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**Academic  
Reading  
Practice Test  
24**

## Academic Reading Practice Test 3

### Reading Passage 1

Read the passage below and answer Questions 1-14 that follow.

Our fears of public speaking result not only from what we do not know or understand about public communication but also from misconceptions and myths about public encounters. These misconceptions and myths persist among professional people as well as the general public. Let us examine these persistent myths about public communication, which, like our ignorance and misunderstandings of the fundamental assumptions and requirements of public speaking, exacerbate our fears and prevent our development as competent public persons.

A. Perhaps the most dogged and persistent myth about public communication is that it is a "special" activity reserved for unusual occasions. After all, how often do you make a public speech? There are only a few special occasions during the year when even an outgoing professional person will step behind a podium to give a public speech, and many professional people can count on one hand the number of public speeches given in a career. Surely, then, public communication is a rare activity reserved for especially important occasions.

This argument, of course, ignores the true nature of public communication and the nature of the occasions in which it occurs. When we engage with people we do not know well to solve problems, share understanding and perspectives, advocate points of view, or seek stimulation, we are engaged in public speaking. Public communication is a familiar, daily activity that occurs in the streets, in restaurants, in board rooms, courtrooms, parks, offices, factories and meetings.

Is public speaking an unusual activity reserved for special occasions and restricted to the lectern or the platform? Hardly. Rather it is, and should be developed as, an everyday activity occurring in any location where people come together.

B. A related misconception about public communication is the belief that the public speaker is a specially gifted individual with innate abilities and God-given propensities. While most professional people would reject the idea that public speakers are born, not made, they nevertheless often feel that the effective public communicator has developed unusual personal talents to a remarkable degree. At the heart of this misconception - like the myth of public speaking as a "special" activity - is an overly narrow view of what a public person is and does.

Development as an effective public communicator begins with the understanding that you need not be a nationally-known, speak-for-pay, professional platform

speaker to be a competent public person. The public speaker is an ordinary person who confronts the necessity of being a public person and uses common abilities to meet the fundamental assumptions and requirements of daily public encounters.

C. A less widespread but serious misconception of public speaking is reflected in the belief that public speeches are "made for the ages". A public speech is something viewed as an historical event which will be part of a continuing and generally available public record. Some public speeches are faithfully recorded, transcribed, reproduced, and made part of broadly available historical records. Those instances are rare compared to the thousands of unrecorded public speeches made every day.

Public communication is usually situation-specific and ephemeral. Most audiences do well if they remember as much as 40 per cent of what a speaker says immediately after the speaker concludes; even less is retained as time goes by. This fact is both reassuring and challenging to the public communicator. On the one hand, it suggests that there is room for human error in making public pronouncements; on the other hand, it challenges the public speaker to be as informed as possible and to strive to defeat the poor listening habits of most public audiences.

D. Finally, professional people perhaps more than other groups often subscribe to the misconception that public communication must be an exact science, that if it is done properly it will succeed. The troublesome corollary to this reasoning is that if public communication fails, it is because it was improperly prepared or executed. This argument blithely ignores the vagaries of human interaction. Public speakers achieve their goals through their listeners, and the only truly predictable aspect of human listeners is their unpredictability. Further, public messages may succeed despite inadequate preparation and dreadful delivery.

Professional people often mismanage their fears of public communication. Once we understand what public encounters assume and demand, once we unburden ourselves of the myths that handicap our growth as public persons, we can properly begin to develop as competent public communicators.

### Questions 1-5

The reading passage "Myths about Public Speaking" has four sections A-D. In boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet write the appropriate letter A, B, C, or D to show in which section you can find a discussion of the following points. You may use any letter more than once.

1. A person's ability to be a public speaker.
2. Whether public speeches are remembered for a long time.
3. A definition of public speaking.
4. The relationship of preparation to success in public speaking.
5. Retention rates as a challenge to public speakers.

### Questions 6-11

Do the following statements reflect the claims of the writer in the reading passage?

In boxes 6-11 on your answer sheet write:

YES	<i>if the statement agrees with the writer</i>
NO	<i>if the statement does not agree with the writer</i>
NOT GIVEN	<i>if there is no information about this in the passage</i>

6. Very few people can become good public speakers.
7. Public communication is an ordinary daily activity.
8. Public speaking can be learned at specially designated schools.
9. Most good public speakers lead happy and productive lives.
10. It is impossible to predict how a speech will be received.
11. There is little place for public speaking in the life of the ordinary person.

**Questions 12-14**

Use information from the reading passage to complete the following sentences. **USE NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS OR A NUMBER.** Write your answers in boxes 12-14 on your answer sheet.

12. The writer defines public speaking as any activity where people jointly explore problems, knowledge, attitudes and opinions, or look for \_\_\_\_\_
13. At the end of most public speeches, most audiences immediately forget about \_\_\_\_\_ of what they have just heard.
14. Because most public speeches are short-lived, the speaker should work to counteract the \_\_\_\_\_ of the listeners.

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## Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 15-28 which are based on Reading Passage 2.

A main public concern about petroleum exploration and production seems to be that a blow-out will cause a major oil spill.

Oil often exists in the subsurface at great pressure and, in the early days, when wells were drilled with only air or water in the hole, the oil could rush into and up the hole and "blow out" at the surface. For reasons of economy and safety, the early oilmen soon put a stop to that practice. Rotary drilling technology developed rapidly, including special drilling fluids with additives to control their density and consistency, and counterbalance the pressure of inflowing oil or gas. Modern drilling rigs are also fitted with blow-out prevention controls - complex systems of metal clamps and shutters which can be used to seal the hole if unexpected high pressures are encountered.

There can be no denying that major blow-outs still occur, and cause loss of life, as well as severe ecological trauma and economic loss. Fortunately, the available technology and proper precautions make them very rare events. Since offshore drilling commenced in Australia in 1965, there has not been a single oil blow-out. Six gas blow-outs occurred during that time - five in Bass Strait and one in the Timor Sea. The Bass Strait blow-outs were all controlled relatively quickly; the Petrel well in the Timor Sea flowed gas for 15 months. Only one well involved any spillage of oil, and the amount was negligible. It is a comment on improving technology and safety procedures that four of the incidents occurred in the 1960s, one in 1971 and the last in 1984.

The statistics on oil spills from offshore exploration and production in Australian Commonwealth waters are shown in the table below. The total spillage, over 26 years, is roughly equivalent in size to a large backyard swimming pool. The main spills have actually occurred in the loading of fuel onto production platforms; they had nothing to do with the oilwell itself.

AUSTRALIAN DRILLING RECORD			
Total number of incidents on offshore facilities from 1965 to 1991, involving spills >320 litres, or causing injury or damage	51	Total number of wells drilled	1,100
• Platform oil spills	27	Total number of kilolitres (barrels) of oil produced	480,000,000 (3,100,000,000)
• Explosions and fires	13	Total number of kilolitres (barrels) spilt	70 (440)
• Blow-out	6	Largest single spill in kilolitres (barrels)	10 (63)
• Pipeline breaks and leaks	2		
• Other	3		

Source: *Oil Spills in the Commonwealth of Australia offshore areas connected with Petroleum Exploration and Development Activities*.  
Department of Primary Industries and Energy

In addition to the oil spill issue, there are concerns about other discharges from the drilling and production facilities: sanitary and kitchen wastes, drilling fluid, cuttings and produced water.

Putrescible sanitary and kitchen wastes are discharged into the ocean but must be processed in accordance with regulations set by the Federal government. This material is diluted rapidly and contributes to the local food chain, without any risk of nutrient oversupply. All solid waste material must be brought ashore.

The cuttings are sieved out of the drilling fluid and usually discharged into the ocean. In shallower waters they form a low mound near the rig; in deeper water a wider-spread layer forms, generally within one kilometre of the drillsite, although this depends on a number of factors. Some benthic (bottom-dwelling) organisms may be smothered, but this effect is local and variable, generally limited to within about 100 metres of the discharge point. Better-adapted organisms soon replace them and storm-driven wave activity frequently sweeps away the material.

Drilling fluid is also discharged directly into the ocean. Most of the common constituents of water-based fluids used in Australia have low-to-nil toxicity to marine organisms. Some additives are toxic but are used in small concentrations and infrequently. The small amounts of heavy metals present are not absorbed into the bodies of marine organisms, and therefore it is unlikely that they would pose a problem for animals higher up the food chain. Field studies have shown that dilution is normally very rapid, ranging to 1,000-fold within 3 metres of the discharge point. At Rivoli-1 well in Exmouth Gulf, the input was chemically undetectable 560 metres away.

Oil-based drilling fluids have a more toxic component, and discharge to the marine environment is more significant. However, they are used only rarely in Australia, and the impact remains relatively local. At Woodside's North Rankin A Platform offshore Western Australia, the only facility currently using oil-based fluids, the discharge is diluted 2,000-fold within 1 kilometre downcurrent, and undetectable beyond 200 metres either side.

In the event of a discovery, the presence of a permanent production facility and the discharge of "produced water" are additional concerns. Produced water is the water associated with the oil or gas deposit, and typically contains some petroleum, dissolved organic matter and trace elements. Most produced water is effectively non-toxic but, even when relatively toxic, is quickly diluted to background levels. The impact occurs mainly within about 20 metres of the discharge point, but is observable in some instances for about 1 kilometre downcurrent. Government regulations limit the oil content allowed to be discharged, and the produced water is treated on the platforms to meet those specifications. The discharge points are carefully selected to maximise dispersion and dilution, and avoid any particularly sensitive local environments.

Ultimately the best test of the real environmental effect of drilling and producing operations may be the response of the environment to the fixed production platforms. In many areas the platforms quickly become artificial reefs, with the underwater supports of the platforms providing a range of habitats, from sea-bottom to surface, and quickly colonised by a wide range of marine plants and animals.

*Glossary:* **Cuttings:** small pieces of rock broken off as the drill cuts through the rock  
**Putrescible:** able to decompose, rot, break down

**Questions 15-17**

Choose the appropriate letter A-D and write it in boxes 15-17 on your answer sheet.

15. Oil sometimes "blows out" of a drilling hole because
- A the oil is mixed up with air
  - B special drilling fluids are used
  - C the surface pressure is greater than the pressure under the ground
  - D oil exists under pressure under the ground.
16. Sudden high pressures
- A cannot be controlled
  - B can be controlled using metal clamps and shutters
  - C can be controlled using water to counterbalance the pressure of the oil
  - D can be controlled using rubber pressure valves.
17. Since offshore drilling began in Australia in 1965
- A oil and gas blow-outs have been a major problem
  - B oil blow-outs have occurred occasionally
  - C most gas blow-outs were rapidly controlled
  - D gas blow-outs have occurred regularly up to the present.



**Questions 18-20**

Answer the questions below **USING NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS OR A NUMBER**. Write your answers in boxes 18-20 on your answer sheet.

18. How much oil was spilt in the largest accident on offshore facilities?
19. How many incidents were the result of blow-outs?
20. According to the table, what was the major cause of spillage of oil?

**Questions 21-28**

Using the information in the passage, identify each type of waste described below. In boxes 21 to 28 on your answer sheet, write

SK-1	if the statement refers to	sanitary and kitchen wastes which decay
SK-2	if the statement refers to	solid sanitary and kitchen wastes
C	if the statement refers to	cuttings
DW	if the statement refers to	drilling fluid - water-based
DO	if the statement refers to	drilling fluid - oil-based
PW	if the statement refers to	produced water

Note: each indicator may be used more than once. An example has been done for you.



21. This waste must not be discharged into the ocean.
22. This waste may contain heavy metals and toxic additives.
23. This waste can be used as a food source by marine organisms.
24. This waste is produced at only one location in Australian waters.
25. This waste consists of solids which are usually deposited on the ocean floor near the drilling rig.
26. This waste may sometimes cause problems due to its petroleum content.
27. This waste consists of substances very slightly poisonous or not poisonous at all to sea life, although substances added to it may be more harmful.
28. Because this waste contains oil, its discharge is carefully controlled to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems.

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### Reading Passage 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 29-42 which are based on Reading Passage 3.

There are many ways of obtaining an understanding of people's behaviour. One of these is to study the objects discarded by a community, objects used in daily lives. The study of the refuse of a society is the basis for the science of archaeology in which the lives and behaviour of past societies are minutely examined. Some recent studies have indicated the degree to which rubbish is socially defined.

For several years the University of Arizona, USA, has been running a Garbage Project, in which garbage is collected, sorted out and noted. It began in 1973 with an arrangement whereby the City of Tucson collected for analysis garbage from randomly selected households in designated census collection districts. Since then the researchers have studied other cities, both in the USA and Mexico, refining their techniques and procedures in response to the challenges of validating and understanding the often unexpected results they have obtained. Garbage is sorted according to an extremely detailed schedule, a range of data for each item is recorded on a standardised coding form, and the researchers cross-tabulate their findings with information from census and other social surveys.

This Project arose out of courses designed to teach students at the University the principles of archaeological methodology and to sensitise them to the complex and frequently surprising links between cultural assumptions and physical realities. Often a considerable discrepancy exists between what people say they do - or even think they do - and what they actually do. In one Garbage Project study, none of the Hispanic (Spanish-speaking) women in the sample admitted to using as much as a single serving of commercially-prepared baby food, clearly reflecting cultural expectations about proper mothering. Yet garbage from the Hispanic households with infants contained just as many baby food containers as garbage from non-Hispanic households with infants.

The Project leaders then decided to look not only at what was thrown away, but what happened to it after that. In many countries waste is disposed of in landfills; the rubbish is compacted and buried in the ground. So in 1987, the Project expanded its activities to include the excavation of landfills across the United States and Canada. Surprisingly, no-one had ever attempted such excavations before.

The researchers discovered that far from being sites of chemical and biological activity, the interiors of waste landfills are rather inactive, with the possible exception of those established in swamps. Newspapers buried 20 or more years previously usually remained perfectly legible, and a remarkable amount of food wastes of similar age also remained intact.

While discarded household products such as paints, pesticides, cleaners and cosmetics result in a fair amount of hazardous substances being contained in municipal landfills, toxic leachates pose considerably less danger than people fear, provided that a landfill is properly sited and constructed. Garbage Project researchers have found that the leachates do not migrate far, and tend to get absorbed by the other materials in the immediate surrounds.

The composition of landfills is also strikingly different from what is commonly believed. In a 1990 US survey people were asked whether particular items were a major cause of garbage problems. Disposable nappies (baby diapers) were identified as a major cause by 41 per cent of the survey respondents, plastic bottles by 29 per cent, all forms of paper by six per cent, and construction debris by zero per cent. Yet Garbage Project data shows that disposable nappies make up less than two per cent of the volume of landfills and plastic bottles less than one per cent. On the other hand, over 40 per cent of the volume of landfills is composed of paper and around 12 per cent is construction debris.

Packaging - the paper and plastic wrapping around goods bought - has also been seen as a serious cause of pollution. But while some packaging is excessive, the Garbage Project researchers note that most manufacturers use as little as possible, because less is cheaper. They also point out that modern product packaging frequently functions to reduce the overall size of the solid-waste stream.

This apparent paradox is illustrated by the results of a comparison of garbage from a large and socially diverse sample of households in Mexico City with a similarly large and diverse sample in three United States cities. Even after correcting for differences in family size, US households generated far less garbage than the Mexican ones. Because they are much more dependent on processed and packaged foods than Mexican households, US households produce much less food debris. (And most of the leaves, husks, etc. that the US processor has removed from the food can be used in the manufacture of other products, rather than entering the waste stream as is the likely fate with fresh produce purchased by households.)

One criticism made of Western societies is that the people are wasteful, and throw things away while they are still useable. This, however, does not seem to be true. Garbage Project data showed that furniture and consumer appliances were entering the solid waste stream at a rate very much less than would be expected from production and service-life figures. So the researchers set up a study to track the fate of such items and thus gained an insight into the huge informal and commercial trade in used goods that rarely turns up in official calculations and statistics.

The Garbage Project's work shows how many misconceptions exist about garbage. The researchers are therefore critical of attempts to promote one type of waste management, such as source reduction or recycling, over others, such as incineration or landfilling. Each has its advantages and disadvantages, and what may be appropriate for one locality may not be appropriate for another.

*Glossary:* Leachate: water carrying impurities which has filtered through the soil

### Questions 29-35

Complete the following notes using information from the passage. Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS OR A NUMBER** in boxes 29-35 on your answer sheet.

<b>The Garbage Project</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• started in 1973</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• first studied garbage in the city of _____ (29) _____ since then has studied it in other cities in USA and _____ (30) _____</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• method: garbage collected and sorted, the information noted on _____ (31) _____</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• findings compared with _____ (32) _____ and other social surveys</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reason for Project: show students the _____ (33) _____ of archaeological _____ (34) _____</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from 1987 Garbage Project studied _____ (35) _____ in USA and Canada</li> </ul>	

### Questions 36-39

Complete the following sentences using information in the passage. Choose the appropriate phrase A-C from the list in the box and write its letter in boxes 36-39 on your answer sheet. You may use any phrase more than once.

- |   |
|---|
| <p>A more ... than</p> <p>B less ... than, fewer ... than</p> <p>C as many ... as, as much ... as</p> |
|---|

36. Hispanic women used \_\_\_\_\_ baby food \_\_\_\_\_ they said they did.
37. After excavating landfills the Garbage Project researcher found that there were \_\_\_\_\_ plastic bottles \_\_\_\_\_ people thought.
38. Mexican families create \_\_\_\_\_ garbage \_\_\_\_\_ American families.
39. Consumer appliances are reused \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ was officially predicted.

### Questions 40-42

Below are some of the wrong ideas that the passage states people have about garbage. Match each misconception I-IV with TWO counterarguments A-M used in the passage to argue against them. Write the appropriate letters A-M in boxes 40-42 on your answer sheet.

MISCONCEPTIONS	COUNTERARGUMENTS
	<b>A</b> 40% of landfills is paper
	<b>B</b> perishable items are often almost unchanged, even after long periods of time
	<b>C</b> people throw away furniture and consumer appliances
	<b>D</b> processing and packaging cuts down on other garbage
	<b>E</b> chemicals become less dangerous after 20 years
	<b>F</b> disposable nappies make up less than 2% of landfills
	<b>G</b> fresh food creates less waste debris
	<b>H</b> chemicals do not spread far in landfills
	<b>I</b> plastic bottles are a bigger waste problem than nappies
	<b>J</b> there are many businesses that collect and resell things people no longer want
	<b>K</b> manufacturers cut their costs by using as little packaging as possible
	<b>L</b> household goods constituted a smaller than expected part of solid waste
	<b>M</b> people use fewer disposable nappies now than in past years

Counter arguments for Misconception II: \_\_\_\_\_ (40) \_\_\_\_\_

Counter arguments for Misconception III: \_\_\_\_\_ (41) \_\_\_\_\_

Counter arguments for Misconception IV: \_\_\_\_\_ (42) \_\_\_\_\_