

ENGLISHWITHOUTBORDERS
**HIPPO
THE
CONTEST**

**PRELIMINARY ROUND
CANDIDATE BOOKLET**

CEFR LEVEL C1
HIPPO CATEGORY HIPPO S5

CANDIDATE NUMBER _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CANDIDATES:

Do NOT turn over the page until instructed.

This examination is made up of 2 units: READING & USE OF ENGLISH

Answer all the questions.

Use only black or blue PEN.

Dictionaries are not allowed.

Remember to transfer your answers onto the answer sheet.

Time allowed:

Reading 45 minutes

Use of English 30 minutes

Reading Task 1

Read the article and circle the best option to complete the text – a, b, c, or d. An example has been done for you.

Still Searching for the Big Cheese

You have probably heard of robberies of expensive paintings from famous art galleries. Or you might have heard of diamonds or gold being stolen from a **0)** ___ safe. But have you ever heard of an international **1)** ___ where criminals plan to steal cheese?

Well, London-based cheesemaker and distributor Neal's Yard Dairy announced on Instagram that it was "the victim of a **2)** ___ fraud" by a carefully planned operation involving numerous participants, and the theft of high-value cheddar cheese. And **3)** ___ in London have arrested a 63-year-old man in connection with the cheese theft, in which tens of thousands of pounds worth of **4)** ___ cheddar cheese was stolen from a major distributor.

The Metropolitan Police confirmed that a man was detained on **5)** ___ of fraud by false representation, and handling stolen goods. The man was taken to a south London police station where he was **6)** ___. He has since been bailed while further enquiries are made.

Over the past week, the British cheese manufacturing community has been **7)** ___ by the announcement from Neal's Yard Dairy that it had been the "victim of a complex fraud resulting in the loss of over £300,000 worth of cheddar".

The theft involved a fake buyer posing as a **8)** ___ buyer for a major French retailer, with the cheese delivered before the discovery of the false identity, the company said. The thief made off with roughly 48,500 pounds in weight of cheddar. The cheese came from three different suppliers across England and Wales.

'Between them, these cheeses have won **9)** ___ awards and are amongst the most sought-after artisan cheeses in the U.K.,' Neal's Yard Dairy said. 'The high financial value of these cheeses likely made them a **10)** ___ target for the thieves.'

Cheddar, which originated in a village of the same name in Somerset, England, is the best-selling cheese in the U.K. and a **11)** ___ of national pride. British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver explained in an Instagram video that there is "only a small **12)** ___ of real cheddar cheese makers in the world," and that's where the stolen cheese came from. He called the loss of the cheese a "real shame."

- Example:** (a) secure b) confident c) sheltered d) standard
1. a) conspiracy b) intrigue c) schedule d) strategy
 2. a) cautious b) mature c) sophisticated d) realistic
 3. a) citizens b) authorities c) criminals d) suspects
 4. a) treasured b) priceless c) invaluable d) artificial
 5. a) respect b) suspicion c) guilt d) receipt
 6. a) studied b) explored c) considered d) questioned
 7. a) shocked b) delighted c) convinced d) persuaded
 8. a) defensible b) permissible c) legitimate d) consistent
 9. a) educational b) numerous c) affordable d) biased
 10. a) brief b) prime c) precise d) respective
 11. a) dawn b) basis c) fountain d) source
 12. a) handful b) gathering c) gesture d) portion

(12 marks)

Reading Task 2

Read the text and answer the questions below. Circle the correct option, a, b, c, or d. An example has been done for you.

Hikikomori

Across the world more and more people, especially the young, appear to be choosing to withdraw from society. This seems to be particularly affecting Japanese society, although similar concepts exist in other countries, especially South Korea. The Japanese even have a word for this phenomenon, *hikikomori*, which translates as 'pulling inward'. Estimates suggest that in Japan, half a million youths have become *hikikomori* 'dropouts', as well as more than half a million middle-aged individuals. In South Korea, it could be that around 350,000–500,000 people are affected.

Para. 2

In Japan, the affected individuals refuse to leave their parents' house, do not work or go to school, and GAP) ____ themselves from society and family in a single room for a period exceeding six months. Nobody has provided a concrete reason why this happens. Psychologists have speculated and given their opinions, but no scientific study has identified a causal link between people no longer wanting to be involved in society and something specific causing their unwillingness to leave their room.

Para. 3

While the level of the problem varies between individuals, in the most extreme cases, some people remain alone for years or even decades. Their self-removal from society usually starts GAP) _____. Often people start out as 'school refusers', people who simply refuse to attend school. These individuals typically have limited social connections and friendships even prior to their withdrawal. Affected people may appear unhappy, lose their friends, become insecure and shy, and talk less. While most favour indoor activities, some do venture outdoors occasionally.

Para. 4

According to Japanese government figures GAP) ____ in 2020, the average age of these individuals is 31. These figures included those who were at that time in their 40s and had spent 20 years in isolation. This group is generally referred to as the "first-generation *hikikomori*". There is concern about these people ever getting back into society. This has become known as "the 2030 Problem", because soon they will be in their 60s and their parents will begin to die, leaving them in the family home with no income. It is possible that they will not even be able to afford the cost of basic household bills, as many will quickly spend their parents' limited savings. The monthly cost of living for a single person in Japan is around 166,000 yen, which many people will not have. Further to this, the government estimates that 1.55 million people are on the verge of becoming *hikikomori*.

Para. 5

Sometimes referred to as a social problem in Japan, becoming a *hikikomori* has a number of possible contributing causes. Researcher Alan Teo has summarised the GAP) ____ cultural features that may contribute to the high numbers in Japan. These include tendencies toward conformity, overprotective parenting, and the specific structures of the Japanese education, housing and economic systems.

So, does this severe social withdrawal appear to affect men and women equally? Because of differing social expectations for maturing boys and girls, the most widely reported cases of *hikikomori* are from middle- and upper-middle-class families; sons, typically the eldest, refuse to leave the home. This sometimes happens after they experience one or more upsetting episodes of social or academic failure. However, it seems to be the case that girls are just as affected, but there is less pressure on them to have a job or leave the house, so they do not appear in the research or statistics.

Para.7

Japanese society exerts a great deal of pressure on adolescents to be successful and there is a strong emphasis on responsibilities and duties. This GAP) ____ the stress felt by young adults. Historically, Confucian teachings, which are very important in Japan and across East Asia, emphasise conformity and following rules over the rights of the individual. This shared background in thinking could possibly explain the emergence of the *hikikomori* phenomenon in other East Asian countries.

Para.8

No discussion of the problems faced by young people in the modern age can ignore modern technologies (such as the Internet, social media and video games) and the idea that these could be a factor in their withdrawal from society. Previous studies of *hikikomori* in South Korea found that some of them showed signs of 'Internet addiction', GAP) ____ researchers do not consider this to be the central issue. According to Takahiro Kato, a professor of psychiatry, video games and social media have reduced the amount of time that people spend outside and in social environments that require direct interaction. The emergence of smartphones may also have deepened the issue, given that people can continue their addiction to gaming and online surfing anytime, anywhere, even in bed.

So, is there any solution to this problem? Researchers suggest that if parents want to help, they must not fear being embarrassed by the opinions of wider society. Rather than hiding or denying the problem, families need to accept the reality of their children's lives and plan ahead, as the Japanese government failed to see the urgency of the problem and did not develop a way of helping *hikikomori*. And above all, *hikikomori* need to be treated kindly, and persuaded by professionals from specialist help centres to gradually get back into society. There is no evidence of a quick-fix solution but there are signs that this patient, step-by-step approach, is helping individuals.

Example: This article is about

- a) the cost of living at home.
- b) people who won't leave their house.
- c) students who do not like school.
- d) the problem of homelessness.

13. The author introduces the article by

- a) stressing that this is only a Japanese phenomenon.
- b) suggesting that only young people are affected.
- c) arguing the problem is limited to specific geographical areas.
- d) proposing that the issue is spreading to new places.

14. In paragraph 2, the best option to complete the gap is

- a) isolate
- b) abandon
- c) assign
- d) support

15. What does the author say about the reaction of psychologists?

- a) They have neglected the problem.
- b) They have only one theory to explain *hikikomori*.
- c) They can now fully explain the issue.
- d) They can't be sure what causes the problem.

16. In paragraph 3, the best word to fill the gap is

- a) gradually
- b) occasionally
- c) patiently
- d) successfully

17. What does the author suggest about *hikikomori* and their friends?

- a) They tend to make some friends online.
- b) Friendship is very important to them.
- c) They have a lot of friends but lose them.
- d) They rarely have many friends.

18. In paragraph 4, the best option to complete the gap is

- a) demonstrated
- b) perceived
- c) released
- d) accomplished

19. What does the '2030 problem' refer to?

- a) By 2030, there will be a critical shortage of workers to care for the hikikomori.
- b) Social withdrawal of teenagers in Japan is expected to reach a peak in 2030.
- c) As *hikikomori* age, there will be no one at home to fund their lifestyle by 2030.
- d) 2030 is the target date for Japan to solve the problem of hikikomori.

20. In paragraph 5, the best option to complete the gap is

- a) uncommon
- b) recent
- c) promising
- d) potential

21. Who does the text suggest is likely to be most affected?

- a) Girls more than boys.
- b) Boys more than girls.
- c) Both girls and boys at about the same rate.
- d) It is impossible to say because of lack of data.

22. In paragraph 7, the best option to complete the gap is

- a) compensates for
- b) contributes to
- c) deteriorates
- d) differentiates

23. What would be the best title for paragraph 7?

- a) Why more people are turning to Confucian thinking.
- b) Confucian thinking – the cause of the problem?
- c) Look for the solution in an old idea.
- d) Why Japan is special.

24. In paragraph 8, the best option to complete the gap is

- a) though
- b) so
- c) while
- d) and

25. The evidence regarding the use of modern technology suggests that

- a) it is the main reason people become *hikikomori*.
- b) it appears to have made the situation worse.
- c) it could be used to help solve the problem.
- d) it is more important in South Korea than Japan.

26. What does the author say about solving the *hikikomori* problem?

- a) It really cannot be solved by anyone.
- b) They need to be forced back into society.
- c) The Japanese government has the solution.
- d) A slow approach seems to work best.

(14 marks)

Reading Task 3

Part A. Read the four texts and answer the questions below by indicating which text each question relates to: A, B, C, or D.

An example has been done for you.

Text A Making Life Sweet

The amount of sugar in our diets seems to be a problem in almost all modern societies. For example, two out of every five Americans struggle with obesity, and more than 140 million have type-2 diabetes. GAP) _____, Americans consume a whopping 17 teaspoons of sugar every day.

To solve this problem the company Oobli sells drinks and chocolates that taste like a sugary treat, but their recipes have a secret: their sweetness doesn't come from sugar, but from "sweet proteins". These imitate a protein found in certain fruit, including the Oubli fruit native to West Africa. Found in about a dozen fruits from West Africa and similar environments, sweet proteins are a class of proteins that deliver a sugar-like sweetness, but which have none of the negative health impacts.

How these tiny, sweet proteins work is fascinating. These plants have basically worked out that humans and monkeys love sweetness. So, the plants evolved sweet-tasting proteins within their fruit to fool animals into eating them, so they spread their seeds further.

These sweet proteins also don't appear to have any bad side effects, unlike artificial sweeteners, which are suspected to contribute towards the on-set of heart disease, strokes and other serious illnesses.

Text B Teeth Cleaning Innovation

After more than 20 years working in the oral-care industry, dentist Steffen Mueller noticed one group that always had more dental problems: people with disabilities, many of whom experience tooth decay. Some vibrating toothbrushes for people with mobility difficulties leave them unable to clean hard-to-reach spaces, says Mueller, managing director of Swiss oral-health company Curaprox. This was causing their poorer oral health.

So the company invented the brand-new Samba Robotic Toothbrush, which solves this problem. Shaped like a U and featuring 12,900 soft bristles, it moves around the gumline and vibrates at both high and low frequencies to cover every tooth and gap, with no movement required from the user. Put simply, it allows you to clean your teeth without moving your hand. It is also designed to get between teeth far better than a traditional toothbrush, helping prevent tooth decay and other dental problems.

It retails online for €299. That might sound a lot when you can get a manual toothbrush for €1 or less and standard electric toothbrushes can be purchased for around €20. But because the cost of dental work can range from €200 to €2000, the initial expenditure is small, GAP) _____ the savings it can bring.

Text C The World's Smartest Stick

Every year, America spends about £50 billion on medical costs related to people falling. GAP 1) _____ this problem, scientists invented the CAN Go. It is an AI-powered smart walking stick with fall detection, activity tracking, GPS location, and emergency-calling features. It also has a built-in phone and flashlight.

“A lot of seniors don’t adopt new technologies,” says Ahmad Alghazi, founder and CEO of CAN, “which is why we decided to embed them into devices they already need or use.”

Using one for a few weeks certainly made me feel more confident about walking on rough ground, where people are most likely to fall. Fortunately, the emergency features were not needed! GAP 2) _____, the tracking was excellent, and it recorded all the steps taken.

The device also learns about the daily activity of its users and can share that data with family members and medical professionals. This can allow doctors to suggest a more active lifestyle to ensure patients are getting enough daily exercise.

Text D The Power of Walking

German researchers have built a shoe-based power generator that harvests energy from walking to charge small wearable devices. These innovative generators, which can be integrated into regular footwear, could power health monitoring sensors that track vital signs like heart rate and body temperature, eliminating the need for separate battery charging.

There are two separate designs: a "shock harvester", that generates power when the heel of the foot strikes the ground, and a "swing harvester", that produces power when the foot is swinging. Both generate power from an action that we make anyway, so there is no need to use fossil fuels or even solar power to create the electricity needed.

A spokesperson for the researchers said “They could also be used to find people who are lost, say in a jungle or desert. One of the current problems is that their devices might not have been charged. With this system, that issue would be eliminated.”

The biggest challenge for the designers has been to balance the size of the generator with a normal shoe. To generate enough power to run a mobile phone would require a larger battery, so shoes would need extra bits and would look odd. However, this may change soon, as smaller, more powerful, batteries are being invented all the time.

| Which text... | Text |
|---|-------|
| Example: describes a product sourced in Africa | A |
| 27. describes an invention that has some eco-credentials? | _____ |
| 28. highlights a product aimed at older users? | _____ |
| 29. discusses potential health risks of competing products? | _____ |
| 30. hints that the device could be improved in the future? | _____ |
| 31. says a natural product could be used to solve a problem? | _____ |
| 32. suggests a user could save a considerable amount of money? | _____ |
| 33. describes two different mechanisms working at the same time in the same device? | _____ |
| 34. identifies a specific group of people who struggle to use an existing solution? | _____ |

Part B. Now answer the following questions. Circle the correct option, a, b, c, or d.

35. In Text A, the best option to complete the gap is

- a) On average
- b) Together
- c) Due to that
- d) Overall

36. In Text B, the underlined words 'Put simply' could be best replaced by

- a) At face value
- b) In basic terms
- c) By all accounts
- d) To put it mildly

37. In Text B, the best option to complete the gap is

- a) as opposed to
- b) compared to
- c) other than
- d) in the region of

38. In Text C, the best option to complete the first gap is

- a) To compose
- b) To implement
- c) To consider
- d) To tackle

39. In Text C, the best option to complete the second gap is

- a) Despite this
- b) Therefore
- c) As a result
- d) However

40. In Text D, the underlined word 'innovative' means the same as

- a) fundamental
- b) complex
- c) original
- d) expensive

(14 marks)

END OF READING ASSESSMENT

13th HIPPO

preliminary round

HIPPO S5 Use of English MC Test VI



Time allowed: 30 minutes

In the sentences 41 -50 you need to choose the INCORRECT answer, and 51-60 you need to choose the CORRECT answer.

41. The accident happened because a baggage handler _____ to close one of the cargo doors properly.
A) omitted B) overlooked C) neglected D) failed
42. The central heating system is _____; it's time we replaced it.
A) antiquated B) inefficient C) uneconomical D) unworthy
43. Don't you think the piano needs _____?
A) a tune B) tuning C) an overhaul D) to be tuned
44. 'We'll have you _____ in no time,' said the doctor cheerfully.
A) on your feet B) well and good C) up and about D) fit again
45. The car's performance has _____ our expectations.
A) lagged behind B) fallen short of C) failed to come up to D) not fulfilled
46. The escaped prisoner is _____ to be carrying a gun.
A) landmark B) considered C) believed D) known
47. Do you remember _____ last night?
A) having any dreams B) what you dreamt about C) whether you dreamed D) to have been dreaming
48. The players were _____ by the time they got back to the training camp.
A) done out B) all in C) dog-tired D) dead beat
49. I have no idea what you're _____ at.
A) getting B) driving C) implying D) hinting

13th HIPPO

preliminary round

HIPPO S5 Use of English MC Test VI



50. Here are a few ideas I _____ down during the lecture.
A) jotted B) scribbled C) doodled D) noted
51. They had to buy a lot of equipment for the old boat _____ a new anchor.
A) coupled with B) joined to C) including D) partnered with
52. I wish I _____ the letter soon.
A) have written B) wrote C) would have written D) had written
53. Surely, you're not so naïve _____ everything the papers say.
A) believing B) to believe C) as believe D) as to believe
54. Can you give us an estimate of the _____ of stolen items?
A) value B) cost C) worth D) price
55. Patricia is a terrible chatterbox; she'd talk the _____ off a donkey.
A) ears B) tail C) hind legs D) front legs
56. There's an old saying that you _____ have your cake and eat it.
A) mustn't B) can't C) won't D) don't
57. Protestors dispersed when the police arrived _____ force.
A) with B) by C) in D) in a
58. I felt _____ me.
A) him distrust B) him to distrust C) his distrusting D) that he distrusted
59. I was under the _____ that he worked in a bank.
A) belief B) conviction C) misapprehension D) mistake
60. Did you hear the _____ about the fatal accident on the M1?
A) newsflash B) bulletin C) report D) update



END OF ASSESSMENT

REMEMBER TO TRANSFER YOUR ANSWERS
ONTO THE ANSWER SHEET!

IESOL L2/C1 READING ANSWER SHEET – HIPPO Preliminary Round 2025

Reading Task 1

| Question | Answer |
|--------------------|--------|
| 1. | A |
| 2. | C |
| 3. | B |
| 4. | B |
| 5. | B |
| 6. | D |
| 7. | A |
| 8. | C |
| 9. | B |
| 10. | B |
| 11. | D |
| 12. | A |
| Total: / 12 | |

Reading Task 2

| Question | Answer | Question | Answer |
|--------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| 13. | D | 20. | D |
| 14. | A | 21. | C |
| 15. | D | 22. | B |
| 16. | A | 23. | B |
| 17. | D | 24. | C |
| 18. | C | 25. | B |
| 19. | C | 26. | D |
| Total: / 14 | | | |

Reading Task 3

| Question | Answer | Question | Answer |
|--------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| 27. | D | 34. | B |
| 28. | C | 35. | A |
| 29. | A | 36. | B |
| 30. | D | 37. | B |
| 31. | A | 38. | D |
| 32. | B | 39. | D |
| 33. | D | 40. | C |
| Total: / 14 | | | |

PREL S5 USE OF ENGLISH MC KEY

- 41. B
- 42. D
- 43. A
- 44. B
- 45. A
- 46. A
- 47. D
- 48. A
- 49. C
- 50. C
- 51. C
- 52. D
- 53. D
- 54. A
- 55. C
- 56. B
- 57. C
- 58. D
- 59. C
- 60. A