

# READING SKILLS PRACTICE EXAM for IELTS

READING PASSAGES 1, 2 and 3

# DOG NAVIGATION

You should spend about 20 minutes reading this passage and answering questions 1–14.

**A** Dogs are often described as ‘man’s best friend’, a belief that originated in the distant past. All breeds of dogs are descended from wolves and scientific evidence indicates that ancient humans began to train wolf cubs approximately 40,000 years ago. These ‘trained’ wolves, scientists believe, served two very useful purposes. They helped our ancient ancestors to hunt wild animals, which were essential sources of food as well as skins used for clothing and shelter. The wolves may have also acted as guards as these dog-like animals would have sensed any dangerous creatures or other unwelcome human groups that were in the vicinity.

**B** The modern species of dog comes in different shapes, sizes and colours as a result of thousands of years of selective breeding. Although most dogs are now considered pets or companions, there are a huge range of skills that the modern dog has developed and these skills are put to a great variety of uses by their human owners. For example, farmers and shepherds train their dogs for herding farm animals. Police dogs may be used to search for missing persons, stolen property or drugs and in the apprehending of criminals. Dogs are also put to use by the military to detect landmines and for guarding purposes, and civilian guard dogs play an essential role in protecting property. Rescue work is a further crucial skill that dogs have been trained to carry out, often under the most difficult of conditions. Certain dog breeds, of course, continue to be employed in many parts of the world for hunting as well as for guiding people who are blind.

**C** Stories about dogs walking hundreds of kilometres to find their owners are not unusual. For instance, a family may take their pet dog with them on holiday to another part of the country. If the dog should become lost, the family may have to abandon their pet, but stories abound about a missing animal finding its way home. Various explanations have been suggested for these incredible feats. One is that dogs have an exceptionally good sense of smell because of their extremely sensitive nerve cells. These sensory neurons send information from the sensory organs to the brain. The dog’s great sense of smell is due to the number of neurons they possess – between 220 million to two billion compared to the average 25 million human neurons.

## READING PASSAGE 1

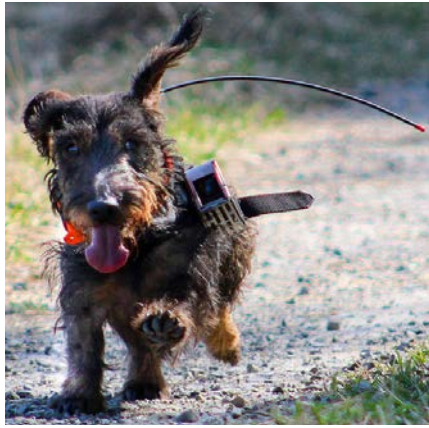


Figure 1

Video camera and GPS device attached to a dog used in the navigation experiment

(Kateřina Benediktová and Hynek Burda)



Figure 2

Dog with video camera and GPS tracking device

(Kateřina Benediktová and Hynek Burda)

**D** This is why dogs can retrace their journeys easily, but their excellent sense of smell is unlikely to explain their ability to find their way over distances not travelled on a path, where their superior sense of smell may be less relevant. However, it is known that some animals use the earth's magnetic field to complete long journeys; birds, sea turtles, whales, and bees are all examples. Researchers in the Czech Republic have carried out experiments with dogs and the results have suggested that dogs too can use the Earth's magnetic field to find their way.

**E** To accomplish the experiments, video cameras and GPS trackers were attached to four dogs that were taken for long walks. Often, the experimental dogs would run off and chase the scent of other animals. On average, it was noted that the dogs would go about 400 metres before turning back, and they returned in one of two ways. They might follow their path in reverse thus they were tracking their scent, or they would take a different, and much more direct, route back. If dogs followed their noses, this was called 'tracking' but if the dogs returned by more direct routes, it was recorded as 'scouting'. It was noticed that before a dog began a scouting return typically it would briefly stop before running about 20 metres along a north-south axis, or path. It was concluded that the dogs did this to pick up the magnetic field.

**F** Subsequently, the size of the experiment was increased and, over three years, hundreds of 'run-offs' made by 27 mostly hunting dogs were recorded. The research focused on 223 scouting returns and it was recorded that the dogs ran along a north-south axis for 170 out of the 223 completed trips. When the dogs did these north-south 'alignment runs', they got back more quickly. The researchers suspect the dogs remembered the magnetic direction they travelled when setting off and, as they have an 'inbuilt magnetic compass' like many other animals, instinctively carried out their north-south axis runs to work out the most direct path back. Further experiments are planned where magnets will be attached to the dogs' collars thus distorting the localised magnetic field. The aim here is to discover what effect this will have on the dogs' ability to navigate. It is anticipated that more than 15 different dog breeds will be used in this next phase.

# DOG NAVIGATION QUESTIONS

## Questions 1–5

Reading Passage 1 has six paragraphs (A–F). Choose the most suitable heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below. Write the appropriate numbers (i–viii) in boxes 1–5 on your Answer Sheet.

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

### LIST OF HEADINGS

- i. Wolves have the same skills as dogs
- ii. Extended research into homing instincts
- iii. Dogs have specialised purposes in society
- iv. How dogs are able to find their way
- v. Some dogs move more quickly than others
- vi. Finding their way back – amazing examples
- vii. The origins of our relationship with dogs
- viii. Early research methods into canine ability

Paragraph D has been done for you as an example.

1. Paragraph A

2. Paragraph B

3. Paragraph C

Example Paragraph D Answer: **iv**

4. Paragraph E

5. Paragraph F

## Questions 6–10

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C, or D.

Write the correct letter in boxes 6–10 on your Answer Sheet.

6. Long ago humans needed wolves...

A for their fur.

B as a food source.

C to warn them.

D for training purposes.

## READING PASSAGE 1

7. **Dogs used for looking after buildings are...**  
A sheep dogs.  
B guide dogs.  
C police dogs.  
D guard dogs.
8. **What do dogs and other animal species have in common?**  
A a superior sense of smell  
B being born with natural magnetic forces  
C ability to find their way over long distances  
D hunting and scouting skills
9. **'Tracking' refers to dogs that...**  
A hunt other animals.  
B use sensory neurons.  
C rely on magnetic fields.  
D are part of a research project.
10. **How many 'run-offs' were recorded in the later experiment?**  
A 27  
B 223  
C 170  
D 15

### Questions 11–14

Complete the summary below of the first three paragraphs of the reading passage. Choose **ONE OR TWO WORDS** from the reading passage for each answer. Write your answers in boxes 11–14 on your Answer Sheet.

Dogs have had a special relationship with humans over many centuries. Originally, they helped in hunting down ...**11**... in their owners' search for food and clothing. However, these wolf-like creatures have changed considerably into the modern range of dogs as a result of ...**12**.... A particular role for certain dogs is to carry out ...**13**... in times of emergency due to natural disasters. Experiments have been conducted into the behaviour of dogs, for example, by taking hunting dogs into ...**14**... and releasing them to analyse their natural ability to find their way back to their owners.

# FOOTPRINTS FROM THE PAST

You should spend about 20 minutes reading this passage and answering questions 15–28.

- A** A team of American researchers, working in Tanzania, have uncovered over 400 ancient human footprints in a place called Engare Sero. The tracks are between 12,000 and 10,000 years old and make up the largest collection of ancient human footprints ever found although further research at Laetoli, also in Tanzania, has led to the discovery of 3.7-million-year-old footprints possibly made by the human ancestor *Australopithecus afarensis*. Where the prints were made, in both areas the ground had recently been covered by a layer of volcanic ash from a nearby erupting volcano. Heavy rain would have turned the ash into a cement-like substance and, after it had been walked across, the ash would have hardened. A further eruption would have covered the area with more ash and it was this ash layer that would have preserved the footprints.
- B** The 'Laetoli' footprints are some of the best-known hominin footprints. Hominin, a term referring to humans and species related to humans, is mostly used to describe ancient human ancestors who lived thousands of years ago. When a hominin walks across a soft surface, their feet often make impressions, which can be extremely informative. They may indicate that the hominin was running, walking or even carrying a heavy weight. Fossil hominin footprints preserve data offering snapshots of organisms in their immediate ecological and behavioural contexts. The Engare Sero site represents the largest assemblage of footprints currently known from the human fossil records in Africa.
- C** Estimates of group composition suggest that the footprints found in Tanzania were made by mostly adult females. One group of tracks was attributed to 14 adult females who walked together at the same pace, with only two adult males and one juvenile accompanying them. Some analysts have noted in their interpretations that a smaller footprint track bears signs that suggest whoever left the prints was burdened on one side. This may indicate that a female was carrying an infant on her hip. The 400 prints found here record several episodes in time.
- D** The researchers believe that adult women were foragers who searched for food at a time when humans were hunter-gatherers. Early humans lived in small groups and, being nomadic, moved frequently from place to place. The groups hunted wild animals and

## READING PASSAGE 2

Figure 1

Engare Sero footprints site in Tanzania: the volcanic mudflow came from the background volcano

(Cynthia Liutkus-Pierce)

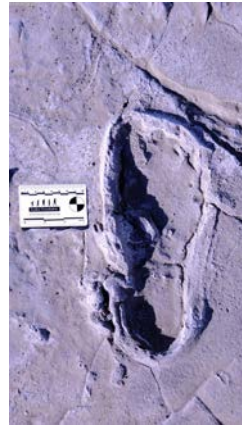


Figure 2

One of the Engare Sero footprints

(William Harcourt-Smith)

collected fruit and other edible plants; the women may have been, in certain cases, collecting food. Several local tribes now live in this part of Tanzania and still follow the hunter-gatherer lifestyle with the women from these tribes collecting food while the men hunt. In the context of modern ethnographic data, it has been suggested (Hatala et al, 2020) that the trackways made by these early humans may capture a unique snapshot of cooperative and gender-divided foraging behaviour in the period known as the Late Pleistocene humans.

**E** Before the discovery of the Laetoli footprints, there was much argument as to which developed first in the human evolutionary time line: a larger brain or bipedalism. The Tanzanian discovery settled the issue, proving that the Laetoli hominins were fully bipedal, in other words moving on two feet, long before the evolution of the modern human brain, and were bipedal almost a million years before the earliest known stone tools were made. It has been noted that the toe pattern is much the same as the modern human foot, very different from the feet of chimpanzees and other non-bipedal beings. The footprint impression is the same as the modern human stride, with the heel striking first and then a weight transfer to the ball of the foot before pushing off from the toes.

**F** Many sets of fossilised dinosaur footprints, or tracks, have been found in various parts of the world with the best known being in Australia. These Australian prints are about 95 million years old and scientific analysis indicates that they were made by approximately 150 two-legged, bi-pedalled dinosaurs. Most of these creatures were quite small but scientists suggest that the prints are a record of a stampede possibly caused by a large predator dinosaur, which all the small dinosaurs were trying to escape from. Modern-day humans (or homo sapiens) are thought to have evolved in Africa about 200,000 years ago. The oldest known modern-day human prints were found in South Africa. Known as Eve's footprints, they were created by a woman approximately 117,000 years ago. There are only three prints and scientific evidence indicates that the woman was walking across a dune during a rainstorm.

# FOOTPRINTS FROM THE PAST QUESTIONS

## Questions 15–19

*Reading Passage 2 has six paragraphs (A–F). Choose the most suitable heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below. Write the appropriate numbers (i–ix) in boxes 15–19 on your Answer Sheet.*

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

### LIST OF HEADINGS

- i. The last of the hominins
- ii. Who made the footprints?
- iii. Solving a scientific debate
- iv. How the footprints were preserved
- v. Early humans' ways of movement
- vi. Discoveries around the world
- vii. Very important research projects
- viii. A lifestyle that still exists

*Paragraph B has been done for you as an example.*

**15.** Paragraph **A**

*Example* Paragraph **B** *Answer: ii*

**16.** Paragraph **C**

**17.** Paragraph **D**

**18.** Paragraph **E**

**19.** Paragraph **F**



## READING PASSAGE 2

### Questions 20–25

Complete the summary below. Choose **ONE OR TWO WORDS** from the Reading Passage for each answer. Write your answers in boxes 20–25 on your Answer Sheet.

Two major research projects in Tanzania have unearthed invaluable clues about the very earliest humans. One project discovered evidence of the largest group of early humans ever discovered and then ...**20**... unearthed evidence of human existence at a much earlier period. Scientists believe that human-like footprints covered by ...**21**... near Engare Sero were preserved as a result of a volcanic eruption. The prints had been made by a hominin species, which was almost certainly evidence of our ...**22**... existing in this part of Africa long ago. Indeed, the tracks proved to be ...**23**... for the research teams. They discovered, for example, that one of the group of humans consisted of predominantly ...**24**... . Researchers claim that evidence shows that ...**25**... was being carried by one of the adults.

### Questions 26–28

Read the passage and look at the statements below. In the boxes 26–28 on your Answer Sheet, write

**TRUE** if the statement is true

**FALSE** if the statement is false

**NOT GIVEN** if the information is not given in the passage

#### Example

#### Answer

The Laetoli hominins used stone tools long before the human brain evolved. **FALSE**

- 26.** The footprints in Tanzania were made at very different times.
- 27.** The footprints show a group of adults escaping a volcanic eruption.
- 28.** Eve was an example of a very early female adult.

# SAVING THE SCREAM

You should spend about 20 minutes reading this passage and answering questions 29–42.

*The Scream*, one of the world's most famous pictures, was painted by Edvard Munch about 125 years ago. Munch (1863–1944) was Norwegian and as a young man had ambitions of becoming an engineer, but after one year, he abandoned his studies and decided to be an artist. Significantly, his childhood was overshadowed by illness, bereavement and the dread of inheriting a mental condition that ran in the family. As a young artist, Munch lived a bohemian life and began to paint his own emotional and psychological so-called 'soul painting', from which emerged Munch's distinctive style. For much of his life, the artist lived and worked in various cities in Germany, including Berlin.

*The Scream* has been stolen twice, first in 1994 and then again in 2004. On this second occasion, it was missing for two years before being recovered. Like other artists of the time, Munch liked to use yellow paint made from cadmium sulphide and serious concerns were raised by experts at the Italian National Research Council in Perugia that the yellow paint used was fading. When the stolen painting was recovered for the second time, initially it was kept in a special storage area in the museum in Oslo where the temperature is 18°C and the amount of water vapour in the air, in other words the humidity, is 50%. This level of humidity, the Perugia experts decided, was affecting the yellow paint rather than the light in the storage area. Thus the painting, they decided, could be kept under normal lighting but the humidity should be lower than 45%.

Munch's artworks have caused a lot of arguments and discussion because his pictures usually have 'dark' and unhappy themes. They seem to be about misery, fears and anxieties and it appears that many of his paintings were inspired by the great unhappiness of his early childhood. *The Scream* features a strange figure with the figure's hands held up on either side of the face and the mouth open in a scream. Two smaller figures stand in the background. Art experts believe the painting, with the sky above, depicted as wavy lines of red and orange, is a visual representation of anxiety and dread.

## READING PASSAGE 3



Figure 1

Version of  
*The Scream*  
painted  
in 1910

(Munch Museum)



Figure 2

Polar stratospheric  
clouds (PSCs)  
or mother of  
pearl clouds

(Ivar Marthinussen)

Between 1893 and 1910, Munch produced four versions of *The Scream*. Three of the pictures are now displayed in the Oslo Munch Museum and the fourth was sold to a private collector from New York for US\$120 million. The fourth version is the only one with a poem on the frame. Munch himself wrote the poem which explains his inspiration for the picture. The verse describes how Munch was walking along a path as the sun was setting when suddenly the sky turned blood red and he saw that 'there was blood and tongues of fire above the blue-black fjord and the city'. The poem goes on to describe how he stood there trembling with anxiety because he 'sensed an infinite scream passing through nature'.

It is widely believed that the 'blood-red sky' seen by Munch was actually caused by a faraway volcanic eruption. When large volcanoes erupt huge amounts of volcanic dust and ash are thrown high into the atmosphere and these tiny particles can remain suspended in the air for a long time. After a large eruption, winds, high above the ground, can spread volcanic ash all around the world. Skies that contain many of these particles can affect the sunlight and, at sunset, skies look much redder than normal. It is widely believed that this particular volcanic eruption was probably in Indonesia. In 1883, the biggest volcanic eruption in recorded history occurred when Krakatoa erupted, sending huge plumes of volcanic dust into the atmosphere which spread quickly around the globe. For several years these tiny ash particles created bright red sunsets in distant places such as Europe and America.

However, as Krakatoa had exploded about nine years before Munch painted his first version of *The Scream*, some experts claim that any volcanic ash in the atmosphere would have cleared. Instead, they believe that what Munch saw, and then painted, was an unusual type of cloud formation called PSCs which occur much higher than other clouds. If temperatures in this part of the atmosphere fall below  $-85^{\circ}\text{C}$ , tiny ice crystals may form, which can cause a phenomenon known as iridescence where colours change when seen from different angles.

# SAVING THE SCREAM QUESTIONS

## Questions 29–37

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in the reading passage?

In the boxes 29–37 on your Answer Sheet, write

**YES** if the statement agrees with the claims of the writer

**NO** if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer

**NOT GIVEN** if it is impossible to say if the writer claims this

### Example

Munch was born in Kristiana

### Answer

NOT GIVEN

29. Munch qualified as an engineer.
30. Munch's most famous painting was stolen during his lifetime.
31. The painting is kept below a maximum temperature.
32. *The Scream* includes more than one figure.
33. The painting includes an imaginative representation of the sky.
34. Various versions of *The Scream* were painted.
35. Experts analysed the painting using intensive light beams.
36. *The Scream* was inspired by Munch's viewing of a sunset.
37. Munch was in Indonesia when the PSCs formed.

## READING PASSAGE 3

### Questions 38–42

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C, or D.

Write the correct letter in boxes 38–42 on your Answer Sheet.

- 38. Munch began his artistic career...**  
A while living in Germany.  
B at least 125 years ago.  
C after trying something else.  
D because of his childhood experience.
- 39. Where was the preservation work carried out?**  
A Berlin  
B Oslo  
C Perugia  
D New York
- 40. To save the painting, experts recommended...**  
A changing the exposure to light.  
B keeping *The Scream* in storage.  
C providing a suitable temperature.  
D avoiding the use of cadmium sulphide.
- 41. *The Scream* was...**  
A the cause of artistic controversy.  
B painted under a red sunset.  
C inspired by the artist's poem.  
D created as the result of Krakatoa.
- 42. The colours Munch used in *The Scream* were due to...**  
A the effects caused by volcanic ash.  
B the clear light when the artist was working.  
C dust clouds spreading very widely.  
D an extreme temperature effect.

# ANSWER SHEET

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# ANSWER KEY

1	vii
2	iii
3	vi
4	viii
5	ii
6	C
7	D
8	C
9	C
10	C
11	(wild) animals
12	selective breeding
13	rescue work
14	the forest
15	iv
16	v
17	viii
18	iii
19	vi
20	further research
21	volcanic ash

22	(early) ancestors
23	extremely informative
24	adult females
25	an infant / a burden
26	True
27	Not given
28	False
29	No
30	No
31	Not given
32	Yes
33	Yes
34	Yes
35	Not given
36	Yes
37	No
38	C
39	B
40	A
41	A
42	D