

# IELTS READING GA 304

## SECTION 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1 - 13, which are based on Reading Section 1 below.

### Knighthoods

#### An ancient tradition

Knighthoods are one of the oldest and most prestigious forms of honouring individual citizens in the United Kingdom. Although initially conferred upon members of the armed forces solely on the basis of their performance in combat, the award now recognises all contributions to national life. Some of the most notable knighthoods of recent times have been bestowed on musicians or entertainers such as Sir Elton John and Sir Paul McCartney, and the fields of finance, industry and education are also represented. Citizens of non-Commonwealth<sup>1</sup> countries are eligible for an 'honorary' knighthood for which they are not permitted to use the titles 'Sir' or 'Dame'. Perceived to be a British tradition, the legacy of knighthoods actually dates back to ancient Rome, from where it spread throughout a number of European countries in the Middle Ages and acquired certain features. A would-be knight had to undergo strict military instruction from a young age, which included spending time as an assistant (known as an esquire) to an existing knight, and participating in battle. He had to learn how to equip his knight for battle, and to help him with putting on the heavy and cumbersome armour of the time. He was responsible for keeping this armour in good condition, polishing and cleaning it. He also had to demonstrate chivalrous behaviour such as generosity, selflessness, fearlessness and skill in battle. Finally, the potential knight also required the financial means to purchase horses, weapons and armour for himself, and then make himself available to serve the ruling monarch for a minimum period each year.

In modern times, the process is very different. Instead of relying on formalised military training or political patronage, a nominations system is used. This way, a person's name can be put forward for a knighthood by any institution such as a school or business, or even just a fellow member of society. After this, an advisory panel, acting on behalf of the sovereign, deliberates and selects the future knights and dames from the pool of applications. Those selected are contacted discreetly before announcements are made to ensure that they wish to accept the honour.

In rare cases, knighthoods can be revoked through a process known as forfeiture. This most often occurs when the recipient is convicted of a criminal offense. Terry Lewis, a police officer in Queensland, Australia, was stripped of his knighthood after being implicated in a string of illegal activities that included accepting \$700,000 worth of bribes from bookmakers and casinos, and forging the signature of an Australian politician on a police document in 1981. Lewis has repeatedly protested

his innocence and suggested that he was falsely accused of these crimes, but his appeals failed in court. In a more serious incident, British art historian and intelligence officer Anthony Blunt lost his knighthood after it was discovered that he was working as a double agent and handing confidential material over to the Soviet Union. Knighthoods have also been forfeited for reasons of incompetence rather than outright illegality or treason. Having been knighted for 'services to banking' in 2004, CEO of the Royal Bank of Scotland Fred Goodwin presided over a 24-billion-pound loss at the bank just four years later. Although retaining a 16 Million pound pension, to which he was legally entitled, Goodwin had his knighthood annulled as the Queen's advisory panel deemed him 'the chief decision maker at the time'. Scandals such as these have contributed to spirited debates regarding the role and relevance of knighthoods in 21st-century society.

### Questions 1 - 6

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Section 1?

In the spaces given for questions 1 - 6, write

- **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information
- **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information
- **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this

1. The knighthood was first awarded only for military service .....
2. Most knights now come from the arts and entertainment industries .....
3. People from outside the Commonwealth cannot be awarded any type of knighthood .....
4. The knighthood began in Great Britain .....
5. Esquires, or trainee knights, were usually related to the knights they served .....
6. An esquire needed money to buy his own equipment.....

### Questions 7 - 10

**Complete the summary below.**

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer. Write your answers in the spaces given for questions 7 - 10.

### Knighthood Selection: Then and Now

The process of becoming a knight has changed over time. In the Middle Ages, people began training to become a knight at **7**.....They had to show they were brave and skilled fighters, were required to work for **8** ..... for part of the year. Today, potential recipients of the

knighthood are selected through **9** .....A final decision is made by **10** .....

**Questions 11 - 13**

Choose **THREE** letters, **A - F**.

Write the correct letters in the spaces given for questions 11 -13.

Which **THREE** of the following are reasons given in the text for people losing their knighthoods?

- A.** Punishing someone for a crime he or she did not commit
- B.** Using another person's name on an important paper
- C.** Poor management of a company
- D.** Wrongfully accepting pension payments
- E.** Gambling on horse-racing or card games
- F.** Giving secret information to a foreign government

**11** ..... **12** ..... **13** .....

[**1** *The Commonwealth is an international association consisting of the UK together with states that were previously part of the British Empire and dependencies.*]

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**SECTION 2**

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 14 - 26, which are based on Section Passage 2 below

**"Just do it!"**

Or - the subtle art of procrastination

Procrastination, a kind of chronic time-wasting, has long been dismissed as an innocuous human foible. Researchers are now beginning a more sober examination of this practice, however, and there may be good reason for doing so: twenty per cent of Americans now admit to suffering from procrastination, a fifteen per cent jump from 1970. Researchers are bemused as to what explains this sharp rise in the figures; but there is no doubt that procrastination is wreaking havoc on people's lives. One side effect is perhaps the most predictable: procrastination hampers academic and work commitments as sufferers fail to meet deadlines or achieve their goals. But there are other costs too. In shifting burdens of responsibility onto others and renegeing on their promises, procrastinators undermine relationships both in the workplace and in their private lives, all of which

takes a toll on their well-being. In one study, over the course of a semester, procrastinating university students were noted to be suffering from notably weaker immune systems, more gastrointestinal problems, and higher occurrences of insomnia than their non-procrastinating peers.

Is there hope for procrastinators? Everyone admits it's a difficult demon to beat, but a few self-styled procrastination coaches have developed strategies to that end. Although evidence for their efficacy is largely anecdotal at this stage, some of these strategies at least offer promising avenues for future research. Career counsellor Amy Sykes focuses on the basics. Firstly, she says, embrace peer pressure. Many weight loss and self-help groups encourage individuals to hold themselves accountable to a wider circle of their peers, and Sykes believes this social safety net can be harnessed just as successfully by procrastinators. A change in perspective is also considered vital. 'When we want people to do something bus, we really sell it to them,' Sykes observes. 'But when we need to do it ourselves, we focus on all the reasons we don't want to. Instead, she argues, we should pique our own interest and find ways to make our important projects more attractive - by turning them into little competitions or ba-finding missions, for example. If all else fails, Sykes bciovcs we must recompense ourselves for our troubles, klealy with little treats upon finishing a task. 'It doesn't need to be big,' she says. 'Pancakes, a hot bath, or an episode of your favourite television show could all do the trick.'

Though these tips may be a little too garden variety' for some, others have thought up more cunning twists on the human psyche. One such approach was developed by the crime writer Raymond Chandler, who built his strategy on a basic yet critical observation: procrastinators rarely sit about completely inactively, but rather tend to engage themselves in useful but less pressing tasks: vacuuming behind the bed, cleaning out the fridge, washing the windows and so on. The result is that they 'cheat' themselves into experiencing feelings of productivity and satisfaction that offer further distraction from the original project. Chandler's method, which he successfully used to help himself write detective stories, involves setting aside a period of time in which the procrastinator may do one of two things: absolutely nothing or work on the project that he or she wishes to complete. Sitting still, without the satisfaction of busying himself with less urgent tasks, Chandler slowly felt the itch of tedious monotony sink in. Within five or ten minutes, this itch had become intolerable, and he felt compelled to begin writing his stories.

Another procrastinator, professor of philosophy John Perry, developed his strategy against procrastination based on essentially the same insight as Chandler's - that procrastinators are actually quite good at doing 'marginally useful' tasks, just not the tasks they really ought to be doing. He thus surmised that the enemy of successful task completion is not, in fact, that great engine of productive activity - procrastination itself - but rather how we order our projects in the hierarchy of urgency. If a procrastinator needs to finish an assignment before 8 o'clock the following

morning, for instance, he is likely to find himself sharpening pencils instead. 'But if all the procrastinator had left to do was to sharpen some pencils,' Perry observes, 'no force on earth could get him to do it.' The key to this approach is to rank one's priorities, then bump the most urgent tasks a little further down and place at the top some potentially daunting and important-sounding projects which are ultimately not all that essential. If the student with the essay deadline can convince himself he absolutely must reorganise his email box, or finish reading that old, dusty novel he only got halfway through, then suddenly the essay deadline is going to seem a far superior option.

If the Ancient Greeks struggled with it, and all the life coaches, counsellors and motivational speakers in the modern world are unable to erase it from our existence either, it seems unlikely that procrastination will ever truly be put to rest. As these procrastination gurus have shown, however, the right strategies have the potential to minimise its impact – if you ever get around to using them.

### Questions 14 - 18

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Section 2?

In the spaces given for questions **14 - 18**, write

- **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information
- **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information
- **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this

**14.** Procrastination has always been recognised as a serious problem

.....

**15.** The reason for the rise in procrastination is unknown .....

**16.** Students are the most likely group to procrastinate .....

**17.** A range of health problems have been linked to procrastination

.....

**18.** Most techniques to stop procrastination are based on scientific study .....

### Questions 19 - 25

Look at the following statements (Questions 19 - 25) and the list of people below. Match each statement with the correct person, A, B or C. Write the correct letter, A, B or C, in the spaces given for questions 19 - 25.

19. Doing housework is a common way of avoiding important work  
.....
20. Get support from other people .....
21. Make a list of boring tasks before important ones
22. Look for ways to make the work more interesting
23. Lists are powerful tools for reducing procrastination
24. Use boredom as motivation .....
25. Use rewards when a task is completed.....

**List of People**

- A. Amy Sykes  
B. Raymond Chandler  
C. John Perry

**Questions 26**

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

**What is the writer's conclusion?**

- A. Some procrastination-reducing strategies have had proven success.  
B. Procrastination will never be completely eliminated.  
C. Procrastinators should employ a life coach to help them.  
D. Most procrastinators want to learn how to be more efficient.

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**SECTION 3**

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 27 - 40, which are based on Reading Section 3 below

**When evolution works against us**

Life has changed in just about every way since small tribes of hunter-gatherers roamed the earth armed with nothing but spears and stone tools. We now buy our meat from the supermarket rather than stalking it through the jungle; houses and high-rises shelter us at night instead of caves. But despite these changes, some very basic responses linger on. The short, sharp feeling of heightened awareness that sweeps through us when a stranger passes in a dark alley is no different, physiologically speaking, from the sensation our ancestors experienced when they were walking through the bushes and heard a dry twig snap nearby. It's called the 'fight or flight' response, and it helps us to identify dangerous situations and act decisively by, as the name suggests, mustering our strength for a confrontation or running away as fast as we

can. This shift to survival mode is often popularly described as a sudden unease, a sense that a situation is 'off' or 'not right'. However, the sense is actually the outcome of an incredibly complex mind-body process which involves the brain's 'fear centre', the hypothalamus, advising the sympathetic nervous system and the adrenal-cortical system to work, at first separately, and then together, to blend a potent mix of hormones and chemicals and secrete them into the bloodstream. Our heartbeat rises, along with our respiratory rate. Skin feels cold (hence the 'shiver' down the spine) as blood supply is redirected to the larger muscles required for a physical confrontation or a hasty retreat. The ability to concentrate on issues of minor importance also suffers, as the brain tends to prioritise 'big picture' thinking at this time.

Without this instinctive response, the human race would never have survived, but at present it is often more of a hindrance than a help. Although instances of physical threats have decreased over the years, activation of the fight or flight response has actually increased, largely in response to mental frustrations. This poses a problem, however, because the fight or flight mechanism functions most helpfully as a response to something that can cause bodily harm, such as a falling tree or a wild animal, rather than in response to a fulminating boss, a traffic jam, or a spouse who has not returned a phone call. During these instances of mental distress, the physical manifestations of fight or flight, such as an inability to think rationally and calmly, can actually exacerbate the problem.

A similar case of an evolutionary development overstaying its welcome is the example of 'mind chatter'. Mind chatter is the ceaseless train of scattered thoughts and self-talk that occupies our mind, ensuring we are always 'switched on', searching for danger and threats. This would have been a boon for a solitary caveman on a three-hour hunting expedition, but in a modern world already overloaded with sensory input, it causes us to fret about non-existent predicaments and occasionally needlessly triggers the fight or flight response.

These twin forces, mind chatter and the fight or flight response, have combined to wreak havoc on the modern psyche and have led to a spike in what some studies have suggested is a cause of up to eighty per cent of all illness today: stress. Stress, erroneously considered by many to be a mere feeling, is actually a physiological condition resulting from a cumulative accrual of certain hormones in the body, hormones that can help us in quick, sharp doses, but which are toxic if they are not properly metabolised. Metabolism of these potentially toxic hormones relies on physical exertion, which originally evolved as part of the fight or flight process - hormone release was usually followed by physical exertion (fighting or running), which returned the body to a state of balance. In present day encounters, however, the vital element of physical exertion is missing: a resentful employee cannot punch his co-worker, for example, and a frustrated driver is unable to simply ram his way through a packed intersection.

What can be done to restore the balance? Stress researcher Neil F. Neimark, perhaps not surprisingly, recommends physical exercise as one useful strategy. Fortunately, the brain is not clever enough to realise that this exercise is completely unrelated to the original stress stimulus, and in this way we can effectively 'fool' our bodies into metabolising stress hormones by punching a boxing bag instead of the person who annoyed us in the first place. Another option is the 'relaxation response', discovered by Harvard cardiologist Herbert Benson. Benson found that certain behaviours, such as deep breathing, meditation, and the repetition of simple, affirmative phrases, acted as an antidote to mind chatter and the fight or flight responses, calming the nervous system and inducing a relaxed state of mind and body instead. Integrating these methods into our lives will be important if the cycle of stress accumulation that is so endemic in modern Western society is to be stopped.

### Questions 27 - 32

Complete the summary using the list of words, A - O, below.  
Write the correct letter, A - O, in the spaces given for questions 27 - 32.

#### The fight or flight response

Modern man still has the **27**.....that were needed in his distant past in the jungle. One of these, the 'fight or flight response', originally assisted humans to recognise **28** .....and take action. Today, this same response manifests itself mostly as nothing more than a feeling of **29** .....It is the result of the hypothalamus producing and releasing **30** .....into the blood, with subsequent rises in heart rate and breathing, and the sensation of a **31** .....in temperature as the blood is diverted to other organs. Although this **32** .....was once essential to human survival, it now occurs as a result of perceived rather than actual threat.

#### List of People

- |                      |                     |                    |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>A.</b> plan       | <b>F.</b> mixtures  | <b>K.</b> anxiety  |
| <b>B.</b> strengths  | <b>G.</b> instincts | <b>L.</b> pressure |
| <b>C.</b> substances | <b>H.</b> threats   | <b>M.</b> drop     |
| <b>D.</b> strangers  | <b>I.</b> powers    | <b>N.</b> problems |
| <b>E.</b> warmth     | <b>J.</b> systems   | <b>O.</b> rise     |



### Questions 33 - 36

Choose the correct letter, **A, B, C or D**. Circle the correct letter in questions 33 - 36.

- 33.** When the fight or flight response is activated, it is difficult to
- A. increase breathing speed
  - B. focus on small problems
  - C. maintain body temperature
  - D. run for long periods of time
- 34.** The fight or flight response is less useful today because modern individuals
- A. encounter fewer physical threats
  - B. can easily manage small daily difficulties
  - C. are better at creative problem solving
  - D. do not need to hunt dangerous animals
- 35.** One disadvantage of 'mind chatter' is that people may
- A. talk too much and miss important information
  - B. spend too much time by themselves
  - C. become distracted from real threats
  - D. worry about problems that are not real
- 36.** The writer suggests stress is increasing because of
- A. a lack of physical release
  - B. an increase in the number of threats
  - C. more health problems
  - D. the loss of some hormones

### Questions 37 -40

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading Section 3?

In the spaces given for questions **37 - 40**, write

- **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information
- **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information
- **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this

- 37.** Stress is an emotion .....
- 38.** Fights in the workplace are increasing .....
- 39.** In order to metabolise hormones, exercise must be linked with the original cause of stress .....
- 40.** Saying positive words can reduce stress .....