

Skills

Integrated Writing Task

For the Integrated Writing Task, you will first read a passage. Then you will hear a lecture on the same subject. You will be asked to write a summary of the two, showing how they contrast or how they support each other.

Skill 1 Main Ideas

For the Integrated Writing Task, you will need to be able to identify the main ideas in both the reading passage and the lecture. You should practice identifying main ideas and taking notes as you read and as you listen.

Example

Read this passage and take notes on the main ideas.

As a result of the rising cost of fossil fuels and increasing problems of pollution, consumers are searching for alternative sources of energy. Many homeowners these days are making use of solar power to provide at least some of the energy needs of their home. The advantages are many.

First of all, solar energy is abundant and cheap. Once the initial investment of installing solar panels has been made, the homeowner has a free source of energy for heating water and generating electricity. The costs of maintaining a solar energy system are very low. Since there are very few moving parts, there is little wear-and-tear on the system.

Second, solar energy is non-polluting. Solar energy systems emit nothing into the air or into lakes and streams. As well as being a very clean source of energy, solar energy is also very quiet. Wind turbines, another popular source of alternative energy, have the drawback of producing some noise, but solar energy systems are noiseless. Wind turbines are also unpopular with some people because they can spoil an otherwise beautiful landscape. Solar panels, on the other hand, can be installed so that they lie flat on a roof and are barely noticeable except from close up.

A third advantage to solar power is that it can be used anywhere. This is especially important in rural areas where homes may be far from the already established power grid. Installing solar panels is an alternative to paying the costs of having the power company connect a remote house to the power grid.

Today, in many places, homeowners are turning to solar power as an inexpensive and effective source of cheap, clean energy.



Now listen to the lecture and take notes on the main ideas.

Tip

You should use your own shorthand when you take notes. Don't try to write complete sentences. These sample notes are written in shorthand so that you can see how you can take notes.

Notes

Reading

Main Ideas

1. solar energy abundant and cheap

2. doesn't cause pollution

3. available everywhere

Lecture

Main Ideas

1. expensive to install system

2. can't be used everywhere

3. solar panels don't look nice

Practice

Read the passage and take notes. Then listen to the lecture and take notes. Use the spaces provided for your notes.

1. Read Passage 1 and take notes.

Reading

Main ideas

Lecture

Main ideas

Passage 1

It is widely accepted that parental involvement in education has a positive effect on student achievement. Higher levels of parental involvement are associated with lower drop-out rates and improved academic performance. Consequently, schools invest significant time and resources into promoting the involvement of parents in their children's education.

Parental involvement can occur at several levels. At the school level, it can manifest itself as parental participation in school events of various types. These might include open-house nights, meetings with teachers, or performances and exhibits put on by students. It could also include volunteering in the classroom or at special events, such as school fairs and field trips.

At the home level, parental involvement can take diverse forms. On one hand, parents can demonstrate an active interest in their children's school activities. Parents can inquire about what their children are doing in class and what things generally are happening at school. Parents can also spend time every day going over homework assignments with their children. In addition, parents can involve their children in educational activities that support what they are doing in school. For example, parents and children can spend time reading together, and they can visit museums and local places of historical or cultural significance. In addition to supporting the development of specific skills and knowledge, such activities show that the family places a high value on education, thus strengthening a student's motivation and sense of achievement.



Now listen to Lecture 1 and take notes.

2. Read Passage 2 and take notes.

Reading

Main ideas

Lecture

Main ideas

Passage 2

Aromatherapy is a popular alternative healing method. It makes use of naturally occurring aromatic compounds to treat certain health conditions, as well as to help people relax and improve mood. Essential oils are distilled from aromatic herbs, the most common of which are lemon, lavender, rosemary, and peppermint.

Aromatherapists claim that essential oils have a pharmacological effect similar to that of other types of medicines. The oils reportedly work to kill bacteria and viruses and stimulate the immune system. Many European doctors routinely include essential oils as part of patient treatment, most often for the oils' antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties, as well as to ease headaches and other pains.

Aromatherapy is commonly employed as a mood enhancer. Massage therapists frequently incorporate various essential oils into their treatments, not only because the oils soothe aching muscles, but also because they reduce stress and help patients relax. Specific aromas are used for patients suffering from stress, anxiety, or insomnia. Aromatherapy is also used in the treatment of depression. Lavender, which produces a sense of well-being, is the essential oil most widely used to improve mood.

Essential oils can be delivered to the patient in a number of ways. One method is to diffuse the oil into the air. Another common method is for the patient to inhale the aroma directly as it evaporates from the oil. This method of delivery is useful for respiratory ailments, as well as for mood enhancement. Essential oils can also be applied directly to the skin. This direct method is commonly used for skin ailments and for stress-relieving massages. However, the essential oils need to be diluted with a carrier oil, such as almond or olive oil, otherwise damage to the skin may result.

Aromatherapy has proven to be a popular form of treatment for both psychological and physical ailments.



Now listen to Lecture 2 and take notes.

3. Read Passage 3 and take notes.

Reading

Main ideas

Lecture

Main ideas

Passage 3

Forest fires can have natural or human causes. Lightning strikes are the most common natural cause. Human causes include activities, such as campfires, smoking, trash-burning, and other events. In order to burn, a forest fire requires three important elements: heat, oxygen, and fuel. Forest fires are frequently classified by the level of the forest in which they burn.

Ground fires burn at or below ground level, where there is low-lying vegetation and decaying organic matter. They are fueled by roots, decaying leaves, and other rotting vegetative matter. They are often smoldering fires and can burn slowly over a long period of time. They can even burn beneath the snow, and then flare up in the spring when the snow melts.

Surface fires are fires that burn from the ground level up to about ten feet high. They are fueled by timber litter, shrubs, and grasses. Certain trees have adaptations that protect them from surface fires. Douglas fir and ponderosa pine, for example, have their branches higher up, above the level where surface fires burn. They also have very thick bark which protects their trunks from the high heat of surface fires.

Crown fires burn at the highest level of the forest—the crowns of the trees. They are the most dangerous and destructive of forest fires. Crown fires can be the result of surface fires that have escalated. Crown fires can burn independently, jumping from crown to crown. For this reason, they can spread very rapidly, virtually exploding over large areas of forest in moments.



Now listen to Lecture 3 and take notes.

4. Read Passage 4 and take notes.

Reading

Lecture

Main ideas

Main ideas

Passage 4

Industrial agriculture approaches food production in much the same way a factory approaches the production of manufactured goods. The goal is to produce the largest amount at the lowest possible cost. Industrial agriculture relies on a system of monoculture, devoting large pieces of land to a single crop. This system leads to a reliance on chemicals to maintain the high crop yields that are desired. Because of heavy chemical use, industrial agriculture is creating an environmental disaster.

Growing the same crop on the same piece of land year after year leads to several problems. One of these is that it attracts pests. If a favorite food source is always available, insects that feed on it will naturally show up in large numbers. The only means of controlling these pests is through the application of chemical pesticides. This practice puts poisons into the natural environment which pollute water, kill beneficial insects and other animals, and may cause disease in humans. Pesticides can also affect the natural fertility of the soil.

Growing the same crop in the same place year after year, instead of rotating crops or allowing sections to lie fallow, results in soil depletion. The natural nutrients in the soil are used up, so chemical fertilizers need to be applied. The application of fertilizers results in pollution, destroying the balance of the natural environment.

Industrial farming generally relies on only a few varieties of a plant. For example, in the 1990s, almost half the corn crop in the United States consisted of just six varieties of corn, while almost the entire pea crop consisted of just two varieties. Devoting large pieces of land to just one or two varieties of a crop makes those crops particularly susceptible to disease. This makes the application of chemicals necessary and can also lead to the loss of entire crops.



Now listen to Lecture 4 and take notes.