Pearson English International Certificate

Lesson Plan Ideas: Skill Building Activities

Short Answer Questions
Task Introduction

- Short Answer Questions tasks assess test takers’ ability to understand specific, detailed information from a short, written text.
- These tasks are included on B1, B2, C1 and C2 levels of the test.
- Two Short Answer Questions tasks feature on each test.
- Test takers should read a text and then answer four open-ended questions that test their understanding of specific information included in the text.
- The length of text varies according to the level of the test. Short Answer Questions tasks on B1 and B2 tests feature texts of approximately 100-135 words. C1 tests feature texts of around 140-175 words, and C2 tests feature texts of about 175-210 words.
- On screen, the task will look like this:

  Read the press release below and answer the questions. Use no more than three words for each answer.

  **JOB VACANCY: Pricer Supermarket**
  Part-time and full-time food delivery assistants wanted. We are looking for people to start work with us in September. If you are interested in this exciting opportunity, please email your CV to p.g@memail.co.uk or give us a call on 0703 987 123. Full training and induction provided late August. Interviews will take place July 20-21.
  You must have a driving licence, and your own mobile phone. You will not need your own vehicle, as we provide vans, as well as uniforms. Flexible working days: Monday – Sunday. Shifts: 9:00-11:30/13:00-17:00/17:00-21:00. Evening work is essential. Most deliveries in Melton Mowbray and surrounding areas.
  Example: Which company has a job vacancy? Pricer Supermarket
  **Question 1. What job is available?**

  **Question 2. When will new employees learn how to do the job?**

  **Question 3. What will new employees need to drive?**

  **Question 4. Between what times must new employees be available to work?**

- Test takers should type their answers into the text box beneath each question.
- The instructions will show how many words should be used for each answer.
- The correct answers to questions will usually be words that can be taken from the text.
- After answering all four questions, test takers should click ‘Next’ to move onto the following task.
Strategies for Success

- Skim the text quickly to get a sense of where information will be located. Test takers will need to find answers to questions in different parts of the text. Skimming is a helpful reading technique that can allow readers to quickly gain some familiarity with a text’s structure and content.

- Focus on the questions. Although they appear below the text, it can help many test takers to read the questions first. It is likely to be necessary to read the questions more carefully than the text. Test takers should ensure they understand exactly what each question is asking and then look for answers within the text.

- Consider text conventions. Test takers should use their understanding of the conventional structure of written texts. Some questions are likely to relate to the main idea of a text. Test takers should check the beginning and end of the text for answers to these questions as these places are usually where main ideas can be found. If questions relate to more detailed information, such as specific examples, test takers can look for common expressions used for introducing this kind of information.

- Scan for specific words. After reading a question, test takers should scan the text for related vocabulary. When doing this, they should think about other ways that words in the question could be expressed, as questions will often paraphrase information in the text. For example, if a question mentions ‘traffic congestion’ test takers should look for related words such as ‘traffic jam’ ‘busy roads’ etc.
Short Answer Questions: Activities for all learners

The passages used in Short Answer Questions tasks will vary in terms of length, vocabulary level and sentence complexity according to the level of the test. Test takers at B1 and B2 levels will be reading passages that mostly contain vocabulary that intermediate users of English are likely to have some familiarity with, while C1 and C2 tests will contain texts with more advanced vocabulary.

To prepare for Short Answer Questions tasks, all learners should be helped to understand the requirements of the task. They should all practise reading texts of the appropriate level and answering questions about them. For learners who are more used to dealing with multiple-choice comprehension questions, it is important to develop confidence responding to open-ended questions. All learners should also be trying to build their vocabulary so that they are more likely to be familiar with the language they encounter in the texts.

Understanding the task

After introducing the format of Short Answer Questions tasks to your learners and explaining the Strategies for Success on page 1, check that they have understood by using the following short answer questions and/or gap-fill summary.

Short Answer Questions

1) On which levels of the test do Short Answer Questions tasks appear?
2) How many Short Answer Questions tasks are there in each test?
3) How many short answer questions appear under each text?
4) What varies according to the test level for these tasks?
5) Where should test takers answer the questions?

Answers: 1) B1, B2, C1, and C2  2) two 3) four 4) text length 5) in the box (below each question)

Gap-fill summary

Test takers will need to find (i) _______ answers to questions in different parts of the text. Skimming the text at first is a (ii) _______ way to quickly gain some familiarity with its (iii) _______ content. Although the questions appear (iv) _______ the text, it can help some test takers to read them before reading the text thoroughly. Test takers can then scan the text looking for words (v) _______ to the questions.

Word options
a) general b) below  c) useful  d) related e) correct

Answers: (i) e – correct (ii) c – useful (iii) a – general (iv) b – below (v) d – related
Creating suitable practice activities

In addition to the Short Answer Questions practice tasks included in this document, you may want to create your own practice activities. This can be done quite easily by sourcing texts of a suitable length and then writing questions that test their understanding. You will be able to find appropriate texts online – for example, short news stories, academic journal articles or reviews of cultural events. Choose topics that will interest and engage your learners.

It is important to ensure that the level of any practice tasks you use matches the level of your learners. You can do this by using the Text Analyzer tool within the GSE Teacher Toolkit here: https://www.english.com/gse/teacher-toolkit/user/textanalyzer. Text Analyzer is a great tool to enable you to check that the level of vocabulary and sentence complexity is appropriate for your purposes.
Short Answer Questions:
Activities for B1/B2

English users at the B1 level should be able scan longer texts in order to locate desired information and to gather information from different parts of a text to fulfil a specific task. At B2 level, learners should be able to quickly identify the content and relevance of texts on a wide range of professional topics and scan quickly to locate details. Short Answer Questions tasks assess test takers’ ability to read in this way. You can help your learners prepare for the test by using the B1 example task below and other B1 and B2 practice tasks on page 15.

Extra Jobs

Would you like to be in a film or on TV? Have you thought about working as an extra? Extras get paid to appear in films and TV shows. For example, during filming, extras frequently stand together in a crowd. You can get this kind of work if you are 16 or older, and many students do this work while studying at university or college. The work is quite well paid – extras earn around £95 per day and £142 if they have to work during the night. This payment is for ten hours and if the filming takes longer, you will get paid at the same rate for every hour you work. Extras also get an hour’s break for lunch. This is provided free of charge by the company.

Example: What do extras often become as a group? (a) crowd

1. Who is the work popular with?
2. When do extras get paid at a higher rate?
3. What length of time do extras normally work for?
4. What don’t extras have to pay for?

Correct answers:

1. (university/college) students
2. (during the)/(at) night
3. 10/ten hours
4. (their) lunch
Skimming

Skim reading is an important reading strategy for your learners to practice before they do Short Answer Questions tasks. It involves quickly and superficially reading a text in order to pick out its main ideas and understand its structure. In the same way as knowing the topic of a conversation in advance can help someone listening to it understand what is being said, identifying the main ideas of a written text first can help a reader to understand it in more detail more quickly.

First, help your learners to understand which parts of a text are most likely to include information related to its main ideas. These include the title, any sub-titles or headings, and the first sentences of each paragraph. (These are sometimes called the ‘topic sentences’). Depending on the type and length of text, it can also be useful to skim the final sentences of paragraphs, which are sometimes called the ‘concluding sentences’.

Next, select a text that will interest and engage your learners, and check that it is of an appropriate level using the GSE Teacher Toolkit’s Text Analyzer tool. Set your learners a time limit to skim the text and identify its main idea(s). Determine the time limit based on the length of the text and the level of your learner but make sure it is only enough time to quickly read the parts of the text that are most likely to contain key information – in other words, do not give your learners too much time: this activity should involve speed reading. Once the time is up, ask learners to turn over or cover the text and then discuss what they have read with a partner. As a pair, ask learners to make some predictions or write down some informed questions about the text based on the information they have gleaned when skim reading. Once they have done this, ask them to read the whole text more slowly and carefully, trying to identify if their predictions were correct or to find answers to the questions they have written.
# Short Answer Questions: Activities for B1/B2

## Paragraph structure

Learners at B1 and B2 levels can be helped to develop their skimming skills as well as their reading comprehension by making them aware of how texts and paragraphs are structured. This will help them to locate the information they need more quickly.

To achieve this, you can use a single paragraph. Highlight the topic sentence, supporting sentence(s) and concluding sentence and then ask learners to match each part to its characteristics:

a) Topic sentence  
   - i) Gives further information about the main topic of the paragraph  
   - ii) Comes at the end of a paragraph

b) Supporting sentence(s)  
   - iii) Can include explanation and examples  
   - iv) Comes at or near the start of a paragraph

c) Concluding sentence  
   - v) Reinforces or restates the main idea of the paragraph  
   - vi) Indicates what the paragraph is about

Key: a) Topic sentence = iv + vi; b) Supporting sentences = i + iii; c) Concluding sentence = ii + v

You can also use an activity like this to build your learners awareness of how longer texts are structured by using the characteristics of introductions, main body paragraphs and conclusions.
**Short Answer Questions: Activities for B1/B2**

**Speed reading log**

Before doing Short Answer Questions tasks, learners should try to improve their reading speed. There are a variety of methods that can be used to help learners become faster readers. It is important for them to know that a) everyone can develop their reading speed but b) improvement won’t just happen overnight – in other words, improving reading speed requires a sustained effort over a period of time.

You will need to timetable regular opportunities for your learners to practise their speed reading over a period of time. As with all kinds of reading practice, it is necessary to isolate the skill that is being practised for the practice to be effective. Developing reading speed cannot be entirely separated from developing comprehension skills, but it is important that learners do not confuse the purpose of speed-reading activities with improving reading comprehension, building vocabulary or anything else. They need to understand the main objective is to become a faster reader.

To help your learners become faster readers:

- Find a collection of 5-20 texts that are slightly below their current reading level. In other words, if you are working with B2 learners, find texts that are B1 level. (You can use the GSE Teacher Toolkit’s Text Analyzer tool to identify the level.)

- Edit the texts so that they are almost exactly the same length as each other. (No text should be more than 5-10 words shorter/longer than the average length.)

- Write comprehension questions for each text, focusing on information that should be clear to any reader. For every text, you should write the same number of questions, with the number depending on the length of texts you choose. For example, if you use 200-word texts, you will probably find 4 questions about right, while if you use texts that are around 500 words, then 10 is likely to be the best number of questions to use.

- Give your learners one text with the questions written on the back so that they are not visible when reading the text.

- Ask learners to read the text as quickly as possible, then turn the page over so that they can see the questions. Explain that once they have turned to see the questions they cannot turn back to look at the text.

- Display a digital clock or timer as they read, and ask learners to make a note of how long it took to read the text. Explain that learners are not competing with each other but that they are instead individually trying to improve their reading speed.

- Once learners have answered each question, display the correct answers and ask them to make a note of how many they got right.

- Now, have learners record a log showing the date, the title of the text, the time it took them to read it, and the number of correct answers they got; e.g. “February 1, Frog species, 2 mins 10 secs, 4 out of 5.”
**Short Answer Questions:**

**Activities for B1/B2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed reading log (Continued)</th>
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Learners should keep this log somewhere that they will be able to add to it during your next speed-reading practice session, such as their main class notebook or on their phone. Next time you practice speed reading, explain to learners that they will be using a different text of the same length and difficulty level. Set them the challenge of reading it more quickly than the last text but getting the same number of questions right. Explain that the main target is increased speed not answering a higher proportion of questions correctly. At the end of activity, ask learners to make a record of their progress in the reading log again and continue this process as many times as you can at regular intervals. Gradually your learners should each start seeing signs of improvement in their reading speed. It will happen more quickly for some than others.

When selecting texts for this activity, try to use topics that are likely to be equally unfamiliar to all learners. For example, you could select texts about uncommon species of animals or the lives of people who are not famous. This way, familiarity with a topic is unlikely to affect how quickly a learner is able to read it.
**Short Answer Questions:**

*Activities for C1/C2*

C1-level learners can understand in detail a wide range of complex texts likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life, identifying finer points of detail, while at C2 level English users can appreciate subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning. Short Answer Questions tasks assess C1 and C2 test takers’ reading skills by exposing them to texts about complex topics and containing more advanced vocabulary, asking questions that test understanding of specific details. You can help your learners prepare for the test by using the C1 example task below and other practice tasks on page 23.

Whenever my mother nagged me to sit still, my granny would remark, ‘Fidgeting is a sign of alertness.’ Now, research seems to back her up, at least partially. Making continuous, small physical movements, or ‘fidgeting’, is now thought to be beneficial.

Fidgeting has been shown to reduce stress and benefit cognition. For instance, fidgeting aids concentration, thereby contradicting generations of parents and teachers who viewed it as evidence of an unfocused mind.

The way it reduces stress is similar to the calming effect of colouring in pictures, an activity now taken up by adults for its therapeutic effect. Both activities involve repetitive movements which are more soothing than the processes involved in creative activities such as painting.

The physical benefits of fidgeting are negligible for highly active people. Nevertheless, since it improves blood circulation, it may help sedentary workers. However, there’s no denying that fidgeting may irritate some colleagues. It can be distracting, so during important meetings it might be wise to refrain from doing it!

Example: Which relation tried to get the writer to stop fidgeting?  mother

1. What did many people in the past think that fidgeting indicated?
2. What aspect of fidgeting and colouring in pictures makes people feel calmer?
3. What type of people does the writer say may get physical benefits from fidgeting?
4. In what circumstances does the writer recommend that people avoid fidgeting?

Correct answers:

1. (an) unfocused/unfocussed mind/lack of focus/lack of concentration
2. repetitive movement(s)
3. sedentary workers
4. (in/during) (important) (work/business/office) meetings
**Short Answer Questions: Activities for C1/C2**

**Knowledge relay**

Test takers will be able to complete Short Answer Questions tasks more quickly if they can retain information from the text in the mind when answering the questions. This can prevent them from needing to continually look back at the text. To help your learners practice remembering information from a text, you can use a ‘Knowledge relay’ activity, which works in a similar way to a running dictation but with one or two differences.

- Put learners into pairs, and assign one learner the job of ‘running’ and one learner the job of ‘questioning’.

- Ask the questioners to sit at tables on one side of the room.

- Stick a text (such as one of the Short Answer Questions practice tasks on page 5) on the wall on the other side of the room.

- Give questioners a piece of paper with questions about the text and the answers to the questions.

- When you shout the word “go,” the runners should run to the text, skim it and remember as much as they can.

- Runners then run back to their questioner partner, who asks them a series of questions related to the text. Runners should try to correctly answer as many questions as possible and then run back to the text to search for answers to the other questions.

- Questioners should not show the answers to their partner but should tell them whether their answer is correct.

- Repeat this process until one runner has answered every question correctly. Then change roles so that questioners get a chance to practice reading and remembering the text.

Repeat this activity regularly to give your learners as much opportunity as possible to practice retaining information and then using it to answer questions. For learners who are familiar with running dictation activities, it is important to emphasise that unlike these activities where partners are working as a team, for knowledge relay activities runners are racing against each other while questioners are all acting like judges and referees – asking questions, assessing answers but not assisting runners in anyway.
Short Answer Questions:
Activities for C1/C2

Scanning race

When completing Short Answer Questions tasks, test takers will need to scan the text. Scanning is a technique that involves rapidly reading a text in order to find specific words. After skimming the text and then reading the questions below it, test takers will need to scan for specific words in the text that relate to each question. They should do this as quickly as possible.

An excellent activity for improving your learners’ scanning ability is a scanning race. For this, you will just need a text. Make sure it is of the length your learners should expect to find in Short Answer Questions tasks, which for C1 and C2 tests is between 175 and 210 words. For this activity, the vocabulary level of the text is not important. You should number each line of the text and give one copy to each learner/pair of learners.

Scan races are competitions where learners race each other to find a word within a text. Once they have, they should shout out the line number where they have found the word. Ask learners to turn their texts face down. Select a word that only appears once in the text, e.g. ‘soothing’ in the practice task above. Say the word aloud and then shout ‘go’ to your learners, who can then turn over the text and scan for that word. When one learner shouts out the correct number for the line that ‘soothing’ appears on, award that learner a point and then repeat the process with another word. Encourage learners to compete with each other, as this will get them reading faster. If you have a large class, you can divide them into groups of 4 or 5 learners and ask them to compete within their smaller groups.
**Short Answer Questions: Activities for C1/C2**

**Call my bluff**

Although C1 and C2 learners are already likely to understand a wide range of vocabulary, it is important for them to continue trying to expand their vocabulary ahead of doing Short Answer Questions tasks. The vocabulary used in these tasks at C1 and C2 level will often be quite advanced. An effective way to help your class to learn new words while also having fun is to play a vocabulary game similar to ‘Call my bluff’, a British TV show. The game involves selecting the correct definition of uncommon words and encourages vocabulary expansion.

First, you will need to create two lists of target words that you want your class to learn. Ensure they are words that your learners do not already know. Then, divide the class into two teams – or, if you have a large class, divide them into groups of six with each six further divided into two groups of three. Three is usually the minimum number of learners needed in each group for this activity to work well.

Give each group one of the two lists of target words. Then, ask them to prepare three definitions for each word – one correct definition plus two incorrect but plausible definitions that they can make up. If your learners have trouble imagining incorrect but plausible definitions, you can suggest they use their dictionary to find definitions of other words to use.

Once they have written all the definitions for their words, ask groups to take it in turns to write one word from their list on the board and then read out their three definitions for it to the opposing group, who must then choose which definition they think is correct. Award a point each time a correct definition is selected.

Select the number of words used for each list according to how much class time you have for this activity. If you are short of time in class, you can give the word list to learners in advance and ask them to prepare definitions for homework.
**Short Answer Questions: Practice Tasks**

**B1**

**The Cheese-rolling Festival**

The cheese-rolling festival takes place in Gloucestershire, England. It used to be a festival for local people, but now they come from all over the world. A huge, round cheese is thrown down a hill. Competitors run after the cheese and whoever crosses the finish line first is the winner.

The prize is the cheese that they are racing against. The race is not very safe because the hill is very long so people can easily hurt themselves as they run down it. Another problem is that the weight of the cheese is about four kilogrammes. It gets to speeds of 110 kilometres per hour so it could hurt anyone in its way. Recently, the cheese has been changed to a plastic cheese that is much lighter to make the event safer.

Example: Where is the cheese-rolling festival? Gloucestershire/England/ Gloucestershire, England

1. Who went to the event when it first started?
2. What does the first person to cross the finish line win?
3. How heavy is the cheese?
4. What does the competition use now that is not as dangerous?

Correct answers:
1. local people/locals
2. (the) cheese
3. 4/four kg/kgs/kilos/kilogrammes/kilograms
4. (a) plastic cheese
**Short Answer Questions:**

**Practice Tasks**

**B1**

The Colour Café is very modern, but it’s in a historic building and from the outside it looks very old. The furniture is unusual because it’s all red and the inside walls are green. It’s not like anywhere else in the city. I usually have a sandwich for lunch, but this time I felt like the soup instead. And I was really pleased with it! The chicken looked good too, so I might have that another time. In general, the food was great, and they give you large amounts of it. Overall, it’s good value for money. I’ll be back very soon.

Example: How does the writer describe the café? (very) modern

1. What is red?
2. What did the writer have to eat?
3. What does the writer think about the prices?
4. When will the writer have his next meal there?

Correct answers:

1. (the) furniture
2. (the) soup
3. good value/(they're) reasonable
4. (very) soon
**Panglos Island – the holiday of a lifetime**

I’ve always been into travel, and even when I was a kid I watched lots of travel programmes on TV, and dreamt of going to those places one day. But I hadn’t heard of Panglos until I saw it in a magazine, and booked a ticket. I’d done long flights of seven hours before, and one of ten, but this was the first time I’d done thirteen. One passenger was late which meant that our flight didn’t depart on time. But I didn’t care – I wanted sunshine. There’s lots to do here on Panglos Island. Tomorrow is going to be too hot for the beach, so the idea is to do a trip and explore a cave near here. I’m looking forward to it.

Example: What has the writer always been interested in? travel/travelling

1. Where did the writer find out about Panglos Island?
2. How long was the flight to Panglos Island?
3. What caused the delay?
4. What is the writer planning to visit tomorrow?

Correct answers:

1. (in) (a) magazine
2. 13/thirteen hours
3. (a) late passenger
4. (a) cave
The benefits of making soup

Making healthy and warm meals that are quick to prepare and cook is becoming popular and I’ve recently discovered the benefits of making soup. Some people have little time to spend in the kitchen, so cooking soup is a practical option for them. Instead of being stressed or worried about the process, it makes me calm but excited at the same time because I love to try out new recipes. My current favourite is bean soup. Mushroom recipes have a particularly good taste but the cost of the ingredients can be high. Carrots, for example, offer a good solution for a cheaper soup. Although soup contains a high quantity of water, the main advantage is that it contains natural ingredients. So, why not try making your own healthy soups?

Example: When did the writer realise how good making soup was? recently

1. How does the writer describe making soup if you have a busy life?
2. How does the writer say he feels when he makes soup?
3. Which soup does the writer think gives value for money?
4. What does the writer say homemade soup contains that provides its greatest benefit?

Correct answers:
1. (a) practical option
2. calm (but/and)/excited
3. carrot(s) (soup)
4. natural ingredients
Short Answer Questions: Practice Tasks

If you’d told me five years ago that I’d quit my science degree to devote my time to social media, I’d never have believed you! I began promoting products via social media three years ago for extra cash, but last year, I became a full-time social media influencer.

Influencers create content such as blogs or videos that promote everything from food to fashion to their followers. I’m known for posting about fitness, so that’s what I focus on. I never accept a job without researching the product first. If I’m not happy with it, I refuse to endorse it.

This job can lead to great career opportunities, mainly in media industries such as broadcasting. However, my plan is to use the marketing skills I’ve acquired to create an online coaching start-up. The future looks good!

Example: What subject was the writer studying at university? science
1. When did the writer first begin making money from social media?
2. Which particular field does the writer specialise in for her social media work?
3. What does the writer do before agreeing to promote something?
4. What has working as an influencer helped the writer to learn?

Correct answers:
1. three/3 years ago
2. fitness
3. research (it/the product)
4. marketing (skills)
My friends have been into escape rooms for a while, but I couldn’t see the appeal until recently. In fact, I’d never have discovered how thrilling they are, if my colleagues hadn’t dragged me along to one.

Escape rooms are places where teams collaborate to solve clues in order to “escape” from a room. Although leisure centres in my city have started developing escape rooms, the majority here are in former industrial sites, which adds to the atmosphere.

I’d assumed escape rooms were primarily designed to attract video game players, but I saw many families taking part. On reflection, this makes sense, because escape rooms encourage teamwork. For instance, I loved the word puzzles, whereas my teammates excelled at the maths clues which were beyond me. Overall, I’d recommend escape rooms to anyone.

Example: How does the writer describe their experience in an escape room? thrilling

1. Who managed to get the writer to try an escape room activity?
2. What is the most common type of venue for escape rooms in the writer’s city?
3. Who did the writer originally believe was the target market for escape rooms?
4. What aspect of the experience did the writer find difficult?

Correct answers:
1. (some/his/her/the writer’s) colleagues/co-workers
2. former industrial sites
3. video game players/gamers
4. (the) maths/math clues
I’d planned to spend the weekend reading “The Step” by Matty O’Hare, but finished the entire thing in just three hours – a sign of a great book.

In real life, an individual can be both a hero and a villain, and the novel reflects this in that it has no classic, likeable main character. In fact, he comes across as arrogant, while the other characters seem rather selfish. Having realistic characters is essential in a novel with such a complex plot. “The Step” wouldn’t be as effective without them.

While the novel is O’Hare’s first comedy, it contains plenty of sci-fi references to satisfy fans of his previous works. Overall, “The Step” has something for everyone. I’m sure I’m not the first person to visit Mexico after reading O’Hare’s vivid descriptions of the landscapes there.

Example: How long did it take the writer to read “The Step”? three hours
1. How does the writer describe the main character’s personality?
2. According to the writer, what makes the novel a success?
3. What genre does the author generally write?
4. What did the book inspire the writer to do?

Correct answers:
1. arrogant
2. (having/using/including/its/the) realistic characters
3. sci-fi/science fiction
4. visit Mexico/travel to Mexico/go to Mexico
While I happily blog about my travels to well-known destinations, hidden gems can lose their charm when too many people discover them. Whenever I’m fortunate enough to visit such places, I’m always cautious about discussing them online.

However, I didn’t describe my first Trans-Siberian railway trip simply because this blog didn’t exist ten years ago! Last month, I completed a second Trans-Siberian trip. I was pleased that the stunning scenery hadn’t lost its charm. I also experienced the same friendly atmosphere which had been the highlight of my original trip.

As for distance covered, my first journey was relatively short, whereas the second trip involved crossing three countries and covering 7000 km! My one regret was planning the fastest journey possible. If I’d made more stops en route, what unique places might I have discovered?

Example: What is the writer reluctant to write about on her blog? hidden gems
1. When did the writer initially travel on the Trans-Siberian railway?
2. What did the writer enjoy most about her first experience on the Trans-Siberian railway?
3. What was the main difference between the two Trans-Siberian trips the writer took?
4. What does the writer wish she had done on the second trip?

Correct answers:
1. ten/10 years/a decade ago
2. (the) friendly atmosphere
3. (the) distance (covered)/(the) length
4. made more stops/stopped more
Short Answer Questions: Practice Tasks

C1

I don’t recall when I first encountered the term “slacktivism”. However, I remember dismissing it as doomed to disappear, a meaningless buzzword invented by journalists. Wrong! However, given my academic research is into social media trends, the widespread adoption of slacktivism has been fascinating to observe.

Slacktivism can be defined as making a small, public gesture to support important causes, without being actively engaged. A classic example is signing online petitions by just clicking a link, as opposed to taking concrete action such as protesting or volunteering. I believe it’s the simplicity of slacktivism, rather than how trendy it is, for example, that lies at the heart of why it has become so popular.

For good causes, slacktivism does have a beneficial role to play, if only in terms of raising public awareness. This is particularly true following the advent of social media, which has made reaching mass audiences easier. However, I question whether slacktivism has any direct impact. A charity video going viral on social media doesn’t necessarily lead to increased public donations.

Example: What did the writer predict would happen to “slacktivism”? it would disappear

1. What is the writer’s professional field of interest?
2. What activity is mentioned to illustrate slacktivism in relation to supporting causes?
3. According to the writer, what is the most appealing quality of slacktivism?
4. What positive impact on good causes does the writer directly associate with slacktivism?

Correct answers:
1. social media (trends)
2. signing (online) petitions
3. (its/the) simplicity
4. (raising) public awareness
Short Answer Questions: Practice Tasks

C1

In the US, audiobook sales look set to reach a billion dollars. UK audiobook sales generate approximately 87 million dollars annually. When arguing for the supposed demise of publishing, people inevitably cite falling print sales as proof. However, the rise of audiobooks indicates all is not lost for publishing.

While digitally recorded books are a modern phenomenon, the idea first appeared in a magazine article back in 1894. Audiobooks became a reality in the 1930s when a charity produced books recorded onto discs.

Clearly, technological advances have transformed audiobooks. Arguably, though, the starkest contrast between early audiobooks and their contemporary counterparts concerns narrators’ performance style. Early narrators performed in a serious rather than dramatic way.

Conveying emotion using voice alone is never a simple task, especially when it involves using unfamiliar accents as well. Typically, stage actors narrate audiobooks, although famous stars of the screen are increasingly doing so. However, they sometimes struggle, because TV and film offer the luxury of multiple takes to perfect the lines, whereas audiobook narrators are expected to keep going!

Example: How much is the American audiobook market expected to be worth soon? 1/a billion dollars/$1 billion/$1bn

1. What evidence is usually quoted to show that the publishing industry is under threat?
2. Who produced the first versions of audiobooks?
3. What does the writer think differs most between early and modern audiobooks?
4. What benefit do TV or film actors miss when they narrate audiobooks?

Correct answers:

1. falling print sales
2. (a) charity
3. (narrators’) performance style
4. (having) multiple takes
The concept of a “digital detox”, in which you refrain from using your devices and go offline to relieve stress, seems absurd to me. Unfortunately, my colleagues nominated me to do exactly that for a charity. I had to abstain from using my devices for a week. That would feel like an entire month to me, but I gave it a go.

Even though most people just post mundane things online, I still missed seeing what my friends were up to. Indeed, feeling left out was the biggest downer of the detox, followed closely by the inconvenience. For instance, not being able to use my phone as an alarm clock was a hassle.

The experience was beneficial. I was so used to mindlessly scrolling through social media that my hands felt restless. So I decided to knit instead, which was really enjoyable. I also appreciated having fresher eyes from not constantly staring at screens. Of course, I was delighted to get back online, but I now advocate quality over quantity when it comes to technology.

Example: What was expected to benefit from the digital detox? (a) charity
1. How long was the writer’s digital detox?
2. What part of the writer’s experience did they like the least?
3. What physical effect of the digital detox was the writer pleased with?
4. What is the writer’s new approach to technology following the digital detox?

Correct answers:
1. a/1/one week/7 days
2. feeling left out
3. (having) fresher eyes
4. quality over quantity
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The restaurant industry is booming. I suspect this is largely due to popular TV cooking shows, which have increased people’s interest in new cuisines. This in turn has led to a foodie revolution, with organic farm shops and food fairs popping up all over the country.

The rise of foodie culture is a mixed blessing. I applaud many of its fundamental principles, like championing independent food suppliers. Even the inevitably higher prices are justifiable. However, what I find insufferable is all the pretentious jargon.

Without a doubt, dining has changed dramatically. For one thing, many customers are more concerned with photographing their dinner than eating it. That’s why my local restaurant recently decided to prohibit all photography.

As for restaurant staff, one impressive development concerns their knowledge level. Nowadays, all staff are expected to be able to respond to queries concerning anything from food allergies to where the chef sources the ingredients.

Ultimately, of course, providing a restaurant offers delicious food and a relaxing ambience, I’ll forgive even the most annoying of dining trends.

Example: According to the writer, what have made eating out more popular? (TV/television) cooking shows

1. What aspect of foodie culture does the writer particularly dislike?
2. What has the writer’s local restaurant banned?
3. What does the writer admire about the staff working in contemporary restaurants?
4. In addition to good food, what does the writer look for when choosing a restaurant?

Correct answers:

1. (all) (the) (pretentious) jargon
2. (all) photography
3. (their/staff/level of) knowledge (level)
4. (a) (relaxing) ambience/ambiance
Be yourself in English.