

Academic Reading Practice Test 26

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Instructions for Taking the Test

Read the rules and regulations carefully before the test:

1. Switch off your mobile phone and electronic devices.
2. Manage your time strictly to **20 minutes** per passage, reading questions first to guide your skimming and scanning for answers, always paying close attention to word limits and matching synonyms.
3. Read the instructions thoroughly before answering the questions.
4. Read the questions carefully to avoid silly mistakes.

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Second Nature

Psychologists for a long time have said that a person cannot undergo transformation in their character in any meaningful way and that the key traits of personality are determined at a very young age. Researchers however began looking more closely on how we can change. Positive psychologists have found 24 qualities we appreciate, such as kindness and loyalty, and are studying them to find out why they are found naturally in few people. What they discovered is that many of these qualities come from habitual behaviour that decide the way we react to the world. And the good news is that such qualities can be learned by anyone.

Some qualities like optimism are less challenging to develop than others. However, developing some qualities requires mastering a range of skills that are surprising and diverse. For example, you must be open to experiencing negative emotions to bring more joy and passion into your life. Focusing on such qualities will help you realise your full potential.

'The evidence says that most personality traits can be changed,' says, psychology professor Christopher Peterson of the University of Michigan, who cites himself as an example. Inherently introverted, he realised early on that as an academic, his reserved character was disastrous in the lecture hall. So he learned to entertain his classes and be more outgoing. He says 'his extroverted behaviour is now spontaneous'.

David Fajgenbaum went through a similar transition. He was preparing for university, when he had an accident which ended his sports career. He understood that apart from ordinary counselling, the university had no services for students who were going through physical rehabilitation and suffering from depression like him on campus. So to help others in similar situations he launched a support group. Despite his own pain he took action - a typical response of an optimist.



Professor of psychology Suzanne Segerstrom, at the University of Kentucky, believes that rather than positive thinking the key to increasing optimism is through developing optimistic behaviour. She recommends you train yourself to write down 3 positive things that come about each day to pay attention to good fortune. This makes it easier to begin taking action and will help you convince yourself that favourable outcomes actually happen all the time.

By a person's involvement you can recognise a person who is passionate about a pursuit. Tanya Streeter is passionate about freediving - the sport of jumping into the water without any tanks or other breathing equipment. From 1998, she set 9 world records and can hold her breath for 6 minutes. The physical stamina required and the psychological demands for this sport is intense and overwhelming. Streeter learned to fight her fears from her judgement of what her body and mind could do. 'There was a limit to what I could do in my career as a competitive freediver, - but it wasn't anywhere near what I thought it was - she says.

You can improve your life by finding a pursuit that excites you. According to psychologist Paul Silvia of the University of North Carolina the secret about consuming passions, is that 'they require discipline, hard work and ability, which is why they are so rewarding.' Psychologist Todd Kashdan gave this advice to people who are taking up a new passion: 'As a newcomer, you also have to tolerate and laugh at your own ignorance. You must accept the negative feelings that come in your way,' he says.

Physician and scientist Mauro Zappaterra in 2004 began his PhD research at Harvard Medical School. Unfortunately, he was desperate as his research wasn't compatible with his curiosity about healing. He then took a break and during 8 months in Santa Fe, Zappaterra learned about alternative healing techniques not taught at Harvard. He switched labs to study how cerebrospinal fluid nourished the developing nervous system, when he returned. Including in his failure, he vowed to look for the joy in everything, as this could help him learn about his research and himself.



A person's concentration on avoiding failure rather than their looking forward to doing something well can hold his joy back. 'Focusing on being safe always might not help you reach your goals,' explains Kashdan. For example, will you be worried about getting through a business lunch without embarrassing yourself, or will you think about how interesting the conversation would be?

Ordinary life demands something else even though we think of courage in physical terms. It meant speaking out against something that was ethically wrong, said marketing executive Kenneth Pedeleose. The new manager was intimidating staff so Pedeleose carefully recorded each instance of bullying and knowing his own job security would be threatened he eventually took the evidence to a senior director. The manager was the one to go. Psychologist Cynthia Pury of Clemson University says, Pedeleose's story proves the point that courage does not come from fearlessness, but by moral obligation. Pury also believes that people can develop courage. Many of her students said that they first tried to calm themselves down when faced with a risky situation, and then looked for a way to mitigate the danger, just as Pedeleose did by recording his claims.

Picking up a new character trait over the long term may help you move toward being the person you want to be. The effort itself could be surprisingly rewarding in the short term, a kind of internal adventure.



Second Nature IELTS reading questions

Question 1–5

Look at the following Questions 1–4 and the list of the statements below.

Match each statement with the correct one

Write the correct letter **A–E** on your answer sheet.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

1. The evidence says that most personality traits can be changed
2. He had an accident while preparing for university which ended his sports career.
3. Rather than positive thinking the key to increasing optimism is through developing optimistic behaviour.
4. Passionate about freediving
5. Passion requires discipline, hard work and ability, which is why they are so rewarding.

- A. Mauro Zappaterra
- B. Christopher Peterson
- C. Tanya Streeter
- D. David Fajgenbaum
- E. Paul Silvia
- F. Suzanne Segerstrom

Question 6–10

Complete the sentences using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

6. Physician and scientist Mauro Zappaterra in 2004 began his PhD research at _____ School.
7. Focusing on being _____ always might not help you reach your goals.
8. _____ demands something else even though we think of courage in physical terms.
9. Picking up a new _____ over the long term may help you move toward being the person you want to be.
10. Pury also believes that people can develop _____.



Question 11–14

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the Reading Passage?

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 what the writer thinks about this

11. A person cannot undergo transformation in their character in any meaningful way and that the key traits of personality are determined at a very young age.

12. Some qualities like optimism are more challenging to develop than others.

13. Training yourself to write down 3 positive things that come about each day is good to pay attention to good fortune.

14. Meditation can help you change your character.

[Click Here to Check Answers](#)



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05






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Answers for IELTS Academic Reading Practice Test 26

1. B. Christopher Peterson	2. D. David Fajgenbaum	3. F. Suzanne Segerstrom	4. C. Tanya Streeter
5. E. Paul Silvia	6. Harvard Medical	7. Safe	8. Ordinary life
9. Character trait	10. Courage	11. Yes	12. No
13. Yes	14. Not Given		

How many questions did you get right?

Correct Answers (Out of 13)	Your Next Step
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