

Focus on
keywords. →

Key
Strategy! *

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Effective reading strategies require active engagement and
targeted practice to discern key information rapidly.

Mastering IELTS Reading

The Examiner's Playbook for Active Test-Takers

The 60-Minute Information Retrieval Challenge

Success in IELTS reading is about speed, strategy, and locating data—not reading every word.

40 Questions

40

(Target for Band 7: ~30 correct answers)

60 Minutes

60

(Strict time limit)

~2,500

Words

(Spread across the test)

0

Penalties

(No negative marking for incorrect guesses)

Guessing is
mandatory.

Academic vs. General Training

Match your daily reading habits to the specific structure of your exam variant.

Academic

- **Structure:** 3 long passages (approx. 900 words each).
- **Tone:** Semi-academic, complex topics, research-based.
- **The Training Diet:** The Guardian, New Scientist, Time Magazine, The Conversation (academic research simplified for the public).

General Training

- **Structure:** ~6 shorter passages (Sections 1 & 2) + 1 long passage (Section 3).
- **Tone:** Workplace rules, everyday survival, instructions, advertisements.
- **The Training Diet:** Junk mail, pizza delivery flyers, workplace manuals, local English newspapers.

The Three-Gear Reading Engine

You cannot read every word. Efficient test-takers shift between three distinct reading speeds.



Read every 2-3 sentences.
Focus heavily on the first paragraph, the last paragraph, and key nouns/verbs.



Look at the test questions first.
Identify keywords (names, dates, numbers) and sweep your eyes over the text solely to locate them.



Engage only when you find the target area. Check specific prepositions, quantities, or comparative words.

How to Skim Like an Examiner

In your native language, you don't read every word on a newspaper's front page. Apply that same filter here.

The phenomenon of climate change, driven primarily by human activities such as fossil fuel combustion, deforestation, and industrial processes, **represents one of the most critical global challenges of the twenty-first century**, impacting ecosystems, economies, and societies worldwide. The phenomenon of climate change encompasses a wide range of environmental and societal impacts, including rising global temperatures, sea level rise, and extreme weather events. These changes are driven by the release of greenhouse gases, primarily from the burning of fossil fuels. The impact of climate change is global, affecting all regions and communities. It leads to the loss of biodiversity, disruption of ecosystems, and significant economic losses. The challenges posed by climate change require urgent action at the global level. International agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming. Mitigation strategies, such as transitioning to renewable energy sources and improving energy efficiency, are essential to address the root causes of climate change. Adaptation strategies, such as building resilient infrastructure and implementing disaster risk reduction measures, are also crucial to manage the impacts of climate change. Ultimately, addressing climate change requires a concerted global effort, innovative technological solutions, and significant behavioral changes to transition towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

Ignore the filler. Map the structure.

The ‘Unknown Word’ Hurdle

Do not panic when encountering complex vocabulary. The text contains the key to its own lock.



If a difficult word is important, it will be explained in the surrounding text. If it is not explained, it is not important.

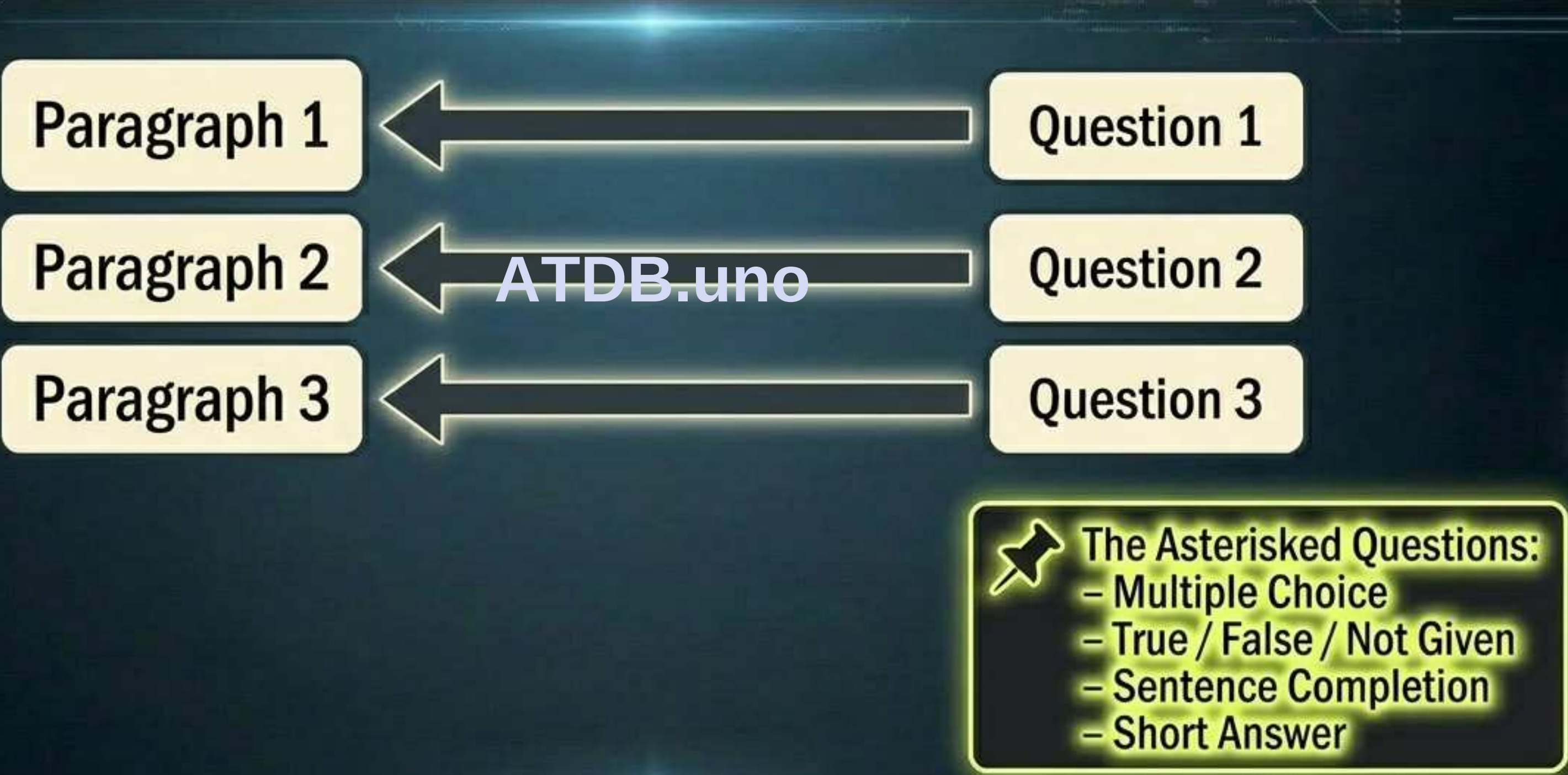
The Active Reader Habit Loop

Passive reading builds stamina. Active reading builds test-day proficiency.



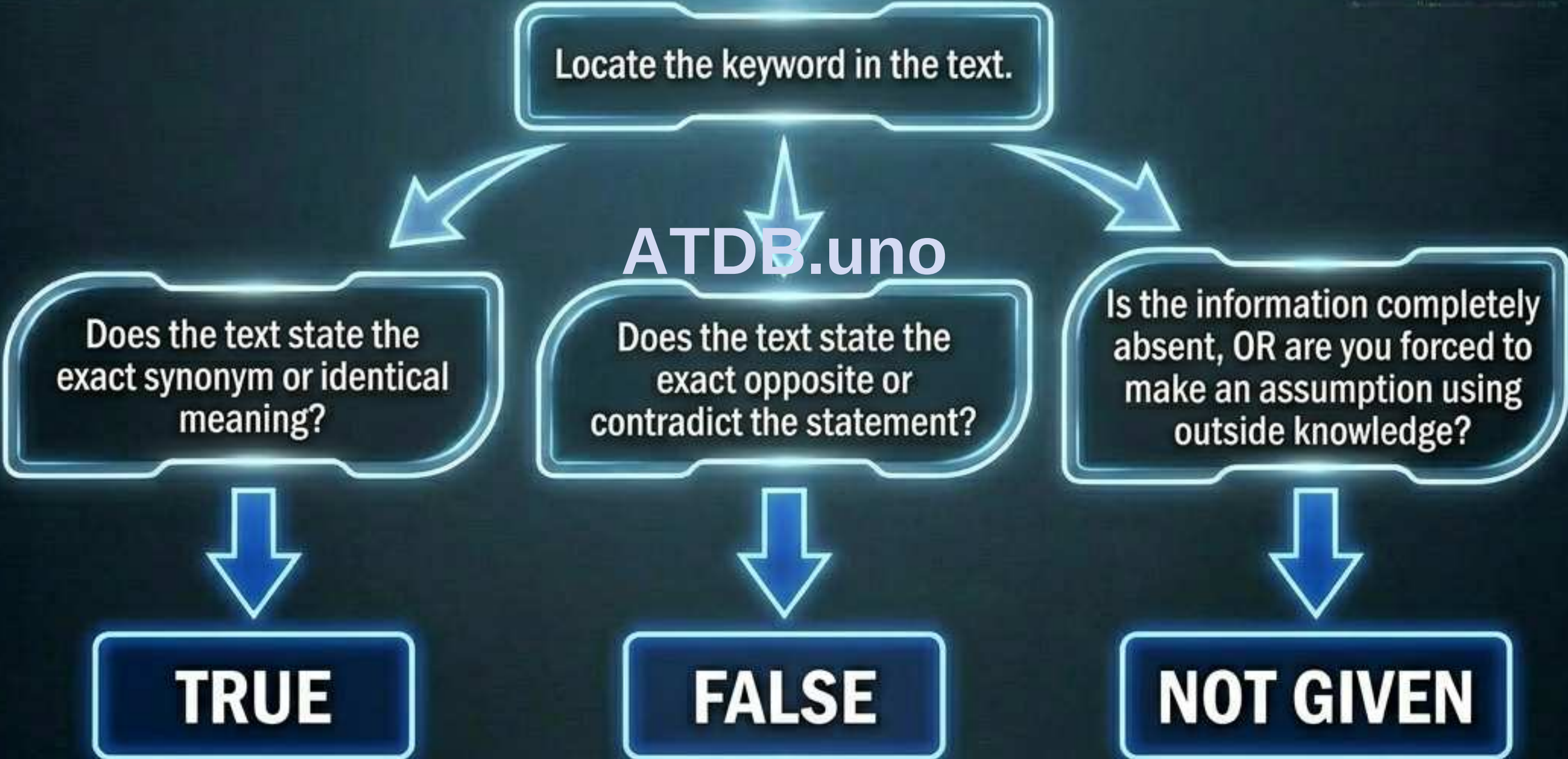
The Chronological Cheat Code

Do not hunt randomly. Certain question types follow the exact physical order of the text.



Diagnostic Logic: True / False / Not Given

Remove the guesswork. Route your reading through this strict decision tree.



T/F/NG: Examiner Traps & Red Flags

Contradictions are not tricks; they are tests of precise detail reading.



The “Outside Knowledge” Trap

Never rely on assumptions. Just because a banana is **more expensive** does not mean the text states it is **“better”**. Stick exclusively to the words on the page.

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The “Absolute” Trap

Pay hyper-attention to quantifiers. The text saying “greater genetic diversity” (more) does NOT match a question claiming the “greatest genetic diversity” (most).



The “First Question” Rule

As a general structural rule, the very first question in a T/F/NG set is rarely “Not Given”—examiners don’t want you wasting your initial time hunting for ghosts.

The Synonym Game

You will almost never find the exact question word in the text. You are hunting for its disguised twin.

The Question Keyword	The Text Paraphrase (The Target)
Restaurant	Eating house / Food service
Children	2 and 4-year-old brothers / Nanny
Supervising other staff	Managing staff / Conduct training

Distractors

A job requiring you to “self-manage with minimal supervision” is a distractor designed to trick you if you are just scanning for the word “supervision”.

Test-Day Execution Protocols

Do not lose easy points to mechanical errors. Follow the strict formatting rules.

Time Boxing: Enforce strict 20-minute blocks per passage. Do not spend 5 minutes on a single stubborn question. Move on.

Word Limits: Adhere exactly to instructions. If it says “no more than one word,” a two-word correct answer scores 0.

Transcription: Copy spelling exactly as it appears in the text. British vs. American spelling is accepted, but random errors are not.

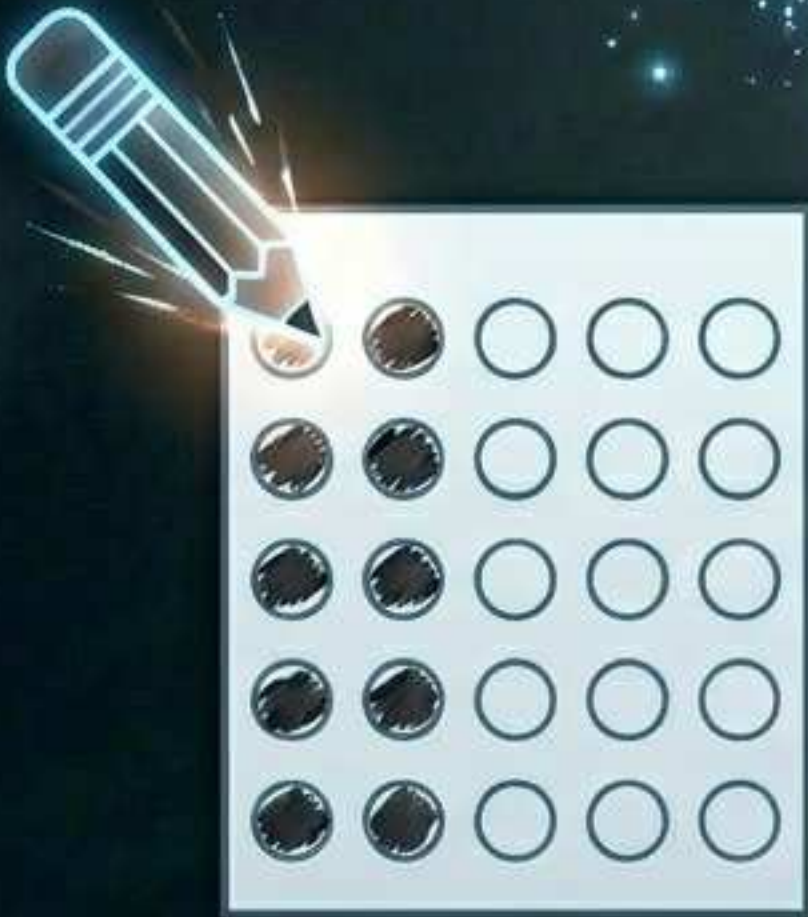
Legibility: Print your letters clearly. If your handwritten “e” looks like an “l”, or your “a” looks like an “o”, the examiner will mark it wrong.

The Golden Rule of the Final Minute

Zero penalties for guessing means an empty box is a wasted opportunity.



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A, A, A, A, A

The Strategy: If you have 1 minute left and 5 blank spaces, fill them all with the exact same guess.

The Math: Statistically, one of those will likely hit, securing a point that could bump your score from a 6.5 to a 7.0.

The Anatomy of a Band 7+ Reader

Success is a system. Combine daily preparation with ruthless test-day execution.

Band 7+ Mastery

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Daily Inputs

Reads actively daily, asks examiner questions, builds a deep synonym log, reads without a dictionary.

Core Mechanics

Uses the 3-Gear Engine (Skim, Scan, Detail), maps chronological questions, navigates T/F/NG strictly by text evidence.

Flawless Execution

Strict 20-minute timeboxing, perfect spelling transcription, obeys exact word limits, leaves zero blanks.