem.

11. In paragraph 3, "Sunday was a different story" means that Sunday _____
    A was much more successful than Saturday
    B followed a different timetable from the one advertised
    C was taught by a different tutor
    D was too difficult for most of the group

12. What happened at lunchtime on Saturday?
    A Participants were told to bring their own food.
    B The lunch break was cancelled because the session ran late.
    C Lunch was served in a different building from the course.
    D There was not enough food, so some people missed part of the next session.

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13. Which outcome would Farida be satisfied with?
    A A full refund of the course fee
    B Money back for part of the course, or credit for another one
    C A free place on the same course next year
    D A written apology from the tutor

14. Why does Farida suggest a questionnaire before courses begin?
    A So that the centre can check whether participants have paid
    B So that participants can choose which tutor they want
    C So that tutors can prepare sessions that suit participants' experience
    D So that the centre knows how much lunch to order

Part 3: Short story

Read the story and answer questions 15-20.

Tomasz had tuned pianos in schools, concert halls and, once, on a ferry, but he had never been asked to tune one that nobody played.

"It was my husband's," Mrs Adeyemi explained, leading him into a front room where the curtains were half drawn. "He died in the spring. I don't play a note myself."

The piano stood against the far wall, its lid covered in framed photographs. Tomasz lifted them off one by one and laid them carefully on the sofa. When he pressed middle C, the sound came out flat and slightly sour, like a voice after a long illness.

He worked in silence for nearly two hours. Mrs Adeyemi brought him tea that he forgot to drink, then hovered in the doorway as if she wanted to say something but could not decide what. Tomasz had learned long ago not to fill other people's silences. In his experience, they usually filled themselves.

Eventually she spoke. "He used to play every evening after dinner. Nothing difficult. The same six or seven songs, over and over. I used to complain about it." She gave a small, embarrassed laugh. "Now the house is so quiet I can hear the fridge."

Tomasz tested the final octave, then sat back. "May I ask," he said, "why you wanted it tuned, if no one will play it?"

She considered the question for a long moment. "Because he would have hated to see it neglected," she said. "And because my granddaughter starts lessons in September. I thought perhaps the songs could come back. Different hands, but the same songs."

Before he left, Tomasz played a short scale to check his work. The notes rose clean and bright through the room. Mrs Adeyemi closed her eyes. When he turned around, he saw that she had already begun putting the photographs back, but not on the lid. She was arranging them on the shelf above the fireplace, leaving the piano clear.

15. What made this job unusual for Tomasz?
    A The piano had not been played by anyone for some time.
    B He had never worked in a private home before.
    C The piano was older than any he had tuned before.
    D The owner wanted to learn to play the piano herself.

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16. The comparison "like a voice after a long illness" suggests that the piano sounded _____
    A loud and unpleasant
    B sad but beautiful
    C completely silent
    D weak and out of tune after a period of neglect

17. Why didn't Tomasz speak while Mrs Adeyemi stood in the doorway?
    A He was too busy and did not notice her.
    B He believed people usually start talking if you give them time.
    C He did not want her to interrupt his work.
    D He felt uncomfortable in a stranger's house.

18. What does Mrs Adeyemi's comment about hearing the fridge show?
    A She is worried that her fridge is broken.
    B She was glad when the music finally stopped.
    C She misses the sound of her husband's playing.
    D She finds the piano too loud for her house.

19. Why did Mrs Adeyemi want the piano tuned?
    A Out of respect for her husband and in the hope that it will be played again
    B Because she wants to sell it before her granddaughter visits
    C Because Tomasz had told her it was badly damaged
    D So that she could start playing her husband's songs herself

20. What does Mrs Adeyemi's decision to move the photographs to the shelf suggest?
    A She no longer wants to be reminded of her husband.
    B She thinks the photographs might damage the piano.
    C She is unhappy with the way Tomasz moved them.
    D She is ready for the piano to be used again instead of kept as a memorial.

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Answer key – Reading Comprehension – Test 4

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

Explanations

1. **C** – The whole article discusses whether handwriting or typing notes leads to better understanding.
2. **A** – Paragraph 2 says both groups performed similarly on facts, but handwriters did better when applying or comparing ideas.
3. **B** – Slow writers must filter and summarise, so they process the material while recording it.
4. **D** – She means people should not make broad claims from short studies lasting only one afternoon.
5. **C** – She says the problem may be "the habit rather than the tool" and that typists can be trained to summarise.
6. **A** – Her examples (questions in the margin, diagrams, recalling main points) all involve active thinking rather than copying.
7. **B** – "The pen is not magic. But the thinking it forces upon us might be" shows the benefit comes from the thinking, not the pen.
8. **D** – She says her long relationship with the centre is why the course deserves more than a quick comment.
9. **B** – The course promised to be for experienced photographers, but the morning covered basic camera settings.
10. **C** – He agreed to move on, but went back to the same basics after lunch.
11. **A** – She goes on to describe Sunday as inspiring, in contrast with the disappointing Saturday.
12. **D** – The sandwiches ran out, and people who went out for food missed the start of the afternoon.
13. **B** – She asks for "either a partial refund or a credit towards a future course" and says she is not asking for a full refund.
14. **C** – She says it would allow tutors to "plan accordingly", that is, according to participants' experience.
15. **A** – The first sentence says he had never been asked to tune a piano that nobody played.
16. **D** – A voice after illness is weak and not quite right, just as the unplayed piano sounded flat and sour.
17. **B** – He had learned that other people's silences "usually filled themselves", so he waited.
18. **C** – Although she once complained, the silence now reminds her painfully of what she has lost.
19. **A** – She says her husband would have hated to see it neglected and that her granddaughter will start lessons.
20. **D** – Leaving the piano clear shows she now sees it as an instrument to be played, not just a place to display memories.

Notes for teachers: Use the test as a timed exam practice or as a lesson split into three parts, one per text. Many questions target typical B2 errors: choosing an option that repeats words from the text but distorts its meaning, confusing a speaker's view with the writer's, and reading figurative language literally. As follow-up, ask students to underline the evidence for each answer, or to write their own reply to Farida Haddad's email.

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