

# IELTS Speaking

## Sample Answers & Vocabulary



FASTRACK IELTS

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# HOMETOWN

## SIZE / LOCATION

Do you live in a city or a village?

*I live in Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan with a population of about two million people.*

with a population of = the total number of people who live there

*I live in a medium-sized town of about 60,000 people situated on the south coast of England.*

medium-sized = of average size

situated on = in a particular place or position

the coast = the land next to or near to the sea or ocean

*My hometown is a small but vibrant city in the heart of Spain.*

in the heart of = the central or most important part of something

*It is a pretty little town, surrounded by some breath-taking scenery.*

surrounded by = to be all around or on all sides of someone or something

breath-taking scenery = very exciting or impressive landscape, such as mountains, valleys, rivers and forests

## CHARACTER

What kind of place is it?

*I love London with all its opportunities, but sometimes I need a break from the hustle and bustle of the big city.*

hustle and bustle /'hʌsl/ /'bʌsl/ = large amount of activity and work, usually in a noisy surrounding

vibrant = full of life and energy

bustling = full of people moving about in a busy way

*London is a truly **diverse, cosmopolitan** city.*

diverse = very different from each other and of various kinds

cosmopolitan = containing people of different types or from different countries, and influenced by their culture

*I live in a **thriving** little village in the middle of the Alps.*

thriving = continuing to be successful, strong, healthy, etc.

*The standard of living has increased and it's become quite an **affluent** place in recent years.*

*It's not exactly **affluent**, but it's still a great place to live.*

affluent place/neighbourhood = having a lot of money and a good standard of living

*Even though the city is growing fast, it's preserved its **laid-back atmosphere** and people are still very **down-to-earth**.*

laid-back atmosphere = calm and relaxed feeling or mood in a particular place or situation

down-to-earth = sensible and practical, in a way that is helpful and friendly

*It is an **idyllic** little town, **surrounded by some breath-taking scenery**.*

idyllic = peaceful and beautiful

*It's a lovely place to live but it can be **rather grim** in the winter.*

rather grim = 'fairly' or 'to some degree' unpleasant and depressing

## TRANSPORT

What do you dislike about your hometown?

I'm not too keen on the *dreadful traffic congestion* which means that *it takes forever* to get anywhere. Usually, I avoid travelling *at rush hour* as much as I can.

dreadful	= very bad or unpleasant
traffic congestion	= situation in which there is too much traffic and movement is difficult
it takes forever	= to take much more time than one would like
at rush hour/in the rush hour	= the time, usually twice a day, when the roads are full of traffic and trains are crowded because people are travelling to or from work

*Public transport* is significantly underfunded at the moment. As a result, most people *commute by car*.

public transport	= the system of buses, trains, etc., which people use to travel from one place to another
to commute	= to travel regularly by bus, train, car, etc. between your place of work and your home
to be stuck in a traffic jam	= unable to move or to be moved because of traffic

## FACILITIES

What is the centre like in your hometown?

My hometown is *not especially modern* and there are no *state-of-the-art* structures or *high-rises*. The town centre is a typical British *high street* with a few *chain stores* and *fast-food outlets*. There is also a good selection of *independent traders* and *street food stalls*, which make it pleasant to visit.

not especially modern	= not very new and adapting to present times
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state-of-the-art	= using the most modern or advanced techniques or method
high-rises	= buildings that are very tall with a lot of floors
high street	= the main street of a town, where most shops, banks, etc. are
chain stores	= a shop that is one of a series of similar shops owned by the same company
fast-food	= hot food, such as hamburgers and chips, that is served very quickly and can be taken away to be eaten in the street
outlets	= shops or organizations that sell goods made by a particular company or of a particular type
independent traders	= person who runs a business on their own
street food stalls	= prepared or cooked food sold in a table or small shop with an open front in a street or public place

## ECONOMY

What kind of jobs do the people in your town or village do?

My city is a popular *tourist destination*, so many people work in *hospitality* and *retail*.

tourist destination	= a place that people visit for pleasure and interest, usually while they are on holiday
hospitality	= businesses such as hotels, bars, and restaurants that offer people food, drink, or a place to sleep
retail	= businesses that sell goods through stores, on the internet, etc. to the public

It's a regional *financial hub*, and there are a lot of *financial services* employees.

financial hub = a city where a lot of financial activities happen, and there are many banks and financial organizations

financial services = business services relating to money and investments, for example those offered by banks

*Most people in the region work in **agriculture**, growing a variety of fruits and vegetables.*

agriculture = the science or practice of farming

*The city's growing so fast that **construction** is a major employer.*

construction = the people and activities involved in making buildings

*I live in the capital, which means that many people work in the **public sector**.*

public sector = the part of the economy of a country that is owned or controlled by the government

private sector = the part of the economy of a country that is owned or controlled by private individuals or companies

## YOUR FEELINGS

*Some people want to spend their lives in their hometown. Why do you think this is?*

*I think it is mainly because being there gives them a sense of belonging and **helps define them** as the person they want to be. Somebody might say they are from Valencia before they say they are Spanish. They **have a bond** with that location.*

to help define them = to make or establish the essential character or somebody

to have a bond with = to have a strong feeling of friendship, love, or shared beliefs and experiences with someone



## Why do many people leave their hometowns?

Mostly because of work. In the UK, many young people see it as an opportunity to *fly the nest* and get new experiences and this often means going away to university. In some regions there aren't many *career opportunities* at all, and people have to *go further afield* to find decent jobs.

to fly the nest

= to move away from parents' home

career opportunities

= any opportunities (job, internship, etc.) that take you closer to your career goals

to go further afield

= to go to a greater distance far away from home

# PEOPLE

## FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Describe a person in your family you get on well with.

*I get on best with my uncle. We've been close ever since I was a child. We get on like a house on fire maybe because we share the same sense of humour. Apart from that, when it comes to emotional support, I couldn't ask for more. He's always there for me when I need someone to talk to and he's such a good listener.*

to get on best with	= the person you get along the most with
to be close	= to know somebody very well and like them very much. It's often used with "always" or "never".
to get on like a house on fire	= to have a great relationship with someone
like chalk and cheese	= completely different to someone
to share the same sense of humour	= to find similar things to be funny
I couldn't ask for more	= if a relationship or anything for that matter is so good that it couldn't be better
to be there for somebody	= to be ready to help
a good listener	= someone who pays attention to and respects what you say and think

Describe a person in your family you admire.

*I have nothing but admiration for my grandmother. I know we all tend to take older family members for granted but when I began to learn of all the sacrifices she made, I was amazed at her outstanding qualities. Not only did she bring up a family of four, but also qualified as an architect, studying mostly at night. She's a true source of inspiration for all of us. The lessons of hard work, devotion and striving to achieve one's goals that she has taught us are invaluable.*

nothing but admiration	= a feeling of deep admiration to someone
to tend to take for granted	= to fail to appreciate properly
outstanding qualities	= extremely good character as a person
true source of inspiration	= the reason why somebody creates or does something
hard work	= a great deal of effort or endurance
devotion	= great love, care and support for somebody/something
striving to achieve one's goals	= the act of trying very hard to achieve one's dreams

## NEIGHBOURS

Describe an interesting neighbour.

Well, there's a man who's just moved into the building where I live, and we *struck up a conversation* the other day in the hallway. It turns out he's a retired diplomat and he's full of stories about the places he's lived in all over the world. As you might expect, *he's very unassuming* and *outwardly calm*, very *soft-spoken* and *sincere* in everything he says.

to strike up a conversation (to strike – struck – struck)	= to start a conversation with someone
unassuming	= modest, not the type to talk about himself
outwardly calm	= doesn't get very excited or show feelings on the outside
soft-spoken	= having a gentle and quiet voice
sincere	= showing what you really think or feel

## POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Describe a person you know who is helpful to others.

There's this woman I work with. She must be the most *warm-hearted* person in the world. If you're struggling with anything, *she's always there to lend you a hand*, always with a cheerful smile on her face, and she never asks for any

*favours in return, although I would be more than willing to help her with anything. I've never met anyone so kind and considerate.*

...-hearted	= having a character or feelings of specified kind
warm-hearted	= kind and friendly
kind-hearted	
good-hearted	
evil-hearted	
to lend somebody a hand	= to help
considerate	= someone who considers others or thinks about their needs

## LEADERSHIP AND ENTERPRISE

Describe someone you know who is a good leader/who would make a good leader.

*A sign of a good leader is someone who leads by example and that's certainly true when it comes to my friend Mark. He works harder than anyone I know and is always on top of everything. Although he's very demanding, he knows how to delegate and has a great rapport with everyone in his team as well as being very supportive. He's the kind of person who will stand by you when it's needed.*

to lead by example	= to guide others through your behaviour instead of your words
on top of everything	= in control of a situation and aware of changes
demanding	= expecting a lot of work or attention from others
to delegate	= to entrust (a task or responsibility) to another person
to have a great rapport with	= to have a friendly relationship in which people understand each other very well

supportive = encouraging somebody or giving them help or sympathy

\*Note: After “as well as”, use a gerund (a verb with -ing). “He is kind as well as **being** supportive.”

to stand by somebody = to help somebody or be friends with them, even in difficult situations

## FAMOUS PEOPLE

Describe a famous person you'd like to meet.

*I've chosen the climate activist Greta Thunberg. For someone of her age, she's made such an impact. She's so straightforward, she just tells it as it is and has this way of putting her ideas across in such a persuasive manner. I can see why she is inspiring young people to protest against climate change.*

to made an impact = to make a powerful effect on somebody/something

straightforward = someone who is very direct when they speak or act

to tell it as it is = to describe a situation honestly without avoiding any unpleasant details

to put something across = to communicate your ideas, feelings, etc. successfully to somebody

## WHAT ABOUT ME?

How well do you know your neighbours?

*To be honest, I usually try to keep to myself, I'm not very sociable. I've met a few people in my neighbourhood and because I'm not that outgoing I haven't really bonded with anyone at all, though there's this woman about my age who lives nearby and seems quite laid-back and easy-going as far as I can see.*

to keep to myself = to avoid meeting people socially or becoming involved in their affairs

sociable = enjoying spending time with other people

outgoing	= liking to meet other people, enjoying their company and being friendly towards them
bonded with	= to develop or create a relationship of trust with somebody
laid-back	= calm and relaxed
easy-going	= relaxed and happy to accept things without worrying or getting angry

# FAMILY

## FAMILY MEMBERS

What was the best holiday you ever had?

*I remember one time, I must have been 7 or 8 years old, and practically the whole **extended family** – my parents, my three **elder siblings**, my uncle and aunt and my cousins, and my grandparents – rented a house near the beach.*

extended family	= a family group with a close relationship among the members that includes not only parents and children but also uncles, aunts, grandparents, etc.
immediate family	= a person's smallest family unit, including parents, siblings, spouse, and children
siblings	= brothers and sisters
elder	= (of people, especially two members of the same family) older

\*Note: We use *older* to make comparisons.

*My **elder** brother is a doctor.*

*vs.*

*He is four years **older** than me.*

*Well, I was **an only child**, but my parents got **divorced** when I was very small. My mum **remarried** so I have a **step-father** and a **half-sister**.*

<b>an</b> only child	= a child who has no brothers or sisters
spoilt child	= rude and badly behaved because they are given everything they ask for and not enough discipline
to divorce	= to end your marriage to somebody legally

to separate	= to end a relationship with somebody
to remarry	= to marry again after being divorced or after your husband or wife has died
step-father / step-mother	= a man who is the husband or partner of your mother but who is not your birth father/a woman who is the wife or partner of your father but who is not your birth mother
half-sister / half-brother	= a sibling who has either the same mother or the same father as them
step-sister / step-brother	= a child of your stepfather or stepmother, step-siblings have no parents in common, whereas half-siblings share one parent

## FAMILY TREE

Actually, my *in-laws* are really great, especially my *mother-in-law* who must be the best babysitter in the world and then there's my *brother-in-law* who's one of my oldest friends.

in-laws / 'ɪn lɔ:z/	= your relatives by marriage
father-in law / mother-in-law	= the father/mother of your husband or wife
brother-in-law / sister-in-law	= the brother/sister of your husband or wife; your sister's or brother's husband/wife; the husband/wife of your husband's or wife's sister or brother

## APPEARANCE AND PERSONALITY

Do you have a favourite family photo?

Yes, there's one with just me and my parents the day I graduated. Everyone says I *look just like* my dad, the same nose and eyes, but I think I *take after* my mother. She's very stubborn, just like me.

to look like (about appearance)	= to have an appearance that is very similar to (someone or something)
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*I look just like/exactly like/a bit like my grandma.*



*I don't look at all like my sister.*

to take after (about personality) = resemble a parent or ancestor

*My younger sister followed in her father's footsteps. She was the only one of us who wanted to be an engineer, just like him. The rest of us are teachers and journalists.*

to follow in (someone's) footsteps = to do the same as someone has done before

## RIVALRY AND RELATIONSHIPS

There was barely any sibling rivalry in our family.

sibling rivalry = jealousy, competition and fighting between brothers and sisters

*Well, I don't get on at all with my brother. We used to be close when we were small but over the last few years we've grown apart and at any family get-together, we just end up arguing. It's sad really.*

to get on well with = to have a friendly relationship with somebody

to get on badly with = not to get along with someone

to be close to = to have a very friendly and intimate relationship with one

cool/distant relationship = having or showing a lack of friendliness or interest in others

to grow apart = to stop having a close relationship with somebody over a period of time

family get-together = an informal meeting; a party with family

*We began to see less and less of each other. We just drifted apart.*

to drifted apart = to become less friendly or close to somebody

*The problem is that on my father's side of the family, they are all very creative and artistic and they just don't see eye-to-eye with anyone on my mother's side who are all very practical and don't see the point of painting or poetry.*

on my mother's / father's side of the family = your mother's relatives or your father's relatives

not to see eye-to-eye with = not to share a position or opinion

## FAMILY DIFFERENCES

Do older people enjoy the same types of films?

How do older people use the Internet and social media?

*I come from a very traditional culture where we are taught to treat the elderly with respect. It's an important part of our upbringing. After all, we can learn so much from them.*

the elderly = used as a polite word for 'old'

treat (the elderly) with respect = to be polite towards someone

upbringing = the way in which a child is cared for and taught how to behave while it is growing up

to bring up / to be brought up = to care for a child until they are an adult

to learn from (someone) = to acquire specific knowledge or experience from someone or something

generation gap = differences of outlook or opinion between people of different generations

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

How many generations live together in your country?

*It's very common to find three or even four generations living under the same roof. In our culture, we don't see taking care of elderly relatives as a burden. We owe them so much for making us what we are today.*

to live under the same roof = to share a home with someone

relatives = a person who is in the same family as somebody else

burden = a duty, responsibility, etc. that causes worry, difficulty or hard work

to owe (someone) = to feel that you ought to do something for somebody or give them something, especially because they have done something for you

Should it be the sole responsibility of the family to take care of the elderly? What about the government?

*I know that in many places the elderly or **senior citizens** often end up in private or public residential homes, but if it is at all possible, the family members should be the **primary caregivers** for their **loved ones**. It's their **duty** to do so.*

seniors/senior citizens = an older person, especially somebody who has retired from work

caregiver = a person who takes care of a sick or old person at home

duty = something that you feel you have to do because it is your moral or legal responsibility

loved one(s) = a person one loves and especially a member of one's family

Let's talk now about husbands and wives. Should they have different roles within the family?

*On the whole, the traditional **gender-based roles** where the man is the **breadwinner** and the woman has all the **household duties** are fast becoming a thing of the past. There are more and more families where both of them **equally share** responsibilities, especially when there are children involved.*

gender = the fact of being male or female, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences, rather than differences in biology

gender-based roles = a way of appearing and behaving that meets cultural expectations based on an individual's gender

breadwinner = a person who supports their family with the money they earn

household duties	= duties needed in a normal functioning of a household, such as cooking, cleaning, washing or ironing
a thing of the past	= something that no longer exists
to share equally	= to divide a total amount into groups so that there is the same number in each group

### What responsibilities do parents have towards their children?

You mean apart from the basics like *feeding and clothing them*? Well, it's important they *instil the right kind of values* in their *offspring* by teaching them how to be caring, responsible individuals.

to feed	= to give food to someone
to clothe	= to dress somebody
to instil values	= to put a feeling, idea, or principle gradually into someone's mind
offspring (pl. offspring)	= a child or children of a particular person

## IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

### Which are more important to you, family or friends?

That's a difficult one. They say that you can't choose your family but you can choose your friends and yes, there's some truth in that. But family is *where we belong* and there are *bonds* that can't easily be broken, no matter what happens.

to belong	= to feel that you are in the right place
bonds	= something that forms a connection between people or groups
sense of belonging	= the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group

### What conflicts can arise between a person's family and a person's friends?

*I think there can be issues when you start inviting your friends home and maybe your parents **don't approve of them** for one reason or another. They may think they have a **bad influence on you**. I know they only have **your best interests at heart** but when you're that age, it's sometimes not easy to see that.*

to approve / disapprove

= to officially agree to something/ to officially refuse to agree to something

approval / disapproval

= the feeling that somebody/something is good or acceptable/ a feeling that you do not like an idea, an action or somebody's behaviour because you think it is bad

good/bad influence

= good/ bad effect that somebody/ something has on the way a person thinks or behaves

to want the best for (someone)

= to wish the best option or advise for the other

to have your best interests at heart = to be concerned about and want to help (someone)

# HANDWRITING

Do you prefer to write by hand or type on a keyboard?

*I would definitely say typing on a keyboard. I find it much better to write that way because it's easy to make changes and check over what I've written by **scrolling** up or down. And to be honest, my **handwriting** is a mess and my spelling is not that good either so I love the **spelling check** on Word.*

to write by hand	= to write using your hand rather than printed by a machine
to type on a keyboard	= to write using a computer by pressing the keys
to scroll up/down	= to move displayed text or graphics on a screen in a particular direction in order to view different parts
handwriting	= a person's particular style of writing in this way
spelling check	= a computer program or function (as in a word processor) that identifies possible misspellings in a block of text by comparing the text with a database of accepted spellings

Did you write a lot by hand when you were younger?

*Well, yeah, of course, at school. We had to write everything by hand right up until the last couple of years at High School where you could **hand in** some projects done on the computer. In fact, when we were about 9 or 10 years old, we had a teacher who tried to show us how to have beautiful handwriting. What's the word? **Calligraphy**, that's it!*

to hand in	= to give something to a person in authority for their attention
calligraphy	= beautiful handwriting that you do with a special pen or brush

Is good handwriting important?

*Well, that teacher I mentioned thought so! I don't know, I mean, maybe in some jobs where you need to write clearly, it is important. A doctor maybe? But nobody can understand their handwriting. On the other hand, in some cultures, Japan, China, for example, writing by hand is like a form of art, so I guess it all depends.*

good handwriting

= handwriting in which the letters are properly formed and spaced, size and thickness of letters is proper and it can be read by anyone without much effort

bad handwriting

illegible handwriting

= difficult or impossible to read

**Do you think you will write by hand more or less in the future?**

*Personally, I don't see myself writing much by hand in the future. Even short **memos** at work are going to be through texting and, in fact, it'll be the smartphone we'll be using even more than a laptop or tablet to communicate in writing. Ahh...and one thing I would like to use more is **voice dictation**.*

memos

= an official note from one person to another in the same organization

voice dictation

= the act or manner of uttering words to be transcribed

**Why?**

*Because it makes life so much easier. I downloaded the app. All you have to do is speak and it writes the doc for you. It saves time and I believe I think better when I speak than when I write.*

# BIRTHDAYS

## What do you usually do on your birthday?

*I always try to celebrate with friends. We **go out** to a restaurant or maybe I **throw a party** in my flat if my birthday **falls on** the weekend and I don't have to go to work the next day. Oh...and of course, I call my parents and chat. They live far away so I don't get to see them on the day.*

to go out event	= to leave your house to go to a social event
to throw a party	= to organize a social gathering
to fall on	= to happen on a particular day or date

*This year my birthday falls on a Saturday so I can have a big party without worrying about getting up early the next day.*

## What did you like about birthdays when you were a child?

*The parties. It didn't matter if it was my birthday or someone else's. There **would** always be a party with lots of games and a cake and sometimes it **would** be outside, like in a park.*

would	= (expressing the conditional mood) indicating the consequence of an imagined event or situation
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## Is it important for you to celebrate your birthday?

*Yes, maybe because of all those great **childhood memories**. I mean, it's **just another day** really but it's nice to have one day in the year when you feel special. Perhaps when I get old, I won't feel the same of course.*

childhood memories	= memories formed during childhood
just another day	= an ordinary or typical day

## Which birthdays are more important to celebrate in your country?

*In my country, when a boy or girl reaches the age of 18, it's very special. This is a kind of **coming-of-age** event where all the family and friends come to celebrate.*



coming of age

= when a person reaches the age at which they have an adult's legal rights and responsibilities. It may be 18 or 21

# NAMES

Does your name have any special meaning?

*I know that Asiya is a name of Arabic origin and it is said to mean 'Caring One'.*

OR

*I really don't know in fact. All I know is that my name, Carolina, is the female equivalent of Charles but I have no idea if it means something special.*

Who usually names babies in your country?

*Sometimes, it's a family tradition. For example, my eldest brother **was named after** our grandfather **on our father's side**. Our grandad was the first son, my brother too and they call the first son David. But I know some people who choose names simply because they like them.*

to name after

= to give someone or something the same name as someone or something else, especially the same first name as a member of your family

father's/mother's side

= relatives directly related to the father or mother of the family

Did your family have a nickname for you when you were a child?

*Yes, and they still call me by it. It's just "Lina" because when I was small, I couldn't say my whole name – Carolina – so I would say "Lina" and everyone would laugh. That's where it started.*

nickname

= an informal, often humorous, name for a person that is connected with their real name, their personality or appearance, or with something they have done

pet name

= a name you use for somebody instead of their real name, as a sign of love or friendship

Would you like to change your name?

*Actually, I was considering changing my name when I moved to the UK and found out that most people struggle to pronounce it. But it's a big decision. Your name becomes a part of you, something you identify yourself with so closely. Eventually, I decided against it.*

# COOKING

## How often do you cook?

Quite a lot. I live by myself and I like to eat well, so I don't have much choice. I wouldn't say I was that *good in the kitchen*, I mean, more often than not, I make something simple like pasta or whatever, but I *get by*.

good in the kitchen = to be skillful and successful in making food

to get by = to manage to live or do a particular thing using the money, knowledge, equipment, etc. that you have

OR

Never. I'm hopeless and luckily, I don't need to because *my partner is a brilliant cook*.

my partner = either member of a married couple or of an established unmarried couple

brilliant cook = someone who is very good with cooking

## When you were a child, did you help to prepare meals?

Yes. My mother used to ask us to help *set the table* and help a bit in preparing salads and stuff when we were quite young, about 6 or 7. That was me and my brother. Later on, when I was a teenager, I used to do more. My mother really enjoyed cooking so it was fun to help.

to set the table = to place the plates, cutlery, dishes on the table, you can also say "lay the table"

## Do you think children should be taught cookery at school?

Absolutely. I've heard that years ago, cooking classes at school were *mandatory*, at least for girls, but these days that just doesn't happen. It's so important that kids learn practical things like how to cook. And not just girls of course. Boys must learn as well.

cookery = the art and practice of cooking

mandatory = something that has to be done because of a law or a rule

Is it important to know how to cook well?

*It all depends on the individual. If someone enjoys cooking, then, yes, why not? The satisfaction and sense of achievement you can get from cooking incredible meals must be fantastic as well as the pleasure it gives to other people. But I see it as something very personal, not as something important for your role in society.*

# RIVERS

## Is there a river near you?

There isn't one because I live in the centre of a flat, dry country. But I remember visiting London and sitting on the **banks** of the Thames, watching it **flow** through the city. One day we went **downstream** as far as the **estuary**, and I was impressed by how wide and **unspoiled** it was.

bank	= the side of a river
to flow	= to move. "The water in the river flows".
downstream	= the direction of a river
estuary	= the wider part of a river as it enters the sea. When it is not significantly wider, it is called 'a mouth'
unspoiled	= not touched by development

## OR

Actually, I live quite far from any rivers. The river Nile, however, is in my part of the world, and I'd love to see it one day. After all, it is the longest river on Earth and the cradle of ancient Egyptian civilisation.

## Could you describe your favourite river?

I live on the river Kennet which runs through the centre of my city. The **source** is a **spring** up in the hills and it's just a **stream** for the first 20 kilometres or so. Then it gets much wider, so it's **navigable**. Where I live there is also a **canal** that connects **the Kennet** with **the Thames**.

source	= the beginning of a river
spring	= a place where water comes from the ground
stream	= small narrow river
navigable	= used by boats
canal	= man-made passage filled with water

Article 'the' with bodies of water

RIVERS: the Thames, the River Nile

OCEANS: the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean

SEAS: the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea

LAKES: Lake Como, Issyk-Kul Lake

# WATCHES

## How often do you wear a watch?

All the time. The one I am wearing was given to my dad by his father and so it's a family *heirloom*. Even though it wasn't super expensive, it has enormous *sentimental value*. It's also got a good *vintage* because it's an *aviator's watch* from the 1960s and that makes me feel quite *classy* when I put it on.

family heirloom /'eəlu:m/	= valuable object belonging to a family for several generations
sentimental value	= treasured because of its personal meaning
vintage	= something from the past of high quality
aviator's watch	= a watch used by a pilot
classy	= stylish and sophisticated

Or

Not much. Most of the time I use my phone but I can see why some people wear a watch. They are better for *punctuality* and are also more *stylish* and can make you say something about yourself.

punctuality	= the habit of being on time
stylish	= fashionable, sophisticated

## Is there any advantage to wearing a watch?

I think that there is. First of all, you don't have to worry about it *running down* because it doesn't need to be *charged*. It either has a long battery or you just *wind* it. It is also more private as you can just *glance* at it if you are in a meeting. And it looks good. There are some cool *straps* you can get and different *faces*.

to run down	= lose power
to charge	= fill a battery with power
to wind	= turn a knob on a watch to make it work



to glance	= look quickly at something
strap	= strip of leather or fabric used to secure something
face	= the front of a watch with hands and numbers

### When did you get your first watch?

*My first decent watch was given to me by my parents as a **coming-of-age** present. It has a black **dial** with silver **hands** and a metal strap. What I really like about it is that because it is classical, it will never **go out of style**.*

coming-of-age	= reaching the age when one becomes an adult (18 or 21)
dial	= the flat watch surface under the glass
hands	= pointers that indicate the time
to go out of style	= to become no longer fashionable

# DRIVING

## Can you drive?

Oh yes, I've been driving since I was 17. That's the legal age when young people can take their *driving test* in my country, and I got my *licence* as soon as I could.

driving test = a test you must pass before you are qualified to drive

driving licence = a document that shows that you are qualified to drive

## At what age are people allowed to drive in your country?

In the UK, it's 17. Actually, you can apply for a provisional driving licence when you are 15 years and 9 months old and start driving under supervision. This is useful because it helps you develop your *road sense* and learn the *rules of the road*.

road sense = awareness of how to drive in traffic

rules of the road = regulations and customs related to driving

## What do you like best about driving?

Having a car is a lot more convenient for *getting from A to B* than using public transport, and it is much less *time-consuming*. I also love that I can listen to my own music.

to get from A to B = to travel between two points

time-consuming = taking a lot of time

# TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

## Do you like taking photographs?

*I try not to be too **snap-happy** and take photos of everything, so I'm quite **selective**. I never **take selfies**, but I like to capture special occasions like birthdays, or to have **mementoes** of when I travel.*

snap-happy	= keen to take photographs of everything
selective	= choosing what you think is the best
to take a selfie	= to take a photo of yourself
memento /mə'mentəʊ/	= thing you keep that reminds you of a person or place

## How do you keep your photographs?

*Like many people, I keep most of my photos **stored** on my mobile phone, but I have some **hard copies** that I've printed and some traditional-style photos that I keep in **albums**. It's nice to get these out and **go through** them with other people.*

store	= keep in a particular area when not being used
hard copies	= printed on to paper rather than a digital image
albums	= blank books used for inserting photos
to go through	= look at or examine carefully

## Do you have any photographs on the walls of your house?

*Quite a few, actually. In the kitchen, there is a **collage** of **snaps** with family and friends and in the living room, there are some **artier shots** of **seascapes** and **portraits**. Most of these are **framed**, while the ones in the kitchen are just stuck onto the wall **haphazardly**.*

collage	= a collection of images placed closely together
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snaps	= informal photographs
arty	= informal synonym for 'artistic'
shot	= synonym for 'photograph'
seascape	= a picture or photograph of the coast and sea
portrait	= a formal picture of a person, often the head and shoulders
framed	= placed in a frame (a rigid structure designed to hold a picture)
haphazardly /hæp'hæzədli/	= in a manner that has no organisation or principle

# MIRRORS

How often do you look at yourself in the mirror?

*I always look at myself in the mirror before leaving the house. I work in a professional environment and since I meet new clients every day I need to make sure I look **immaculate**. I sometimes carry a **compact mirror** in my purse so I can take a **sneak peek** at myself before entering the meeting room.*

immaculate	= perfectly clean, neat or tidy
compact mirror	= a small handheld mirror usually in a plastic case
sneak peek	= a secret look

Would you use mirrors to decorate your home? Why (not)?

*Absolutely. Even though I know very little about **interior design**, I'm pretty sure that decorating with mirrors has more benefits than just giving you a place to check your **outfit**. For example, a mirror can be used to create the **illusion** of space and make any room appear bigger. You can also place a mirror opposite a window to increase the amount of **natural light** in the room. Mirrors can easily be **integrated** into all styles of furniture so I would certainly **give them a chance** when decorating.*

interior design	= the process of designing and decorating the inside of a house
outfit	= a set of clothes that you wear together
illusion	= an appearance or effect that is different from the way that things really are
natural light	= light from the sun
artificial light	= light from electric lamps
to integrate	= to combine (one thing) with another so that they become a whole

to give a chance

= to allow or grant someone/something the opportunity to do something

### Where do you put mirrors?

*There are so many options when it comes to placing a mirror in your home. The first place most people might think of a mirror is in a bathroom or next to the wardrobe. I believe it's a great idea to have a big, nice mirror **mounted** somewhere near your front door. Then you'll be able to do a last-minute check on your hair before going out. I've also placed a mirror above the fireplace in the living room to make the room appear more spacious. I've also seen people place mirrors on the ceiling which I think is pretty **bizarre**.*

to mount

= to fix something to a wall, in a frame

bizarre

= very strange or unusual

# HEADPHONES

## How often do you use headphones?

*I pretty much use headphones every day. I use them not only for listening to audiobooks and music but for work, too. We often have **conference calls**, so I use the ones with **a built-in microphone**. I also have a pair of noise-cancelling headphones I put on when I want **to cut down** on **background noise** and focus on my work. I sometimes wear them to survive the long **commute** to work.*

conference call	= a work phone call that involves three or more people
built-in microphone	= included as part of something and not separate from it
to cut down	= to do or use less of something
background noise	= noise to which people are not paying attention
commute	= the same journey you take regularly between work and home

## What types of headphones do you use?

*I just bought wireless headphones and I absolutely love them! Although they are a bit **pricey**, they are **worth every penny**. They are convenient because I am free to move without having to worry about the  **cords** or **tangled wires**. They are also lightweight and comfortable, and I couldn't recommend them enough!*

pricey	= expensive
to be worth every penny	= the price is not high for the quality of this item
cord	= a piece of wire covered in plastic, used to connect electrical equipment to a power supply
tangled	= twisted together in an untidy way

## What type of situations would you NOT use headphones in?

*I never use headphones when I'm driving a car or riding a bike. It is also **illegal** to drive with headphones or **earbuds** where I live. The **fin**es and **penalties** are high, so I would rather not risk it. I also never wear headphones while talking to people. I find that to be **disrespectful**.*

illegal	= not allowed by law
earbuds	= a small, round type of earphone that you put in your ear
fine	= an amount of money that has to be paid as a punishment for not obeying a rule/law
penalty	= a punishment for doing something against a law
disrespectful	= lacking respect or care



# PETS

## What is your favourite animal? Why?

I love elephants! They are one of the most intelligent animals, and they are also known to be very *sensitive* and caring. Elephants can develop deep social *bonds*. If a baby elephant cries, the entire *herd* will get together to touch the baby to help it calm down. They are also pretty *unique* – no other animal has such a long *trunk* and large, *floppy* ears.

sensitive	= easily upset by the things others say or do
bond	= a close connection
herd	= a large group of animals of the same type that live and feed together
unique	= being the only existing one of its type or being special in some way
trunk	= the long nose of an elephant
floppy	= soft and not able to keep a firm position

## Have you ever had a pet?

Of course, I love animals! It might sound strange, but I have a cat and a dog that *get along* very well. The cat can sometimes be *moody* or even mean, so I'm not always *fond* of her. Our *poodle*, on the other hand, is always cheerful and everyone loves him. He is like my shadow, and I cannot imagine my life without him!

to get along	= to be friendly and have a good relationship
moody	= if someone is moody, their moods change suddenly and they become angry or unhappy easily
fond	= to like someone or something very much
poodle	= a dog you can sometimes see in circus

## What is a popular pet to have in your country?

I guess most people keep dogs. They are fun, loyal and highly **sociable companions** who tend to keep us healthy, too. People who walk their dogs have a regular exercise routine, and it shows. I've noticed that they're usually more active and **in good shape**. Dogs can also be helpful because you can train them to guard your house and keep your family safe.

sociable

= friendly

companion

= someone you spend a lot of time with

in good shape

= be prepared and ready to do something

# SCIENCE

## What science subject did you study at school?

*If my memory serves me right, we had lots of science classes from primary to high school. In high school, I studied **biology**, **physics**, **chemistry**, **geography** and **astronomy**, and they were all quite demanding classes.*

science subjects	= physics, chemistry, biology, earth science, astronomy, etc.
compulsory subjects	= subjects that all students must study
optional subjects	= subjects that some students choose to study

## What was your favourite science subject?

*Honestly speaking, I didn't care much for science at that age, although I got **top grades** in them all. I found astronomy the most **intriguing** because I have always been interested in space and loved **stargazing**.*

top grades	= the highest results
intriguing	= very interesting because of being unusual or mysterious
stargazing	= looking up at the stars and objects in space as a hobby

## What did you like about your favourite subject?

*Perhaps astronomy reminded me of all the sci-fi books I read, but I was simply fascinated by some of the concepts. I recall my excitement when I learned some stars turn into black holes and even light can't escape them, hence the name, black holes. Or that our universe is full of dark matter, which we can't see but we know it's there.*

## Do you like learning about science?

*Absolutely! I am a very curious person and I love that science challenges us to always ask questions. I don't think we should **take** every day **phenomena for granted**; we should try and question everything around us instead.*

*Understanding life from the scientific point of view makes everything much more **sensible** and it gives life a deeper meaning.*

to take something for granted = to assume that something is true without questioning it

phenomena = something that exists and can be seen, felt, or tasted, especially something unusual or interesting

sensible = based on good judgment and practical ideas

### Do you think science classes are important?

*I guess it depends on each person's interests and way of life. When it comes to me, I believe that science helps us gain a better understanding of the world around us. It's interesting because the more we know, the more we know we don't know. As a result, learning is a **never-ending** process and I love being a part of it. On the other hand, some people prefer to specialise in a certain field, such as literature or arts, which is fine, **each to their own**.*

never-ending = something that never ends or seems as if it will never end

each to their own | to each their own = used to say that everyone likes different things

# SHOES

What kind of shoes do you usually wear?

Girls:

*I walk quite a lot, so I prefer something comfortable like flats or loafers; but when I go out, I like wearing heels.*

Guys:

*I walk quite a lot, so I usually wear trainers. Of course, I have a pair of dress shoes to go with a suit.*

flats	= shoes with a very low heel
loafers	= flat leather shoes that you can put on your foot without fastening it
heels	= a pair of shoes that have high heels
trainers	= shoes that you wear for sports or as informal clothing
dress shoes	= shoes that is suitable for wearing with formal clothes

How often do you buy new shoes?

*Not often at all. I like comfortable high-quality shoes. Though they're a bit more pricey, I can wear them for a good few years.*

high-quality shoes	= shoes of superior quality
comfortable	= making you feel physically relaxed; pleasant to wear, sit on, etc.
pricey	= (informal) expensive

Have you ever bought shoes online?

*No, I haven't. I find that not all shoes my size fit me well, so I tend to try on a few pairs before I buy anything. With online shopping, it would be a total hassle to return so many orders.*

to fit well	= to be comfortable
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to try on	= to put on a piece of clothing or shoes to see if it fits and how it looks
it's a hassle	= a situation that is annoying because you need to do something that requires a lot of effort
to return an order	= that's when you buy something, change your mind and give it back to the shop

### Why do you think some people buy really expensive shoes?

*I'm guessing that for some, the price just seems right to them, while others might love **designer shoes** so much that they don't mind saving up **to invest in a pair of Jimmy Choo's**. I'm not a **shoe person** myself, and I always look for good value for my money.*

designer shoes	= shoes that are very expensive are usually designer shoes, e.g. Dior or Chanel
to invest into something	= to buy something in the hope of making a profit
a pair of Jimmy Choo's	= the brand people often name when they want to refer to very expensive shoes
I'm (not) a shoe/bag person	= You might have heard people saying "I'm a dog/cat person". You may also say that you are a shoe person if you love designer shoes.

# ADVERTISEMENTS

## How do you feel about advertisements?

*I think we see way too many and sometimes they can get quite **annoying**. Especially on TV, **commercials** are so long and frequent that each film or programme is probably 30 percent longer than it really is. That's one of the reasons I prefer watching Netflix over regular TV.*

advertisement /əd'vɜ:tɪsmənt/  
(also informal **ad**)  
(also British English, informal **advert**)

= a notice, picture or film telling people about a product or service

commercial = ad on tv or on the radio

annoying = making somebody feel slightly angry

## Do you watch advertisements until the end?

*Surprisingly, I do at times! However, most times, when I watch TV, I either just ignore the ads or **switch the channel** to avoid them. On YouTube, I also **skip most ads**, unless I want a particular YouTuber to get paid a bit more, then I watch the ads on their channel.*

to switch the channel = to change the channel

to skip ads = to move straight to the video

## Do ads influence the product you choose?

### Have you ever bought something because of the ad for it?

*I'm sure I have. Ads affect us on a **subconscious** level. When we see a product we recognise, we tend to feel it's better than other products we've never seen before. That's why brands spend lots on **promotions** to increase **brand awareness**.*

subconscious /ˌsʌb'kɒnʃəs/  
= something that influences your behaviour even though you are not aware of it

promotion = marketing activities done to increase the sales of a product

brand awareness = how familiar consumers are with a brand or its products

Are there any ads you remember watching when you were younger?

*Well, there was this juice ad, and at the beginning, the kids would exclaim, "Aunt Asiya's arrived!" I remember it very well 'cause my classmates teased me with that phrase for years, long after the ad was discontinued.*

Do you think celebrities promoting products is a good thing?

*Well, I don't see a fundamental problem with it per se, but I think they should carefully choose what they promote. If, let's say, a **celebrity endorses** a certain product, their fans are much more likely to buy it. However, if the fans buy said product and aren't satisfied with it, they might project part of those negative feelings onto the celebrity.*

celebrity endorsement

= a statement by somebody famous or important, saying that they use and like a particular product



# WALLETS

## Do you have a wallet?

Yes, I do. I have a small **wallet** made of red leather that I always carry in my handbag.

wallet = a small, flat, folding case used for keeping paper money and credit cards in

purse = a small bag for money, keys, etc., carried especially by women

## What is in your wallet?

Mainly my credit cards, quite a few discount cards and my driving licence. In London, I rarely **pay cash**, so I usually don't have any paper money in it at all.

to pay cash = to pay with money in the form of coins or notes

to pay by card = to pay using a payment card (credit, debit)

## When did you buy your first wallet?

I really don't remember. It **must have been** at university because when I was at school, I hardly had any **pocket money** to need a wallet.

must have V+ed = the past form of must

pocket money = a small amount of money that parents give their children

## Have you ever lost your wallet?

Well, once I **had my wallet stolen** while **queueing** at a coffee shop. There was no cash in it, but before I could block all my cards, the **pickpocket** managed to buy quite a lot of food at the supermarket nearby using **contactless payment**. They were never caught, but fortunately, my bank **refunded** me all the money.

to have something stolen	= I had my wallet stolen. This is a nice expression to talk about this terrible situation
to queue	= (British) to wait in line
pickpocket	= a person who steals money, etc. from other people's pockets or bags
contactless payment/card	= when you can pay with your card or phone by just touching the payment machine
to refund	= a sum of money that is paid back to you, especially because you paid too much or because you returned goods to a shop

# FLOWERS

Do you like receiving flowers as a gift?

*Oh yes, I do! I love fresh flowers! A nice bouquet makes me smile every time I look at it. Luckily, my husband often gives me flowers.*

*Frankly, I always feel sorry seeing how quickly flowers fade in the bouquet. That's why I prefer potted flowers.*

bouquet = a bunch of flowers arranged in an attractive way so that it can be carried in a ceremony or presented as a gift

to fade = to disappear gradually

potted flowers = flowers in pots or similar containers

What kinds of flowers do you like?

*Almost all flowers, but I'd say peonies and tulips are at the top of the list. Maybe I'm not as keen on roses as some people are.*

to be keen on something = to like somebody/something very much

On what occasions do people give flowers in your country?

*I guess most special occasions, like birthdays and weddings, and also on certain public holidays. I would say Valentine's Day and International Women's Day (8<sup>th</sup> March) are the two most popular.*

Have you recently given someone flowers?

*Just a few days ago, actually. My mum had an anniversary, but I couldn't go and see her. So what I did was I ordered a lovely big bunch of peonies to be delivered to her in the morning.*

to order flowers (to be delivered) = buying products or services over the internet

bunch = a large amount of something

# SMILES

## Do people in your country often smile?

*Thinking about it, I'd say people in Kazakhstan don't smile that often, definitely not as much as in the UK, especially in official situations. For example, when you go through airport border control, no one will smile at you.*

to smile at somebody = to make a smiling face at someone

to smile to yourself = to smile or feel happy

## In what situations do people typically smile?

*Well, all people smile when they're happy or **amused**. That's universal. They might also smile to make someone feel welcome. For instance, good salespeople usually **greet customers with a smile**. In some cultures also, people smile because they want to be polite when talking to others.*

to be amused = to think that somebody/something is funny, so that you smile or laugh

to greet with a smile = welcome or meet an arriving person with a smile

## Who do you think smiles more, men or women?

*I'm not sure it's something that's down to **gender**. I'd say it depends on their personality. Some people have a more **cheerful disposition** and always have a smile on their face, while others are more serious or **reserved**.*

gender = the fact of being male or female, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences, rather than differences in biology

cheerful = happy, and showing it by the way that you behave

disposition = your character. One may have a cheerful or a nervous disposition.

reserved

= (of a person or their character) slow or unwilling to show feelings or express opinions

# TRAVELLING BY CAR

## Do you like travelling by car?

Sure, I love the comfort and flexibility of a *private vehicle*. Having said that, when it comes to the city centre, I wouldn't dream of driving to get there because of *traffic congestion* and *extortionate parking fees*. In such a case, *public transport* is my friend.

private vehicle	= car that is for personal use and owned privately
traffic congestion	= a condition in transport that is characterized by slower speeds, longer trip times, and increased vehicular queueing
extortionate parking fees	= payment for parking that is too high
public transport	= a vehicle such as a bus used by members of the public

## Where do you prefer sitting in a car, the front or back?

I prefer the driver's seat, but if it's already taken, I still prefer *sitting up front*. I find that the view from the *back seat* tends to be more *restricted*, especially when the windows are *tinted*.

in front of the car	= outside the car
to sit up front	= to sit in the front part of a car, next to the driver or where the driver sits
back seat	= a seat at the back of a vehicle
restricted/unrestricted view	= limited or small in size or amount/ not limited or controlled in any way
tinted windows	= having a small amount of colour added

## What's the furthest you've ever travelled by car?

Last year, my husband and I went on a three-week road trip around Europe, driving across France, Italy and Switzerland. We drove about 2,000 km. It was amazing though quite *exhausting*.

exhausting

= making you feel very tired

# BBQ

## Do you often have barbecues?

*I'm not sure I've ever had a barbecue myself. I loved BBQs as a child, and still do, but I now live in a flat and we share the garden with neighbours. As far as I'm aware, we're not allowed to have barbecues there.*

BBQ	= abbreviation for barbecue
to barbecue	= to roast or broil (food, such as meat) on a rack or revolving spit over or before a source of heat

## What food do you like to barbecue?

*I wouldn't say no to a good steak or a yummy marinated chicken leg! I also love barbecued veggies, like corn, tomatoes and onions. In short, I'm really not fussy. Whenever someone invites me to a barbecue, I'm more than happy to oblige.*

yummy	= (informal) tasty
veggies	= (informal) vegetables
to be fussy about something	= too concerned about having things exactly as you want them
to oblige	= to help somebody by doing what they ask or what you know they want

## What is the best place for a BBQ?

*I suppose for those who own a house, it's their back garden if they have one. There are some parks that offer great facilities too, but you still have to drive there, carrying the barbecue, coal, food and other things in the boot of your car.*

back garden/front garden	= back garden is a residential garden located at the rear of a property as opposed to the front
facilities	= buildings, services, equipment, etc. that are provided for a particular purpose



boot /bu:t/

= the space at the back on your car. In the USA, it's called a trunk

# FURNITURE

Do you have a lot of furniture in your home?

We have enough but not a lot. There's everything we need to live comfortably, including several large *wardrobes to store our belongings*, but there's still space in each room.

furniture (uncountable)	= objects that can be moved, such as tables, chairs and beds, that are put into a house or an office to make it suitable for living or working in
wardrobe	= a large cupboard for hanging clothes in, which is either a piece of furniture or built into the wall
cupboard	= a piece of furniture with doors and shelves used for storing dishes, food, clothes, etc.
to store belongings	= keep or accumulate things you own for future use

What is your favourite piece of furniture?

It has to be our sofa. It's my favourite place to *snuggle up* on and enjoy cosy *nights indoors* when we can't *go out* because of the lockdown.

to snuggle up	= to get into a warm comfortable position next to someone else
a night indoors/to stay in	= that's when you stay at home, rather than go out
to go out	= to leave your house to go to a social event

Could you describe it?

It's a pretty standard *three-seater* from Ikea. It's light green with a clean minimalist design. I especially like that it's a *chaise longue* on one side where I can sit and stretch out my legs.

three-seat(er) sofa	= that's a sofa for three people, you may have a two-seat or a large four-seat sofa
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corner sofa

= sofa that has a corner partway along it, so some of the seats are at right angles to the others.

chaise longue /ˌʃeɪz 'lɒŋ/

= a long seat where you can stretch your legs horizontally

### Have you ever received furniture as a gift?

*I don't think so. To be honest, I can't really think of any occasion when someone would give me a table or bed as a present. I think this is something people generally prefer to choose themselves.*

# TREES

## Do you love trees?

*Absolutely. I live in a city so it's always a pleasure to see a piece of **greenery** amongst all the **brick** and **concrete**. I actually think I can sense the air is cleaner near the parks.*

greenery	= attractive green leaves and plants
brick	= baked clay used for building
concrete	= building material that is made by mixing together cement, sand, small stones and water

## Do you have any trees around your house?

*Indeed, we do. We have these beautiful cherry **trees growing along the road** on one side of the building and a little wood on the other side. I'm lucky to live in a very green area and I don't **take it for granted**.*

trees growing along the road	= trees growing in a line next to the road along its extent
wood vs. forest	= a wood is an area with trees, a forest is always large and a wood can be very small
to take for granted	= to never think about something because you believe it will always be available or stay exactly the same

## Have you ever planted a tree?

*Not yet, but I'm hoping to do so soon. This year, we bought a Christmas tree **planted in a pot**. It's still on our balcony, but we need to buy a shovel and give it a new home in our garden.*

pot plant	= a plant which is grown in a container, especially indoors
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# FARMING

Have you ever been to a farm?

*I've been to several **farm shops**, but if you mean a visit that was more like a **guided tour**, then no. I did stay at a **B & B** on a farm once though.*

farm shop	= a plant which is grown in a container, especially indoors
guided tour	= if someone takes you on a guided tour of a place, they show you the place and tell you about it
B & B	= bed & breakfast, when people rent out rooms in their house for people to stay in and provide breakfast

What did you learn about the farm during your visit?

*I learnt that farming is a really tough business. It's difficult for small farmers to **generate enough profit** to live well. That's why our hosts decided to run a bed and breakfast to supplement their income.*

to generate enough profit	= to make a sustainable amount of money that you make in business or by selling things
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What changes are required in farming?

*I think farmers need to embrace all the **new technologies** and trends that can help them increase their profit. For example, by growing **organic food**, they could earn more. I also think smart government regulation is required. Farmers should be encouraged to **reduce their use of pesticides** and go for more **eco-friendly sustainable practices**.*

new technologies	= technology that radically alters the way something is produced or performed, especially by labour-saving automation or computerization
organic food	= produced or practised without using artificial chemicals

reduce the use of pesticides = to lessen the use of chemicals in killing pests, especially insects

eco-friendly sustainable practices = not harmful to the environment

### Why do you think farming is important?

*Farming's an essential sector of our economy; we wouldn't last too long without food. That's why it's safe to say our lives depend on farming.*

### Would you like to live on a farm?

*I've never even lived in the countryside, not to talk of farms, so it would definitely be a step outside my comfort zone. I'm afraid I'd also find it really hard to get up at dawn. So, my answer is no. I prefer to live in the city.*

countryside = is land outside of cities. You may live in a countryside but not on a farm.

to step outside my comfort zone = a situation when you feel safe and comfortable

to get up at dawn = to rise with the sun

# ADVICE

advice (uncountable) = an opinion or a suggestion about what somebody should do in a particular situation

~~an advice~~ = a piece of advice, some advice

~~advices~~

## Do you often ask for advice?

*Not really. I'm very much a **DIY** person and like finding my own answers to most questions. Of course, on some occasions, I still want to reach out and discuss a certain situation with my family or friends and find out what they think.*

DIY = (the abbreviation for 'do-it-yourself') the activity of making, repairing or decorating things in the home yourself, instead of paying somebody to do it

## Do you like giving advice to other people?

*I have to admit, I quite enjoy telling people what I think they should do. At the same time, I know **unsolicited advice** is not welcome. I therefore try to give my opinions with consideration.*

unsolicited advice = advice no one asked for

## Would you pay for advice?

*Totally. In many cases, paying for professional advice **can save a lot of time and money**. For example, I used the services of immigration lawyers several times to clarify certain questions I had. Good advice is never cheap, but I'm sure, for matters of a serious nature, not taking it could be way more **costly**.*

to save time and money = reducing the amount of money and time needed for doing something

costly = expensive and also causing problems

# BORROWING AND LENDING

to borrow = to take and use something that belongs to somebody else, and return it to them at a later time

to lend = to give something to somebody or allow them to use something that belongs to you, which they have to return to you later

*Can I borrow this book? = Could you lend me this book?*

*Of course, you can borrow this book. = I can lend you this book.*

## Have you ever borrowed books?

*Yes, when I was a student, I used to **borrow** most of my books from the university library or from older friends simply because I couldn't easily afford to buy all the study books I needed.*

## Is it good to borrow money from friends?

*I think borrowing a small amount for a short period of time isn't a problem. More substantial sums, however, can potentially break a relationship if the debt isn't paid back on time. I personally feel awkward if I **owe money** and would rather take on credit card **debt** instead.*

to borrow heavily = to borrow to a great degree; in large amounts

to owe money = to have to pay somebody for something that you have already received or return money that you have borrowed

to be in debt = the situation of owing money, especially when you cannot pay

## Do you like lending things to others?

*It depends. I don't mind if my friends borrow something small, like books. But I wouldn't feel comfortable lending more expensive items, such as my camera or laptop, because there's a chance it could be broken **accidentally**.*

accidentally = by chance; in a way that was not planned



# NUMBERS

Do you have a favourite number?

*I think the whole idea of favourite or **lucky numbers** is a bit silly, but if I was forced to say, I'd choose 7. Apparently, so would most people! I've heard it was called the world's favourite number.*

lucky number = number believed to bring good luck

if I was forced to say = to be pressured to give an answer

Are there any numbers that are considered unlucky in your country?

*It's definitely 13. I've heard some hotels don't even have a 13th floor. Personally, I'm not **superstitious** and I definitely wouldn't call it unlucky because my mum was born on 13th July.*

superstitious /,su:pə'stɪʃəs/ = believing that particular events bring good or bad luck

# MATHEMATICS

\*Note: Maths = British, Math = American

## Do you like maths?

Actually, I do. I think I'm quite good with numbers, and I even opted to study advanced mathematics at school and economics at university. Both my parents are engineers; I guess it runs in the family.

to be good with	= skilful at or in a certain action or pursuit
to opt to do something	to choose to take or not to take a particular course of action
to opt for/against something	"He opted for a career in law". "I opted against buying a car".
It runs in the family.	= If a quality, ability, disease, etc. runs in the family, many members of the family have it. "Good manners run in the family."

I never had a flair for number crunching. So I dropped maths after secondary school and studied humanities instead.

to have a flair for	= to have a natural ability to do something well
number crunching	= the act of processing numerical data
to drop a subject	= not to select this subject to study further
humanities	= the subjects of study that are about the way people think and behave (literature, language, history, philosophy, etc.)

## Do you use maths in your everyday life?

Basic maths, yes—more or less. I think it's important for everyone to have basic mathematical knowledge. Whether it's understanding the inflation rate or figuring out the family budget, being able to add and subtract and all the rest is key to managing personal finances.

Advanced mathematics, however—trigonometry, calculus and so on—is another story. It makes sense that it's a prerequisite for professions like engineering and accounting, but higher-level maths rarely comes into play during the day-to-day life of the average person.

to add	$2 + 3 = 5$
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to subtract	$7 - 3 = 4$
to divide	$12 / 2 = 6$
to multiply	$5 * 5 = 25$
advanced mathematics	= mathematics of more advanced content
trigonometry	= the type of mathematics that deals with the relationship between the sides and angles of triangles
calculus	= the type of mathematics that deals with rates of change, for example in the slope of a curve or the speed of a falling object
a prerequisite	= something that must exist or happen before something else can happen or be done
higher-level maths	= abstract mathematics that is more advanced than basic arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry
to come into play	= to start to have a use or an effect in a particular situation
day-to-day	= involving the usual events or tasks of each day

# BOREDOM

## Do you get bored easily?

No—not lately, at least. Luckily, my job and personal life are both pretty satisfying and I rarely find them boring. That wasn't the case when I was in college, though. Back then, I had some truly *tedious* classes and trying to stay awake through those long lectures was nearly impossible. Sometimes I was worried I would *be bored to death*.

tedious	= lasting or taking too long and not interesting
to be bored to death	= to be extremely bored
to be bored out of your mind	= another way to express extreme boredom

## What bores you?

For me, any kind of repetitive, *mindless* work task becomes too *monotonous* to handle. Also, a *dull* teacher or lecturer *droning on* about an uninteresting topic will have *me nodding off in no time*. In high school, one teacher just read books to us for one hour straight. I did nothing in that class but *watch the clock*.

mindless	= done or acting without thought and for no particular reason or purpose
monotonous	= never changing and therefore boring
dull	= unexciting, uninteresting
to drone on about something	= to talk for a long time in a boring way
to nod off	= to fall asleep for a short time while you are sitting in a chair
in no time	= so soon or so quickly that it is surprising
to watch the clock	= to frequently check what the time is, usually because you are bored or eager to leave

## Is it normal to get bored at work or school?

Sure, occasionally. A certain degree of *boredom* every now and then is *unavoidable*! Even if you *land your dream job*, there'll be slow days that seem like a nightmare. Even if your classes seem super-cool at first, *the novelty* won't last and sometimes you'll get bored. It's usually a *temporary* feeling,

though. *Constantly* feeling *underwhelmed* at work, school or just in general means something in your life needs to change.

boredom	= the state of feeling bored; the fact of being very boring
unavoidable	= impossible to avoid or prevent
to land your dream job	= to gain or secure...
the novelty	= the quality of being new, different and interesting
temporary	= lasting or intended to last or be used only for a short time; not permanent
constantly	= all the time; repeatedly
underwhelmed (informal)	= not impressed or excited <i>I was underwhelmed by his speech.</i>
underwhelming (informal)	= not impressing or exciting <i>His speech was underwhelming.</i>

# LAUGHTER

## VOCABULARY

to chuckle /'tʃʌkl/	= to laugh quietly, especially because you are thinking about something funny
to giggle	= to laugh in a silly way because you are embarrassed, nervous or you think something is funny
to roar	= to laugh very loudly

## What makes you laugh?

*I'm a movie fanatic and comedies are my favourite. I love anything with Eddie Murphy in it—he really **cracks me up**. I also love a really good **prank** or **practical joke**. I'm not talking about anything **mean** or **humiliating**, but if someone comes up with a **hilarious** idea, I have to respect that. After all, a good sense of humour is a sign of intelligence.*

to make somebody laugh	= to do silly things in order to make people laugh
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*My friend always makes me laugh.*

to crack somebody up	= to make someone laugh very hard
prank	= a trick that is played on somebody as a joke
practical joke	= a trick played on someone in order to make them look foolish and to amuse others
mean	= to be unkind to another person
humiliating	= making somebody feel ashamed or stupid and lose the respect of other people
hilarious	= extremely funny

## When was the last time you enjoyed a really good laugh?

The other day, I *was in tears* watching my neighbour try to put his dog into a bicycle basket. The dog *wasn't keen on* this idea at all, but my neighbour wouldn't *give up*. It must have gone on for an hour at least and I *almost died laughing*.

to enjoy a good laugh	= to laugh a lot
to be in tears	= to laugh hard and have tears come out of one's eyes
to be keen on	= to be very enthusiastic or excited about something
to give up	= to stop trying to do something
to almost/nearly die laughing	= to find something extremely funny
can't stop laughing	= to not be able to control your laughter
to burst out laughing	= to laugh suddenly and loudly

*I burst out laughing when I saw this.*

### Why is laughter so important?

They say *laughter is the best medicine*. In fact, scientists have proven that laughter *relieves pain, reduces stress and boosts the immune system*. So *laughing it up actually helps us live longer lives!*

Laughter is the best medicine.	= said to mean that trying to be happy is a good way to stop worrying
to relieve pain	= to remove or reduce an unpleasant feeling or pain
to reduce stress	= to make pressure or worry caused by problems less or smaller in size
to boost the immune system	= to increase or improve the system in your body that produces substances to help it fight against infection and disease

# COLOURS

Do you think the colours that a person wears tell something about his or her character?

Yes and no. I find that a lot of people wear *neutral colours*, which don't tell us much. However, some people choose *vivid, rich colours* that *stand out*. I would say that those are usually *perceived* as being *bold*, confident, and perhaps creative.

neutral colours	= muted shades (black, white, grey, beige)
pastel colours	= soft, pale colours (pink, baby blue, mint green)
vivid, rich colours	= bright colours (red, orange, yellow)
dark colours	= colours with low light intensity (black, navy blue, dark green)
to stand out	= to be easily seen or noticed
to perceive	= to understand or think of somebody/something in a particular way
bold	= not afraid to say what you feel or to take risks

Do men and women like to wear similar colours?

I suppose the *staples* of men's and women's wardrobes are very similar: black coats, white T-shirts, and blue jeans. I'd say women are more likely to go for *bright colours* in their *outfits*, while men tend to choose more *subdued colours*.

staple	= forming a basic, large or important part of something
bright, saturated colours	= intensive, bright colours
outfit	= a set of clothes that you wear together, especially for a particular occasion or purpose
muted, subdued colours	= not very bright colours
shade	= a particular form of a colour, that is, how dark or light it is



clothes = there are two ways to pronounce this word: /kləʊðz/ or [clouz]

### Are colours important in marketing and advertising?

*Absolutely! Choosing the right colours can help companies communicate different messages to their customers. Basically, each colour has its own **associations**. For example, most people typically associate red with passion and energy, blue with stability, and yellow and pink with something new and original. That's why so many banks have blue logos, and why companies marketing to younger people opt for bright and unusual colours. This means that the right colour can **emphasize** a brand message, while the wrong colour may confuse and **alienate potential buyers**.*

association = a mental connection between ideas

to emphasize = to make something easier to notice

to alienate = to make somebody feel that they do not belong in a particular group

potential buyers = people who may become interested in buying a certain product or services

# HAIR CARE

## A HAIR OR HAIRS?

When you're referring to all the hair on someone's head or body, hair is an uncountable noun that doesn't require the article "a" and has no plural form:

*She has long black hair.* (~~hairs, a hair~~)

Hair is a countable noun (a hair, hairs) when it's indicating a specific piece or pieces of hair.

*There is a hair in my soup.*

*Her dog leaves little hairs all over the house.* (~~hair~~)

## VOCABULARY

blond(e)/fair/(light/dark)

brown/(jet-)black/red hair

grey/white hair

straight/curly/wavy hair

long/short/shoulder-length/cropped hair

a bald/balding head

dark-haired / long-haired

## Do you go to the hairdresser's or barber's regularly?

*I try to get my hair cut as rarely as I can. I usually ask him to cut it short or tell him to just give me a trim. Then I wait half a year for my hair to grow back before I make another appointment.*

hairdresser's = a place where you can get your hair cut, washed and shaped

barber's = a shop where men can have their hair cut

to have/get your hair cut = to have someone cut your hair for you

haircut = the style in which somebody's hair is cut

to trim = to make something neater or smaller by cutting small parts from it

to grow back = to begin growing again after being cut off or damaged

Or

*I'm trying to grow it out at the moment so I haven't been cutting it. But I do book a blow-dry if I have an important event.*

to grow hair out = to allow your hair to grow in order to change the style

a blow-dry = somebody's hair is dried with a hairdryer and shaped into a particular style

### How long have you had the same haircut?

*A couple of years, I guess. In the past, I always kept it long so I could style up or down, depending on what I was doing. But ultimately, I decided a bob would be better for my face.*

to wear/keep your hair long/short = to have long/short hair

to style up = to wear your hair up

to style down/wear hair down = to let your hair loose

### Will you change your hair colour in the future?

*I don't think I'd ever do anything drastic, but I usually colour my hair a shade lighter once summertime rolls around.*

to dye/colour your hair = to change the colour of your hair by using a special liquid or substance

drastic = extreme in a way that has a sudden, serious or violent effect on something

*I think people are born with the hair colour that suits them best. So, I wouldn't dye my hair—at least not while I'm still young. When I'm older, I might feel differently. I completely understand why some people choose to colour their hair when they go grey.*

grey/white/silver hair = hair that has lightened to a greyish colour, typically due to aging

to go grey = to become grey-haired

# PEN OR PENCIL

Do you prefer to write with a pen or pencil?

Actually neither. I used to be good at *cursive* when I was a kid, but not anymore. Now everyone complains that my *handwriting* is essentially *illegible*. So I prefer *to type* rather than *handwrite* anything.

cursive	= handwriting with the letters joined together
handwriting	= writing that is done with a pen or pencil, not printed or typed
illegible /ɪˈledʒ.ə.bəl/ handwriting	= difficult or impossible to read
to type	= write on a typewriter or computer by pressing the keys
to handwrite	= to write by hand
neat handwriting	= handwriting that is easy to read

For me, writing is much easier and quicker with a pen. That's what I use whenever I *write by hand* but in most cases, I'd rather be using a keyboard.

to write by hand	= to handwrite
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How often do you buy pens or pencils?

I can't even remember the last time I bought *stationery*, but I have a box full of pens and pencils from various conferences and events.

stationery /ˈsteɪ.ʃən.ər.i/	= materials for writing and for using in an office, for example paper, pens and envelopes
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How would you feel if you received a pen as a gift?

If it was a nice pen, I'd definitely keep it in my purse clipped to my notebook in case I needed *to jot down a note* or *fill out a form*.

to jot down a note	= to take a note to help you remember something quickly
to fill out a form	= to complete a document containing questions

# VOICE

## Do you like your voice?

Any time I hear a recording of my own voice, it's hard to believe that it's even really me. It sounds so different from how I hear myself. The more I've heard it, though, the more I've got used to it.

to get used to something = to become familiar with something so that it seems normal or usual

## Does anyone in your family have a similar sounding voice?

People say I sound a lot like my mum. Or *vice-versa*. Of course, we also talk in a similar way, so that's a part of it. If I'm visiting my mum and happen to pick up the phone, her friends always think I'm her.

vice versa /ˌvaɪs 'vɜːsə/ = used to say that the opposite of what you have just said is also true

to pick up the phone = to answer an incoming telephone call

## Has your voice changed over time?

I'm not sure if my voice has changed, but the way I use my voice definitely has. It used to be a lot more *high-pitched*—you could probably even call it *shrill*. So now I make a *conscious effort to modulate* it.

high-pitched voice = high-sounding voice

low-pitched voice = deep, low voice

a conscious effort /'kɒnʃəs/ = effort or decision that is intended and deliberate

to modulate = to change the quality of your voice in order to create a particular effect by making it louder, softer, lower, etc.

## For men:

My *voice broke* when I was around 14. In just a few months it got a lot lower and much deeper. Suddenly I sounded like my dad!

voice breaking = happens during puberty when a boy's voice box begins to grow

# WATER SPORTS

Do you like water sports?

I love swimming! And I enjoy all kinds of *water activities*—*aqua gymnastics*, *snorkelling*, whatever—but I don't usually *get to do* much more than *take a swim* at the gym. I live in England and the sea is pretty cold.

water sport	= various sports, such as swimming, water-skiing, or windsurfing, that take place in or on water
water activities	= something you do for interest or pleasure that take place in or on water
aqua gymnastics	= physical exercises performed in water
snorkelling	= the sport or activity of swimming underwater with a snorkel
to get to do	= to have the opportunity to do something
to take a swim	= to go for a swim

What water sport would you like to try?

I'd love to try *scuba diving*. I went on holiday once to some tropical islands and they taught me how *to snorkel*—it was a *mind-blowing* experience. Next I want to learn how to scuba dive!

scuba diving	= the sport or activity of swimming underwater using scuba gear
to snorkel	= to swim using a short tube to breathe through
mind-blowing	= very exciting, impressive or surprising

Why?

The *undersea* world is so amazing! I had an incredible time *snorkelling* and I could only see *a fraction* of everything that's down there. If I had proper *breathing equipment*, I can only imagine how unbelievable it would be.

undersea	= found, used or happening below the surface of the sea
a fraction	= a small part or amount of something

**snorkelling equipment:**

mask = mask worn by divers underwater over the eyes or face to allow them to see clearly

snorkel = a short tube for a swimmer to breathe through while keeping their face underwater

fins = swim accessories you wear on your feet to improve your technique and performance

**scuba diving equipment:**

wetsuit = a piece of clothing made of rubber to keep warm in water

breathing equipment = equipment that provides the diver with breathing gas

# CAKE

## Do you like eating cakes?

*I have a sweet tooth and love all kinds of cakes, tarts and other pastries sold in bakeries, but I try to be reasonable and only eat them once in a while.*

to have a sweet tooth	= to have a great liking for sweet-tasting foods (foods = different kinds of food)
tart	= an open pie filled with sweet food such as fruit
pastry	= sweet, baked food filled with fruit or cream
patisserie	= a shop that sells cakes, etc.

## What are your favourite cakes?

*I prefer desserts that are not too sweet and don't contain much cream. A couple of times I tried Japanese cakes, and they were delicious, subtle and sophisticated. I also love fruit tarts.*

subtle/'sʌtl/	= not very obvious or easy to notice
sophisticated	= clever and complicated in the way that it works or is presented

## Do you know how to bake a cake?

*Well, I cook regularly but don't bake much. I guess I could make an apple pie and a lemon crumble, but I'm afraid I need to follow a recipe to make anything else.*

to make a pie	= to bake a pie
lemon crumble	= dessert bars filled with lemon filling and flavour in between two layers of crust
to follow a recipe	= to follow a set of instructions that tells you how to cook something and the ingredients



# HOLIDAY/VACATION

## HOLIDAY VS VACATION

holiday (British English) = vacation (American English) = periods of time when you are not at work or school, or time that you spend travelling or resting away from home

*She's on **holiday** this week.*

*I like to take my **holidays** in winter.*

A holiday in American English is a single day when offices, schools, banks and businesses are closed. This is called a bank holiday in British English.

*January 1<sup>st</sup> is a **bank holiday** in England. All the banks and offices are closed.*

## Would you rather take one long holiday break or several short trips?

*I think everyone could use a nice, long **break** once a year—a week, at least. Better yet, two weeks! And definitely some short breaks in-between. You know, quick trips scattered throughout the year. We all need a **change of scene** every now and then.*

to take a break = to stop doing something for a short period of time; to rest

change of scene = a move to different surroundings

## When you go on holiday, would you rather visit a new city or relax on the beach?

*Either one—I love both! I usually take short trips to different cities several times a year. Then when winter comes, I like to go someplace sunny and warm to relax and **recharge** on an **extended** beach **getaway**.*

to go/be on holiday = to experience a time away from home, school, or business usually in order to relax or travel

to recharge = to get back your strength and energy by resting for a time

city-break = a trip into a city, taken for pleasure

extended getaway = to take a longer than usual holiday somewhere

one-day trip = a journey completed in one day

### What's the best vacation you've ever taken?

*The best? That would have to be my **honeymoon**, hands down. We went to Hawaii and it was **breath-taking**. Have you seen the movie Jurassic World? You remember all those incredible **landscapes** and **scenery**—the jungle waterfalls and stuff? That's where they shot it. We took a helicopter **sightseeing tour** around the area and they fly with the doors open so you can see everything really clearly. I've never experienced anything like it.*

honeymoon = a holiday taken by a couple who have just got married

breath-taking = very exciting or impressive (usually in a pleasant way)

landscape = everything you can see when you look across a large area of land, especially in the country

scenery = the natural features of an area, such as mountains, valleys, rivers and forests, when you are thinking about them being attractive to look at

sightseeing tour = the activity of travelling around a place to see the interesting places that tourists usually visit

## IELTS SPEAKING PART 2 EXAMPLES

## PLANTS

**Describe a person who likes to grow plants.**

You should say:

- who the person is
- how you know the person
- what type(s) of plants he or she grows

and explain why growing plants is important for this person

*I'm going to talk about a neighbour of mine who is a **keen gardener** and in fact, grows his own vegetables and some beautiful flowers. He's quite old. He must be **in his early seventies** I imagine but he's very **fit and active for his age**. He's retired and lives with his wife who's a really nice lady.*

*I first met him when I moved in six months ago. The building has these nice gardens and I saw him there and we started talking. I told him I knew nothing about gardening, that I simply don't have "**green fingers**" and he laughed and said he would **give me a few tips**. Now, thanks to him, I'm **the proud owner** of two beautiful **houseplants** and maybe I could even **grow my own vegetables**!*

*You see, my friend has a small **patch** of his own in the far corner of the gardens. He grows carrots, potatoes and onions. I was lucky that he was **planting** them soon after I met him. He showed me how to **sow the seeds** for them. There's a lot to learn about taking care of the **soil** before and after planting, using natural **compost** as a **fertilizer** and **watering** of course. Well, he also **tends** to the **flower beds** in the gardens and helps to **prune** some of the trees we have growing there too. Roses are his speciality. They are **in bloom** right now and they look **absolutely stunning**, not to mention the **fragrance**.*

*When I asked him if all this was just a hobby or whether he did this to save money on food, he explained to me that he just loves doing what he does, but he is also **a firm believer** in eating natural, organically grown food. He never buys vegetables from the supermarket because they are **kept in storage** for ages and **artificially treated** to look fresh. Since he told me that, I've started thinking a lot more about what I eat! As for the roses, I think he just enjoys the creativity it involves.*

keen gardener	= wanting to work in the garden very much
in his early seventies	= between the ages of 70 and 75
in his mid/late seventies	= between the ages of 75 and 80
fit and active for his age	= physically healthy compared to most people at that age
to have green fingers	= to be good at making plants grow
to give somebody a few tips	= to give advice about something practical
the proud owner of	= used to express when someone is happy to own something
houseplants/indoor plants	= plants that you grow in pots and keep indoors
to grow my own	= to be a gardener and grow your own vegetables, fruits, and herbs
patch	= a small area of something, especially one which is different from the area around it
to plant	= place (a seed, bulb, or plant) in the ground so that it can grow
to sow the seeds	= to plant or spread seeds in or on the ground
soil	= the top layer of the earth in which plants, trees, etc. grow
compost	= mixture of decayed (= destroyed by natural processes) plants, food, etc. that can be added to soil to help plants grow
fertilizer	= a substance added to soil to make plants grow more successfully
to water	= to pour water on plants
to tend	= to care for somebody/something
flower bed	= a piece of ground in a garden or park where flowers are grown

to prune	= to cut away dead or overgrown branches or stems, especially to increase fruitfulness and growth
in bloom	= having flowers
absolutely stunning	= very beautiful
fragrance	= a pleasant smell
a firm believer	= someone who believes strongly in something
kept in storage	= to store something somewhere until its needed
artificially treated	= to use man-made substance on something to protect or preserve it or to give it particular properties

# PAYING MORE THAN EXPECTED

**Describe a situation when you paid more than you expected.**

You should say:

- what the situation was
- what you paid for
- what you expected to pay

and explain how you felt after

*I'm going to tell you about the time when I had to buy a new laptop and **ended up paying well over the odds**. I had been working on a project for a client in Canada using a really old laptop that **I'd had for ages**. Anyway, the old one was slow and just about to **pack up**, so I decided that what I needed was a new one.*

*I saw this nice new Lenovo online. It was the big screen that I really liked and, because I was working on several documents at the same time, I thought it would have been perfect. It also had a large battery that was advertised to last for at least nine hours, or a full day. That meant that I could take my laptop and work from a coffee shop without carrying the charger around or looking for a plug.*

*At \$400 it looked like **a bargain**. So, I went to the site where I'd seen it. However, **it turned out** that the one for \$400 was **part of a deal**, and that you also had to sign up for their broadband package which was \$70 a month. I thought that this was **a complete rip-off** as I was only paying \$20 for my broadband.*

*I had **set my heart on** the laptop with a big screen, and I **searched up and down** but the only one I could find was almost twice the price and **came in at** \$800. So, after a week of **humming and hawing**, I decided to **put my hand in my pocket** and **go for it**.*

*I felt a bit guilty at the time but **all in all**, I'm glad that I **went for** the expensive model. It's fast and easy to use. Also, although it's big, it's light, so I can carry it around easily. **If you ask me**, you only **get what you pay for**.*

to end up

= to find yourself at the end of a process

to pay well over the odds

= to pay more than usual or more than expected

to have for ages	= to own for a long time
to pack up	= to stop working
a bargain	= when you can buy something for less than the usual price
to turn out	= to be discovered or proven
to be part of a deal	= to be sold at a lower price with certain conditions
a complete rip-off	= something is sold well above its value
to set one's heart on (something)	= to decide that you want something very much
to search up and down	= to look everywhere
to come in at \$800	= to cost
to hum and haw	= to be hesitant/be unable to decide
to put one's hand in their pocket	= to spend one's own money
to go for	= to choose/select
all in all	= taking everything into account
went for	= to have chosen/selected
if you ask me	= used to emphasize that a statement is one's personal opinion
to (only) get what you pay for	= the price you pay reflects the quality of what you buy

# COMPANY EMPLOYEES

**Describe a company where you live that employs a lot of people.**

You should say:

- what it does
- how many people it employs
- what the employees do at work

and explain how you feel about it

Basically, I live in *a suburban area* of London, which is quite residential. This means that we don't really have any big offices or manufacturing *in the vicinity*. I guess the largest employer in the area is a hypermarket, Tesco. It's called a hypermarket *rather than* a supermarket because it's *open 24/7* and it's really huge. It sells all kinds of things, from food to clothing, domestic goods, and even home electronics. Whatever one may dream of finding in a supermarket, Tesco will have.

*Frankly*, I don't know how many people work there but I suppose several hundred. There are *employees* who work in the *warehouse*, those who put goods on *shelves*, *cashiers*, *security*, and those who manage the store after all. It takes a lot of people *to serve all of their customers*.

*Once* I came back from holiday on a Sunday evening. In the UK, most stores close at 5 pm on Sunday to ensure that their employees have time with their families. *Therefore*, all local stores were already closed and I had to drive to this hypermarket. When I arrived, I *was amazed* at how busy it was. There were tons of cars in the car park and at least twenty *checkouts* working at the same time. *No doubt*, this supermarket is a big machine that requires a large staff and *continuously* recruits new people.

I personally find that shopping there is *not my cup of tea*. I prefer buying my *groceries* in a small *family-run store across the road* or *ordering a home delivery* for heavy items, but some of our neighbours go there regularly.

a suburban area

= when you live on the outskirts of a town, not in the centre

in the vicinity

= nearby

rather than

= you can use it to say "instead of something".



*a hypermarket rather than a supermarket*

*I prefer a cup of coffee rather than tea.*

open 24/7 (open twenty-four seven)	= a place (market, café, restaurant, etc.) is always open
frankly	= used to show that you are being honest about something
employees	= people who are paid to work for somebody
warehouse	= a building where large quantities of goods are stored, especially before they are sent to shops to be sold
supermarket shelves	= shelves where goods are placed
cashier	= a person whose job is to receive and pay out money
security	= the department of a large company or organization that deals with the protection of its buildings, equipment and staff
to serve customers	= to assist and advise people who buy or use a company's products or services
once	= at one time (often used to begin a story)
therefore	= used to introduce the logical result of something that has just been mentioned
to be amazed	= to be very surprised
checkout	= the place where you pay for the things that you are buying in a supermarket
no doubt	= used when you are saying that something is likely
continuously	= all the time, without interruption
not my cup of tea	= an idiom that means what you don't like something.

*An evening at the opera isn't everyone's cup of tea.*

groceries	= food and other goods sold by a grocer or at a supermarket
family-run store	= owned and managed by a family
across the road	= very close
to order home delivery	= to request a service of delivering goods to the consumer's home

# PEOPLE SMILING

## Describe an occasion when people were smiling.

You should say

- who you were with
- when it happened
- why people were smiling

and explain how it made you feel

*I'd like to tell you about my recent visit to the Royal Opera House in London. Last Saturday **my husband and I** went there to see Verdi's opera called *Rigoletto*. It was such **an occasion**. The performance was **sold out** and the room was absolutely **packed**. Before the performance began, people were **chatting**, laughing and **smiling at** each other.*

*I think they were really happy to be there and to see other people. And at the end, the audience just rose to their feet in **a standing ovation**. Of course, *Rigoletto* is an impressive opera, which was masterly performed and totally deserved an ovation, but another reason for this atmosphere was, perhaps, the fact that the opera house had been closed for over a year because of **the COVID outbreak** and the series of **lockdowns** we went through. If I think about it, this was my first theatre **outing** in almost two years, although I **used to be a regular**. I suppose we used to **take a lot of things for granted**, and now we've learned to appreciate them much more. This is the reason why people were smiling more than usual at that performance, despite a certain **anxiety** that I'm sure many felt in such a **crowded** auditorium.*

*For me personally, it felt like a big occasion that I was excited and slightly nervous about. I hope we will all to be able to freely attend events again in the near future.*

my husband and I

\*Note: Always name the other person first.

*Alex and I went to the cinema. (not "I and Alex")*

*My uncle invited Alex and me to the party. (not "me and Alex")*

an occasion

= a special event, ceremony or celebration

sold out

= if a concert, match, etc. is sold out, there are no more tickets available for it

packed	= extremely full of people
to chat	= to talk in a friendly, informal way to somebody
to smile at	= to make a smile appear on your face
a standing ovation	= a period of prolonged applause during which those in the crowd or audience rise to their feet
the COVID outbreak	= the time when the world saw an uncontrollable increase in the number of cases of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease
lockdown	= an official order to control the movement of people or vehicles because of a dangerous situation
outing	= a trip that you go on for pleasure or education, usually with a group of people and lasting no more than one day
used to	= used to say that something happened continuously or frequently during a period in the past
to be a regular	= to be a person doing the same thing or going to the same place often
to take something for granted	= to be so used to somebody/something that you do not recognize their true value anymore and do not show that you are grateful
anxiety	= the state of feeling nervous or worried that something bad is going to happen
crowded	= having a lot of people or too many people

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