

Matching sentence endings in IELTS reading

In this lesson I discuss the matching sentence endings question type in IELTS reading and suggest an approach to deal with this task.

An example of the question

You get a series of incomplete sentences and you need to match them their correct ending using information from the text. There are normally 5 or 6 sentences and 8 to 10 different endings. For example:

Sentence beginnings

1. *The tourism industry in the UK suffered financially*
2. *There was a ban on burials of animals in quicklime*
3. *The first animal became infected*
4. *The policy of transporting dead animals was challenged in the courts*
5. *A policy of vaccination was not introduced*

Sentence endings

- A. *because a farmer used untreated waste as feed.*
- B. *because the number of cases fell between May and September.*
- C. *because footpaths were closed due to the foot and mouth outbreak.*
- D. *because it also affected animals that were not affected by the disease*
- E. *because it might reduce the profits of farmers.*
- F. *because a similar programme had worked well in The Netherlands.*
- G. *because of the adoption of European legislation in the UK.*
- H. *because many abattoirs were closed*

Understanding how it works

This question is designed to test your understanding of the main ideas in a text. You will be NOT be looking for exactly the same words in the text as in the question, but words/phrases that have a similar meaning. In addition, you need to understand before you approach this type of question that:

1. the questions follow order of the text
2. the questions may test part of the whole text, not all of it
3. the sentence endings look grammatically similar
4. you will not use all of the endings

A suggested approach

Concentrate on the sentence beginnings

The general idea is that you focus on the sentence beginnings and not the sentence endings. The simple reason for this is that not all the sentence endings appear in the text and you will waste time if you concentrate on them.

Find the correct section of text

Find the part of the text that the questions relate to. One way to do this is scan the text for key words in the question. Once you have found the paragraph for question 1, then you know that the answer to question 2 comes later in the text and so on.

As you do this, it is sensible to ignore words that occur in more than question and words that occur frequently in the text. Focussing on proper names and dates is often a good approach.

Look for synonyms in the text

The answer will normally be found by looking for words in the text that have the same meaning as one of the sentence endings, rather than using exactly the same words.

Check back with sentence beginning

Once you have found the “correct” ending, check your answer by making the complete sentence.

Think about meaning

Don't be tempted to word match. If you find a word in the text that matches the sentence ending, read carefully. This may be an examiner trap. It is not always that easy. Go back to sentence beginning and match it with the ending. Does the whole sentence make sense? Does the whole sentence match what you find in the text?

Think about grammar

This is a similar piece of advice. Make certain that the sentence you make is grammatically accurate. It is a mistake simply to match words.

Be methodical – check every ending with every beginning

It is very easy here to write down the first option you think is possible. Don't. The examiners set traps. Be careful and look at every ending for each question. This will take a little more time, but you will certainly avoid mistakes.

The first question is the hardest – give it more time

In this type of question, it makes absolutely no sense to give one and half minutes to every question. The first question you look at will be hardest as you still have all the 8/9 options available to you. Likewise the last question will be the simplest and quickest to do as you will only have around 4 options left.

If you can't find the answer to the first question immediately, don't panic. Spend some time on it, note 2/3 different answers it could be and move on. You can always come back to it later, when you have got some other answers right.