

Integrated Skills in English II (B2)

Independent listening practice tasks

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ISE III

Sample Independent listening task – Routine

Examiner rubric

You're going to hear part of a radio programme about books. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

Give the candidate some blank notepaper.

Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me the different ways the speaker evaluates the need for routine in our lives and whether you think he comes to a conclusion. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Now tell me the different ways the speaker evaluates the need for routine in our lives and whether you think he comes to a conclusion. You have one minute to talk.

Audio script

In my recent book, I discuss the subject of routine and the effects it has on our lives. Actually, my original idea was to look at the working methods of successful creative people like writers and artists to see if there were any helpful lessons to be drawn. The more people I examined, the clearer it became that there was one thing the vast majority of them had in common: they had a regular working routine and stuck to it strictly, even obsessively. Their habits and routines often ended up being more like rituals. To take one example, the composer Beethoven apparently used to start each day with a cup of strong coffee made with exactly 60 coffee beans, which he insisted on counting out personally. And that's by no means the oddest ritual I discovered. Obviously we don't all have to behave like that, but it does appear that routine is something most of us need.

Most humans function better when they have some kind of structure to their lives. In fact, without routines for day-to-day activities, nothing much would get done. Transport wouldn't run on time, schools and workplaces would be in a permanent state of chaos, and so on. So, society as a whole seems to favour, or even require, people with regular lifestyles. But there's a growing body of research suggesting that too much routine is bad for personal well-being, and it's this aspect that much of the book is concerned with. Breaking up your routine and doing something new, it appears, increases your happiness. It's not just a case of getting bored: routine also increases our sense of time passing by too quickly. When nothing new is happening, we're not so conscious of events and simply don't notice the days and weeks slipping away.

There's also an interesting connection between time and memory, or more exactly two kinds of connection. Firstly, a lot of what people accept as naturally increasing forgetfulness as they get older is actually more to do with their lives becoming predictable. It's not so much that they forget things that have happened but that they didn't really notice them in the first place because they'd become so automatic. The other thing that strikes a chord with me as I get older is the explanation for why childhood memories seem so vivid. When you're young, everything is new and your brain is working overtime to take everything in, so your impressions of events are much more memorable. What we need to do is to try and recapture that sense of newness by disrupting routines and actively seeking out new experiences.

Answers

Main point/gist: Routine is beneficial to some extent. But it is important to break routine and try new things for happiness and memory (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable).

- ▶ Successful people known to have routine, for example, Beethoven
- ▶ Not always healthy though – can become like a ritual
- ▶ Some routine is vital – transport, schools etc
- ▶ Also, people seem to need some routine to give structure to lives
- ▶ Society needs people to have routine
- ▶ But, doing new things is important for happiness/well-being – it means time doesn't seem to pass so quickly
- ▶ Also, newness important for forming and maintaining memory – memory loss in older age can be due to predictability

Conclusion: The speaker appears to conclude that a degree of routine is important for individuals and society as a whole but that it is very important to avoid becoming too predictable.

ISE III

Sample Independent listening task – Media panics

Examiner rubric

You're going to hear part of a lecture about the media. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

Give the candidate some blank notepaper.

Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me the speaker's attitude to media panics in general, and in particular concerns about the effects of technology on language use. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Now tell me the speaker's attitude to media panics in general, and in particular concerns about the effects of technology on language use. You have one minute to talk.

Audio script

There is nothing new about media panics. Every year there seems to be a fresh reason for the public to panic, according to newspapers and television, whether it's falling standards in education or the rising tide of rubbish in our cities. But in these different tales of woe, there's a common factor: the cause is generally attributed to the youth of today and their strange new ways. One year long hair raises the vision of chaos, anarchy and disobedience; a decade later our worries are focused on hair styles that are too short. The world moves on, but is it progress or decay? It's a bit like the glass half-full or glass half-empty example – more a matter of perception, than having any actual basis in reality.

Our fears in the 21st century centre on advances in technology. Despite enjoying all the benefits, we feel pessimistic about the consequences. People claim they're not worried for themselves, but for those who have less judgement – the young, the less educated. Yes, there's convenience and enjoyment to be had in modern computer technology, but surely there must be a downside. Think, for example, of what has happened to language and communication. No longer do we have to write a letter by hand, first finding the pen and ink, carefully composing a letter on paper, then buying a stamp and taking the envelope to the post-box. A few key strokes on the computer, or worse, the tablet or smartphone, and a message is sent and received in seconds. Let alone the skills of handwriting, there is no need even to spell or punctuate correctly. Some fear that words themselves will soon be redundant, as emoticons or the latest emojis replace them. Human communication will revert to the early human's grunts, gestures and basic signs and pictures, they fear. There are regular news stories, after all, about children beginning to use text message abbreviations in their school essays. Did the same outcry and handwringing greet the advent of the printing press, I wonder?

This invention of Johannes Gutenberg's in the 15th century revolutionised language and communication, replacing the laboriously handmade book with the potential to produce multiple copies with ease. There is nothing new about printing. It is established and familiar, used by old and young, and so it holds no fears. We would hate to do without the comfort of ready access to print. And yet, when the printing press first emerged, this new young invention was also viewed with suspicion by society's elders.

Answers

Main point/gist: The speaker is talking about media panics, in particular worries about the effects of modern technology on language use (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable).

- ▶ Speaker is sceptical about the validity in general – the word 'panic' suggests a hysterical response.
- ▶ They note that it usually concerns the young, suggesting a prejudice, and that the cause changes – even becoming the complete opposite (long versus short hair).
- ▶ They use the glass half-full/half-empty example to show that it's not objective, but it all depends on your viewpoint.
- ▶ Regarding language use in particular, the speaker seems to mock the idea that language is suffering, by exaggerating – mentioning the quill pen with nostalgia and the idea of reverting to cave-man grunts.
- ▶ The comparison with the invention of the printing press illustrates how everything new becomes familiar in time.

ISE III

Sample Independent listening task – Football salaries

Examiner rubric

You're going to hear a talk about highly paid jobs. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

Give the candidate some blank notepaper.

Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me what arguments the speaker puts forward about high salaries and what solutions are offered. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Now tell me what arguments the speaker puts forward about high salaries and what solutions are offered. You have one minute to talk.

Audio script

When you see another footballer getting signed for a top club for a record amount of money or you hear about the millions of dollars a famous actor grosses in one year, it begs the question: Why is there such an imbalance when it comes to salaries? And it's not just the celebrity professions that coin in the cash. Of the top 10 richest people in the world, all of them are business magnates. In fact, the average top company director salary is said to be 120 times the average earnings of their employees when you include the generous bonus-related packages. Sport stars do have relatively short careers and yes, movie stars sometimes have a hard time under the media spotlight when their private lives are invaded and dissected for all to see. You can even argue that salaries are proportionate to the workload and/or training involved.

Doctors, for instance, undertake five to six years of initial study before specialising in an area. And directors of companies are well-known for being workaholics and never really switching off from the job. And yet it doesn't seem fair that other demanding professions do not benefit from the same high rates of pay. Take nurses. They work on the front line in hospitals and are required to do shift work. Chefs also do very tough, energy-draining jobs and have to contend with a hot, stressful work environment. In fact, many of the lower paid jobs are stressful and involve long hours of hard work. So, why the difference?

An alternative theory to explain this relates to the economic laws of supply and demand whereby a commodity automatically becomes more valuable when it is in short supply. So, although anyone, in theory, can be a football player, and there are many good football players, only a tiny proportion will have that little something extra. And it is this rare talent that makes a person a valuable commodity and in a position to demand a high salary. If this is the case, then surely the question should be not so much 'Why does this happen?' as 'What can be done?'. For a start, there could be a cap on the maximum amount a person can earn to reduce the gap over time between the very-well-paid and the not-so-well-paid. Increasing tax thresholds for high earners and decreasing them for lower incomes is another option. A more radical solution would be to automatically deduct a fixed percentage of high earnings for charities that help those worse off.

Answers

Main point/gist: There is an imbalance in salaries in certain jobs. The speaker wonders what can be done about this and offers some solutions (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable).

Arguments for (high salaries justified)	Arguments against (high salaries not justified)	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Short careers (sportsmen/women) ▶ Media scrutiny (celebrities) ▶ Training/educational demands/long hours (doctors/directors) ▶ Premium paid for rare talent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Some low paying jobs also high pressured/require specific training/education (nurse) ▶ Some people on low salaries also work unsociable hours/shift work and long hours (nurse/chef) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cap salaries ▶ Increase/decrease tax according to salary ▶ Automatically give to charity when income reaches certain level

ISE III

Sample Independent listening task – Dolphin communication

Examiner rubric

You're going to hear part of a radio programme about dolphins. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

Give the candidate some blank notepaper.

Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me if the speaker believes that dolphins have something that can be called a culture and why. Are you ready?

The task will play once.

Now tell me if the speaker believes that dolphins have something that can be called a culture and why. You have one minute to talk.

Audio script

Many scientists are now interested in whether or not dolphins can be said to have a culture. The answer depends partly on how culture is defined. Culture is generally seen as shared behaviours which are transmitted across generations. To be regarded as cultural behaviours, they need to be taught – or 'socially transmitted'. For a long time scientists have agreed that dolphins have a complicated form of communication, which some people regard as language – a clue that dolphins do transmit behaviour. Their language consists of various noises, including whistles and clicks, and also involves body language – that is, physical movements that convey meaning.

Bottlenosed dolphins are often seen imitating other members of their group, suggesting that some social learning does take place. Recently there has been some excitement about a particular behaviour among a group of dolphins in Australia. One way for dolphins to find food is to forage on the seabed, that is, they use their noses to dig up fish hiding under the sand. But this can be quite uncomfortable for the dolphins because it hurts their noses. Some Australian dolphins were observed carefully selecting pieces of sponge which fitted on to their noses. They used the sponge to protect their nose when they were foraging. This is known as sponging. Sponging is practised mainly by female dolphins, and the daughters of those sponging dolphins are often also spongers. Scientists therefore believe that they have taught their daughters how to use sponges.

Unfortunately, due to the fact that dolphins spend so much time deep underwater, it is difficult to actually observe this teaching going on. Other behaviours that suggest that dolphins might learn from each other by watching and copying are the various ways in which they play. One particular game involves blowing a ring of bubbles and swimming through it. Dolphins who are cared for by humans seem to learn new games very quickly and it seems most likely that they learn the new games through imitating one another, so games provide more evidence of the social transmission of behaviour. These examples of socially transmitted behaviour support the idea that dolphins do indeed have some kind of culture.

Answers

Main point/gist: Aspects of dolphin behaviour that have led to the suggestion they have a culture (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable).

The speaker believes that dolphins do have a culture because there is evidence that suggests that some dolphin behaviours are socially transmitted/taught/learned/acquired through imitation, for example:

- ▶ Language
- ▶ The sponging behaviours passed on from mothers to daughters
- ▶ Bubble blowing
- ▶ Games.

ISE III

Sample Independent listening task – Technology and happiness

Examiner rubric

You're going to hear part of a talk about technology. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

The task will play once

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

Give the candidate some blank notepaper.

Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me to what extent the speaker agrees that technology causes happiness and why. Are you ready?

The task will play once

Now tell me to what extent the speaker agrees that technology causes happiness and why. I'll stop you after one minute.

Audio script

With the rapid growth of technology in the last twenty years some researchers have been studying the effect this has had on the general happiness of the population. Recent surveys have shown that up to 75% of the world's population have access to mobile phones and this number is increasing rapidly. The advantages of this are obvious, but do these advances actually make people happier? The research that's been done so far considered happiness both in the sense of people feeling happy at a particular point in time and also as having a sense of general well-being. The results tend to show positive links between both these forms of happiness and advances in communications technology. This is more evident in regions where access to the internet and mobile technology is relatively new. Suggesting that the novelty factor of new technology also increases happiness. Some of the reasons for this positive link may be self-evident. The fact that having regular contact with family and friends is good for well-being has been well-established. And information technology makes communication between them easier. The ability to transfer and receive information instantly assist us greatly in other tasks essential to well-being. Finding out about employment opportunities and subsequently applying for jobs is one example. Also, mobile phones have been shown to be more important for well-being in more remoter regions where access to newspapers or television is limited. However, mobile technology can make people too accessible. A study in the USA has shown that the use of mobile phones is blurring the boundaries between work and home increasing work worries while at home. Another study suggests that people who use the internet more experience more stress. It perhaps disengages them more from family and other social ties which are seen as good preventers of stress. There's also a feeling that as we come to take technology for granted we become more frustrated when it lets us down. So, when we think about whether technology makes us happier, the answer is that it certainly has the potential to do so but it's no more than a tool. It needs to be used both sparingly and sensibly.

Answers

Main point/gist: More and more people in the world are benefiting from advances in technology. Research has shown that there is a link between advances in communication technology and happiness. However the fact that it is now so easy to communicate with others can lead to problems (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable)

For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Novelty ▶ Contact with loved ones ▶ Help with tasks ▶ Access to information ▶ Useful for people living in remote places ▶ Gives employment opportunities <p>Why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It improves our feeling of well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Work worries ▶ More stress ▶ Frustrated when it fails ▶ Blurs boundary between work and home

Ultimately speaker believes it can cause happiness, but should be used sensibly.

ISE III

Sample Independent listening task – Technology in classrooms

Examiner rubric

You're going to hear part of a talk about education. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

The task will play once

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

Give the candidate some blank notepaper.

Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me what the speaker suggests are the disadvantages of using technology in the classroom and whether you think they are in favour of it. Are you ready?

The task will play once

Now tell me what the speaker suggests are the disadvantages of using technology in the classroom and whether you think they are in favour of it. I'll stop you after one minute.

Audio script

In recent years there has been a growing trend to bring new technology into the classroom. Even in remote areas students can be found with laptops and tablets. This new age of digital literacy has the potential to teach students to navigate, analyse and filter information that they find on the internet. As such it should be seen as the perfect educational tool, but does it really work? On the one hand, some teachers see the use of technology in the class as a way to empower students. It can create a new dynamic in their learning environment that allows for more student-centred lessons instead of more traditionally teacher centred ones. It can prepare them with 21st century skills that will serve them well in future jobs. They also maintain that students are more engaged in classes when they are using technology that is already familiar to them. Conversely, people worry that if these tools are brought into the classroom they will demand a change in the student's behaviour. Many students own laptops, smartphones or tablets and are already accustomed to using them for entertainment, shopping or social networking. But does that make it an effective learning tool in the classroom? Indeed, they can distract more than instruct. Seeking info on the internet or flicking from screen to screen doesn't necessarily indicate that students are learning or indeed thinking deeply about what they are studying. Another possible disadvantage is that some teachers might not have the technical skills necessary to keep up with more digitally literate students. Unless they are well-trained they may struggle to teach effectively with this new digital tool. Although increased digital literacy will no doubt find its place in education and schools, its place in the classroom should be carefully considered. While technology is a tool for sourcing information and encouraging independent study, good writing and interactive language skills should not be forgotten. A computer can only tell if an answer is right or wrong. It can't guess the intent of the student. A good teacher can interpret where a student is having difficulty and address that need appropriately. It would be wiser to invest the funds that would be needed for such technology in the training of teachers so they are better equipped in their role as educators.

Answers

Main point/gist: The use of technology in the classroom and whether it works or not for the students and the teacher (any broadly similar formulation is acceptable).

Disadvantages	Advantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Needs a change in students' behaviour ▶ Students will have to learn to see technology as a learning tool not a means of entertainment ▶ Can distract not instruct ▶ Hard to know if a student is really thinking about what he/she sees on a screen ▶ Teachers might not be trained well enough ▶ Poorly trained teachers could struggle ▶ A computer can't gauge a student's ability in the way a good teacher can ▶ More money would be better spent training teachers instead of buying new technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Can teach students to navigate, analyse and filter information ▶ Empowers students – creates student-centred learning environment instead of teacher-centred ▶ Gives students 21st century skills they'll need in jobs ▶ Students more engaged

Overall thinks it's a good idea, but the priority should be to invest in teacher training.