

READING TEST PART 1

READING CORRESPONDENCE

GUIDELINES

The first task is to read a personal letter and answer six questions on the text.

The letter topic can be any subject that people would discuss in a typical correspondence, such as a holiday, a meal at a restaurant, or a family event such as wedding.

The second task in this section, reading a short reply from the recipient of the original letter, will be discussed later.

R1 Example

Part 1: Read the following letter:

Hi Abdul,

[S1] I arrived in Tofino yesterday evening. **[S2]** It's a pretty amazing place. **[S3]** We have a cabin by the sea, and we can see hundreds of little islands receding all the way to the horizon. **[S4]** The town of Tofino is little more|than a few blocks of shops, houses, and restaurants, which is a refreshing change from the traffic and offices of downtown Calgary. **[S5]** If they needed a structural engineer here, I'd be very tempted to apply for the position.

Today, Jill and I went exploring. We took a tour to a small island just off the coast of Tofino. It is a tiny island and completely unspoiled. The entire island is covered in a forest of ancient trees. Each one is as wide as your truck and twice as tall as your house. In one tree we saw the outline of an immense eagle's nest, although the eagle was nowhere to be seen. Having said that, it was pretty tough to make out much at all as the weather was pretty grim. Shortly after we reached the island, it started to pour, and we were both completely soaked within minutes. They don't call it a rainforest for nothing.

We look forward to seeing you when you join us on Wednesday. I should warn you that it's quite a journey to get here. You're best off flying from Edmonton to Vancouver and then catching a flight on a small plane from Vancouver to Tofino. If your budget won't allow for that, you can get a bus from the Vancouver airport to the ferry terminal, then get a ferry to Nanaimo, and then finally a bus to Tofino. The views from the ferry are awesome, but given that you have to return on Sunday, it would be great if we could maximize our time in Tofino. Anyway, be sure to let me know how you decide to get here so I can meet you when you get in.

Also, be sure to come prepared for the weather. As I mentioned, the weather here is unpredictable, so you might be sunbathing on the beach one moment and then running for shelter in the cabin a moment later. Still, it's definitely worth the trip, and I can't wait to see you again after all this time.

Take care and see you soon,

Jared

Example Prompt and Question

Using the drop-down menu, choose the best way to complete each statement according to the information given in the letter.

1. Jared feels that Tofino is_____.
- (a) somewhat bigger than he expected.
 - (b) more boring than Calgary.
 - (c) more pleasant than Calgary.
 - (d) too small to be interesting.

STUDY TIP 1

Review and strengthen your **skimming** and **scanning** abilities; these are key speed-reading skills.

You need both skills to answer reading questions, so practice them every day if you can.

Use a textbook to learn more about these skills and to practice them.

STUDY TIP 2

Read the letter once quickly for general understanding. Clarify **who the writer and recipient are**, how they know each other, and what the letter is describing. Your skimming skills may be helpful here.

Make sure you understand the question. What do you need to know to answer it? In this example, you need to discover whether Jared likes or dislikes Tofino and how he thinks it compares to Calgary.

Scan the letter to pick out key words and ideas that will help you find the answer in the letter. In this example, the first paragraph describes Tofino and compares it with Calgary.

Using the drop-down menu, choose the best way to complete each statement according to the information given in the letter.

Jared feels that Tofino is _____

- (a) somewhat bigger than he expected.
- (b) more boring than Calgary.
- (c) more pleasant than Calgary.
- (d) too small to be interesting.

Eliminating the wrong answer:

Answer (a): somewhat bigger than he expected—Incorrect

This answer cannot be correct since Jared thinks that Tofino is small [S4].

Answer (b): more boring than Calgary—Incorrect

If Jared finds Tofino “amazing” [S2], then it’s unlikely that he thinks it is boring.

Answer (d): too small to be interesting—Incorrect

Although Jared says that Tofino is small [S4], the adjective “too” is always used to indicate that something is excessive—too is always negative. Tofino’s small size is what Jared actually finds “refreshing” about it.

The reply letter:

GUIDELINES

The second half of Part 1, the reply letter, is a response from the recipient of the first letter. This letter will directly reply to the content presented in the first letter, but may also present some new information. The questions here are in a fill-in-the-blanks format. There are five blanks, and you have four choices (words or phrases) for each blank. In most cases, you need to relate the reply letter to the first letter to find the answer.

Here is a response to the letter. Complete the response by filling in the blanks. Select the best choice for each blank from the drop-down menu.

Hi Jared,

Thanks for letting me know what is going on. I've taken your advice and booked a **[Blank 1]** from Vancouver to Tofino. I'll be arriving in Tofino at about 3 p.m. **[Blank 2]** just as we had planned. It so happens that I was in Tofino a couple of years ago. Like you, I **[Blank 3]** in a small town. Also, as you suggested, I will be ready for all possible kinds of **[Blank 4]**. Frankly, though, I am not too worried about what we do or what the weather is like, as long as we have a chance to catch up on each other's news. Just as you said, we should try to **[Blank 5]** as possible.

See you soon,

Abdul

RESPONDING TO THE PROMPT

- Read the reply letter sentence by sentence. Click on the blanks in order to read the answer choices.
- Identify and choose any answers that seem immediately correct to you. This might be possible because you are now quite familiar with the subject from reading the first letter. If you have time afterwards, go back and check these more carefully.
- For those questions that you did not immediately know the answer to, try to recognize what you need to understand in order to choose the correct answer. In this example, you would need to know that the term “like you” means that Abdul has the same opinion as Jared.
- If you can’t remember something from the original letter, go back and scan it to find the information you need. In this example for instance, you could scan the first letter to remember that Jared likes small towns, confirming that the answer to Blank 3 is “enjoy being.”

Select the best answer.

3. Blank 3

- a) am a bit bored
- b) enjoy being
- c) feel uncomfortable
- d) have a job

Eliminating the wrong answer:

Answer (a): am a bit bored—Incorrect

If Abdul has the same opinion of small towns as Jared, this means he likes small towns. Therefore, this answer can't be right.

Answer (c): feel uncomfortable—Incorrect

For the same reason as in answer (a), Abdul shouldn't feel uncomfortable in a small town.

Answer (d): have a job—Incorrect

The first letter tells us that Jared does not have a job in Tofino [S5], so this answer can't be correct.

Read the following message.

Hi Mea,

I'm sorry for taking so long to reply to your email. As you know, I've been very busy this summer with Marco's university graduation and my family's visit from Chile. The graduation ceremony was great! Too bad you guys couldn't make it, but we understand it's a bit of a drive from Calgary. You were truly missed. My Mum remembers you well from when we were kids. After the celebrations, we took the family sightseeing here in Vancouver. They loved it! They left yesterday for Victoria, and will catch a plane back home from there in three days.

Read the following message.

Just when we thought things would slow down, Marco broke the news that he had accepted a job offer in Tokyo. He leaves at the end of the month! He was invited to work at a top engineering firm that specializes in rebuilding cities after large disasters. Needless to say Marco is very excited about it. The firm has been really active in the reconstruction efforts following the 2011 earthquake in Japan, and it's a great first step into his career, not to mention the opportunity to experience a new culture, and learn a new language. He's a little apprehensive about communicating in Japanese but the firm has a translator and a tutor to help him.

Read the following message.

Marco is over the moon, but Jack and I are having a tougher time with it. We think he's so young to be so far away, but we know it's for the best. Just the other day Jack and I were talking about that trip all of us took to Disneyland when the kids were little, do you remember that? It's been 20 years! Time flies, doesn't it? Well, get prepared, Cindy is next!

Read the following message.

In any event, we are planning a farewell party for friends next weekend, and Marco cannot imagine not having you, Jason and Cindy there. The party will be at his apartment. He really does not want to leave without saying goodbye to you all. We hope you can make it, after all we haven't seen you since last Christmas. Let me know so I can get the rooms ready.

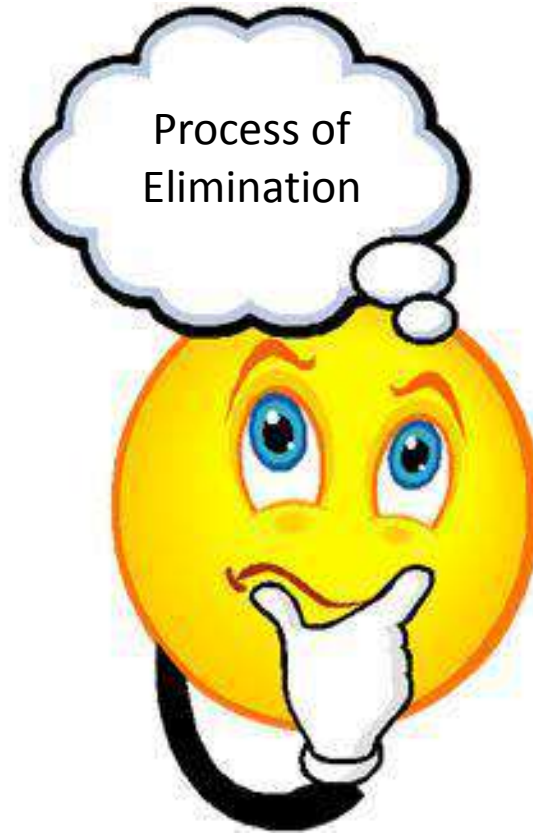
We'll be in touch,

Love,
Maria

Using the drop-down menu, choose the best way to complete each statement according to the information given in the message.

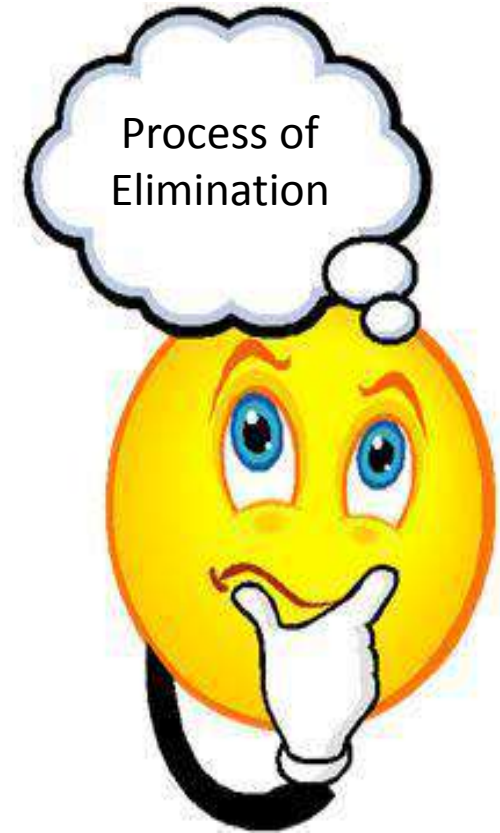
1. MARIA'S MOTHER IS NOW _____

- a)in Chile.
- b)in Calgary.
- c)in Vancouver.
- d)in Victoria.



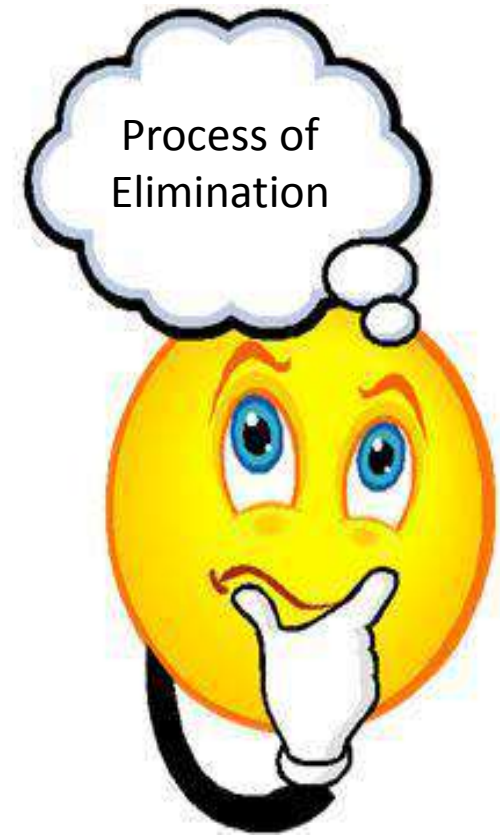
2. IN A FEW WEEKS, MARIA'S SON MARCO
WILL _____

- a) graduate from university.
- b) visit his family in Japan.
- c) start a new job.
- d) visit Mea and her family.



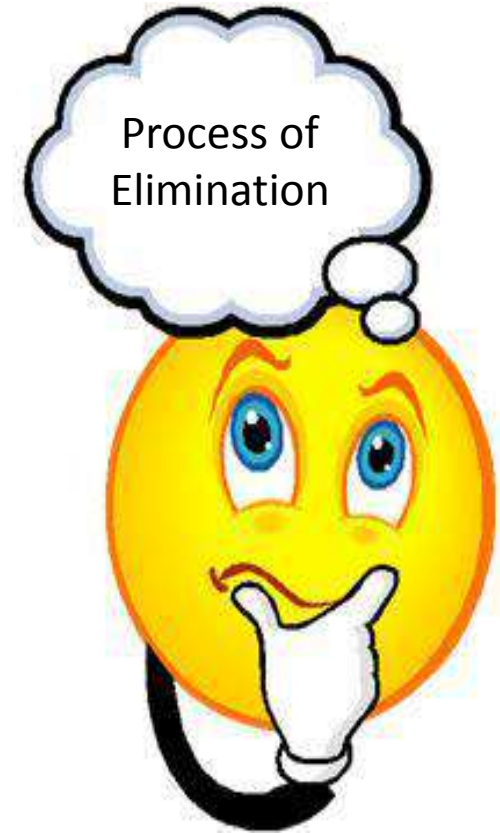
3. MARCO IS FEELING _____

- a) unsure about the job.
- b) happy about leaving his parents.
- c) nervous about speaking Japanese.
- d) sad about moving to Japan.



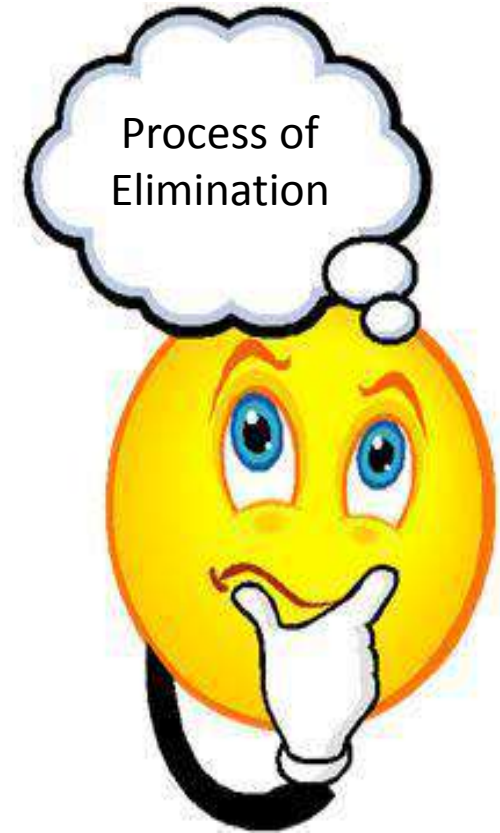
4. MARCO'S EMPLOYERS ARE _____

- a) not supportive of his inexperience.
- b) doing little for Marco's adaptation.
- c) specialists in town reconstruction.
- d) inexperienced with disasters.



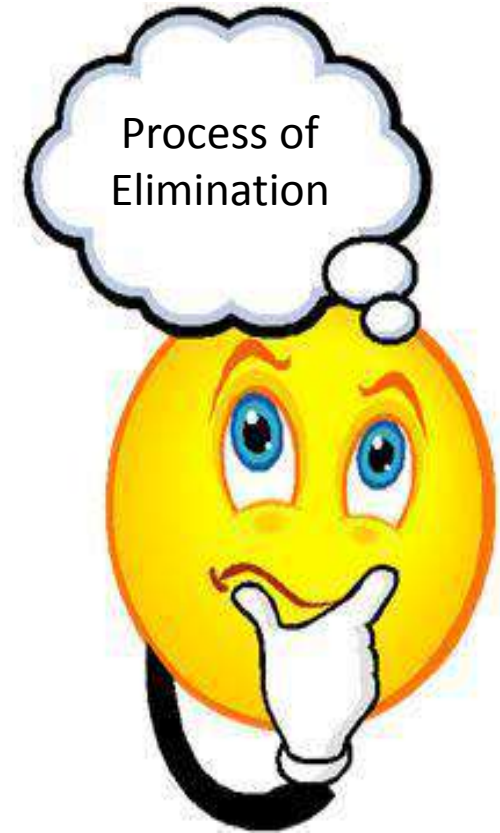
5. MARIA AND JACK ARE WORRIED ABOUT

- a) Marco being in an earthquake.
- b) Marco not speaking the language.
- c) never seeing Marco again.
- d) Marco's lack of life experience.



6. MEA AND MARIA _____

- a) are neighbors.
- b) are cousins.
- c) are co-workers.
- d) are old friends.



**Here is a response to the message.
Complete the response by filling in
the blanks. Select the best choice
for each blank from the drop-down
menu.**

Hi Maria,

This is such wonderful news! Count us in, we would hate to miss 7.) _____. We'll leave 8.) _____ at 6am Saturday morning. We'll be there by early afternoon. That way if you need any help setting up the 9.) _____ you'll have some extra help. Cindy is great with decorations.

Also, we want to give Marco a graduation gift. Initially we thought about a sofa for his Vancouver apartment, but I guess that 10.) _____ Do you have any suggestions? Does he have everything he needs for the 11.) _____.

Winter clothes, perhaps?

Let me know, and see you on Saturday!

Love,
Mea



Study Tip

If you do not understand the phrase “like you,” you will possibly misinterpret the question, which will make it difficult to choose the right answer. “Like you” is, in fact, a short version of the expression, “just like you.” Both phrases mean that the writer shares a certain viewpoint about the topic that is the same as or similar to that of the reader.

Some common English expressions have short versions, such as “Come” instead of “Come with me” or “How much?” instead of “How much is this?” To help you learn shortened forms, make a list of common expressions and see if you can find short forms for any of them. If possible, get help with this from friends who are native English speakers.