

Reading Assessment — Intermediate Low

4 Passages (Narrative & Expository) | Bich Nguyen | M.A. TESOL

This assessment includes four reading passages written for the Intermediate Low proficiency level: two narrative and two expository. Each passage uses clear, accessible sentences and concrete, familiar topics appropriate for this level, and is followed by five comprehension questions covering main idea, detail, inference, organization, and vocabulary-in-context. Answer choices within each question are written to a consistent length so that option length does not cue the correct answer, and distractors reflect plausible misreadings of the text rather than clearly irrelevant choices.

Passage 1: A Busy Morning

Text Type: Narrative | Level: Intermediate Low

Every morning, Maria wakes up at 6:30 and follows the same routine. First, she takes a shower and gets dressed in comfortable clothes for school. Then, she goes to the kitchen and eats a bowl of cereal with her family before they all leave for the day. Maria usually has plenty of time to pack her school bag and check her homework before she walks to the bus stop.

Yesterday morning, however, everything went wrong. Maria's alarm clock did not ring, and she woke up at 7:15 instead of 6:30. She jumped out of bed in a panic and looked at the clock again to make sure she was reading it correctly. There was no time for a shower, so she quickly brushed her teeth and put on the first clothes she could find. Instead of sitting down for breakfast, she grabbed a banana from the kitchen counter and ran out the door.

Maria ran as fast as she could toward the bus stop, but she saw the bus starting to pull away. She waved her arms and shouted, hoping the driver would notice her, but the bus kept going. Determined not to be late, Maria ran two more blocks to the next stop and managed to catch the bus just before the doors closed. When she finally sat down, she was out of breath but relieved. She made it to school just in time for her first class, and after school, she told her friends about her chaotic morning. They all laughed together, and Maria promised herself she would check her alarm clock more carefully from now on.

Comprehension Questions

1. **[Main Idea]** What is this passage mainly about?

- a) Maria's typical morning routine of waking up and getting ready for classes
- b) A morning when Maria's alarm did not ring, causing her to rush to school
- c) A funny conversation Maria once had with her friends about arriving late
- d) The reasons why Maria decided to change her morning schedule for good

2. [Detail] According to the passage, what time did Maria wake up on the morning her alarm did not ring?

- a) 6:15
- b) 6:30
- c) 7:15
- d) 7:30

3. [Inference] Based on the passage, why did Maria eat a banana instead of sitting down for breakfast?

- a) She did not feel hungry enough to eat a full breakfast that morning
- b) She wanted to try eating something different from her usual breakfast
- c) She realized she had run out of time and needed to leave very quickly
- d) She saved her cereal to eat as a snack later in the day after school

4. [Organization] How does the writer mainly organize the events in this passage?

- a) By comparing Maria's morning routine to her friends' morning routines
- b) By describing the events in the order in which they happened in a day
- c) By describing the same event twice from two different points of view
- d) By listing several general reasons why school mornings can be difficult

5. [Vocabulary] In the passage, the word "chaotic" is closest in meaning to

- a) calm and carefully planned out in every possible way
- b) confusing and full of sudden, unexpected problems
- c) quiet and completely free of any interruptions
- d) boring and almost exactly the same as usual

Passage 2: The Importance of Water

Text Type: Expository | Level: Intermediate Low

Water is one of the most important things the human body needs every day. In fact, about 60 percent of the human body is made of water, and every system in the body depends on it in some way. Without enough water, the body cannot function properly, and even mild dehydration can cause noticeable problems.

Water helps the body in several important ways. First, it carries nutrients and oxygen to cells throughout the body, allowing organs and muscles to work correctly. Second, water helps control body temperature; when people exercise or spend time in hot weather, sweating helps cool the body down, but this process uses up water that must be replaced. Third, water supports healthy brain function. Studies show that even slight dehydration can make it difficult to concentrate, remember information, or stay alert throughout the day.

Because water is so essential, doctors usually recommend that adults drink about eight glasses of water a day. However, the exact amount a person needs can depend on several factors, including body size, activity level, and the climate where they live. Someone who exercises frequently or lives in a hot climate may need more water than someone who is less active or lives somewhere cooler. In addition to drinking water directly, people can get some of the water their bodies need from food, especially fruits and vegetables with high water content, such as watermelon and cucumbers. Making an effort to drink enough water every day is one of the simplest and most effective ways to stay healthy.

Comprehension Questions

1. **[Main Idea]** What is this passage mostly about?

- a) The exact number of glasses of water people must drink without exception
- b) Why water is essential for the body and how much people generally need
- c) The differences between drinking water and eating fruits and vegetables
- d) How dehydration specifically affects athletes who exercise in hot climates

2. **[Detail]** According to the passage, about what percentage of the human body is made of water?

- a) 40 percent, according to most recent medical research on the body
- b) 50 percent, which doctors consider the healthy average for most adults
- c) 60 percent, making it one of the largest components of the body

d) 75 percent, though this number can change quickly depending on age

3. [Inference] Based on the passage, what can be inferred about someone who exercises often in a hot climate?

a) They likely need to drink more water than someone who is less active

b) They should avoid drinking any water until after they finish exercising

c) They probably need less water because their body adjusts to the heat

d) Their body temperature will not change no matter how much they sweat

4. [Organization] How does the writer mainly organize the reasons why water is important?

a) By telling a personal story about drinking water during a hot summer

b) By comparing water to other common drinks, such as juice and soda

c) By listing several reasons in order, using words like first and second

d) By describing a specific health problem and explaining how to prevent it

5. [Vocabulary] In the passage, the word "essential" is closest in meaning to

a) optional and only needed in a few unusual situations

b) extremely necessary and required for the body to work well

c) somewhat helpful but not really very important overall

d) rare and generally quite difficult for the body to use

Passage 3: Meeting a New Friend

Text Type: Narrative | Level: Intermediate Low

Last month, Daniel moved to a new city with his family because of his father's new job. He did not know anyone in his new neighborhood, and he felt nervous about starting at a new school in the middle of the school year. On his first day, Daniel walked into the cafeteria and did not see any familiar faces. He found an empty table near the window and sat down by himself, feeling more alone than he had in a long time.

While Daniel was quietly eating his lunch, a boy from his math class walked over with his tray. His name was Josh, and he asked Daniel if he would like some company. Daniel nodded, relieved to have someone to talk to. They started talking about video games, and Daniel mentioned that

he loved playing soccer in his free time. Josh's face lit up, and he explained that he played on a local soccer team and that they both liked the same professional team. The two boys talked for the rest of lunch and discovered they had more in common than they expected.

After lunch, Josh offered to walk with Daniel to his next class so he would not get lost in the unfamiliar hallways. By the end of the day, Daniel already felt more comfortable at his new school. The following weekend, Josh invited Daniel to play soccer in the park with some of his other friends from the neighborhood. Daniel happily agreed, and after spending the afternoon laughing and playing soccer together, he realized that moving to a new city might not be as difficult as he had originally feared.

Comprehension Questions

1. [Main Idea] What is this passage mainly about?

- a) A boy who adjusted to his new school's academic schedule
- b) A boy who moved to a new city and made a new friend
- c) A soccer game played between two teams one weekend
- d) A decision Daniel's family make to have a new life in a city

2. [Detail] According to the passage, what did Daniel and Josh talk about at lunch?

- a) Their favorite teachers and classes at their new school that year
- b) Video games and their shared interest in playing soccer together
- c) Daniel's old neighborhood and the friends he had left behind
- d) Plans for an upcoming school event happening later that weekend

3. [Inference] Based on the passage, how did Daniel most likely feel by the end of the story?

- a) Still lonely and unsure about his new friends and new school
- b) Annoyed that Josh had interrupted his quiet lunch at school
- c) More confident and hopeful about his life in the new city
- d) Eager to convince his parents to move to yet another city

4. [Organization] How is this passage mainly organized?

- a) By comparing Daniel's old school to his new school in detail
- b) By presenting the events of the story in the order they happened
- c) By explaining several official rules for playing soccer in the park
- d) By listing general reasons why moving to a new city is hard

5. [Vocabulary] In the passage, the phrase "his face lit up" most likely means

- a) he suddenly became excited and happy about something
- b) he suddenly felt very tired and wanted to leave
- c) he looked confused by what Daniel had just said
- d) he became annoyed about the topic of conversation

Passage 4: Public Libraries: A Place for Everyone

Text Type: Expository | Level: Intermediate Low

Public libraries offer far more to their communities than just books. Most libraries allow people to borrow books, movies, music, and even video games for free simply by using a library card. In addition to physical materials, many libraries now offer digital resources, such as e-books and audiobooks that can be downloaded directly to a phone or tablet, making it easier than ever for people to keep reading wherever they go.

Beyond lending materials, libraries also provide valuable resources that many people cannot easily access elsewhere. Many libraries have computers and free internet access, which is especially helpful for people who do not have a computer or reliable internet at home. Libraries also offer programs designed for people of all ages. For example, young children can attend story time sessions that help them develop early reading skills, while adults can attend free classes on topics such as computer skills, resume writing, or preparing for a job interview. Some libraries even offer quiet study rooms where students can focus on schoolwork or group projects without distractions.

Because public libraries are free and open to everyone in the community, regardless of income or background, they play an important role in supporting education and lifelong learning. Whether someone wants to read the newest bestselling novel, learn a completely new skill, search for a job, or simply find a quiet place to study for an exam, the public library offers something valuable for nearly every visitor who walks through its doors.

Comprehension Questions

1. [Main Idea] What is this passage mostly about?

- a) The step-by-step process of applying for a public library card
- b) The wide range of services and resources that public libraries provide
- c) The history of how the very first public libraries were established
- d) The importance of things should and should not do at public libraries

2. [Detail] According to the passage, what can adults do for free at many public libraries?

- a) Purchase discounted books, movies, and music for a personal collection
- b) Attend free classes on topics like computer skills or job interviews
- c) Receive a guaranteed job placement after completing a library program
- d) Borrow a personal computer to keep permanently for use at home

3. [Inference] Based on the passage, why might public libraries be especially important for people with lower incomes?

- a) Libraries charge noticeably lower prices for materials than most stores
- b) Libraries only allow people with lower incomes to use their services
- c) Libraries provide free access to resources that might otherwise be costly
- d) Libraries require a special discount card that only some people can get

4. [Organization] How does the writer mainly organize the information in this passage?

- a) By narrating a personal story about visiting the library one day
- b) By comparing public libraries directly to nearby private bookstores in town
- c) By describing several different services and resources that libraries commonly offer
- d) By explaining one problem libraries face and how they solve it

5. [Vocabulary] In the passage, the phrase "lifelong learning" most likely refers to

- a) ongoing education and skill-building that continues throughout a person's whole life
- b) a single class or workshop that a person attends continuously in college
- c) learning that only happens during a person's early childhood school years
- d) a specific type of lesson that people need to learn after they graduate from high school

Answer Key

- Passage 1 — A Busy Morning: 1-b, 2-c, 3-c, 4-b, 5-b
- Passage 2 — The Importance of Water: 1-b, 2-c, 3-a, 4-c, 5-b
- Passage 3 — Meeting a New Friend: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-a
- Passage 4 — Public Libraries: A Place for Everyone: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-c, 5-a