Cork IELTS Reading Practice Test with Answers Key

Cork

Cork is a magnificent material derived from the cork oak tree's thick bark (Quercus suber). It's long-lasting, supple, buoyant, and fire-resistant, making it excellent for a wide range of uses. Ancient Egyptians used cork to seal sarcophagi (stone coffins), while ancient Greeks and Romans used it for everything from beehives to sandals.

In addition, the cork oak is a unique tree in its own right. Its bark can grow up to 20 cm thick, shielding the tree like a cloak around the trunk and branches and keeping the temperature constant at 20°C all year. The cork oak's bark has a unique cellular structure that science has never been able to duplicate, with roughly 40 million cells per cubic centimetre. Because its cells are packed with air, cork is buoyant. It's also pliable, so you can squeeze it and see it return to its original size and shape as soon as you let go of the pressure.

Cork oaks can be found in a variety of Mediterranean countries, including Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Morocco. They prefer warm, sunny climates with at least 400 mm of yearly rainfall and no more than 800 millimetres. The trees thrive in poor soil, sinking deep roots to find moisture and nutrients, similar to grape vines. The Alentejo region in southern Portugal has all of these conditions, which explains why it had become the world's largest cork producer by the early twentieth century, accounting for over half of all cork output globally.

Families own the most cork forests. Most of the family businesses and the trees themselves are around 200 years old. People need patience for cork production. It takes 25 years from the planting of a cork sapling to the first harvest and a gap of about a decade must separate harvests from an individual tree. To get a best-quality cork, waiting further 15 or 20 years is a necessity. It is important to harvest cork on the right kind of summer’s day. The tree will be damaged if the bark is stripped on a day when it’s cold or when the air is damp.

Harvesting the cork is considered as a very specialised profession. There is no mechanical way to strip the cork bark that has been invented. So, the teams of highly skilled workers have done the job. First, they cut down the bark vertically by using small sharp axes and then lever it away in pieces as big as they can handle. The cork-strippers who are skilful prise away a semi-circular husk which spans around the length of the trunk from the ground level to the first branches. It will be laid on the ground for drying for about four months, before it gets into the factories, where it will be boiled to destroy any insects which might be in the cork. Traditional bottle stoppers will be made from over 60% of cork and remainder will be used into construction trade, cork board and cork tiles are ideal for thermal and acoustic insulation and the cork’s granules are utilised for concrete manufacturing.

As the cork contains the chemical compound called 2,4,6 trichloroanisole (TCA), which forms when the plant phenols, chlorine and mould interacts, its usage begins to decline for materials for bottle stoppers. It might spoil the contents of the bottle. Even the tiniest

concentrations will badly influence the taste of the product contained in the product. Though the result is gradual, changes happen in a steady flow. It moves towards plastic stoppers and to aluminium screw caps. These substitutions can be manufactured with cheap cost, and users use the screw caps conveniently.

This ancient material's future looks promising as we are seeing the current concerns about environmental issues. It has the following advantages. Its traditional image comes under the category of high quality goods. Cork can be recycled easily as this is a sustainable product. And, more importantly, cork forests support the local biodiversity and prevent desertification in the place where they have been planted.

Questions 1 - 5

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the reading passage?

Write

- **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information
- **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information
- **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this in the passage

1. Cork has a long-lasting quality.
2. Science can easily duplicate the cellular structure of the cork oak's bark tree.
3. The extraction substance of the cork has been used for curing lots of diseases.
4. Over 60% of the cork has been used for traditional bottle stoppers.
5. Recycling the cork is too difficult and complicated.

Questions 6 - 9

Complete the summary below.

Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

Cork is a material which is derived from the cork **6**_____ thick bark. It has been used for sealing sarcophagi by **7**_____. Romans and Greeks used it for everything from beehives to sandals. The team of highly skilled professionals harvested the cork. It is used for a variety of purposes such as traditional bottle stoppers, cork boards and cork tiles. The problem with cork is that it contains 2,4,6 **8**_____ chemical compounds which spoil the content of the product. Still it has several advantages such as it can be **9**_____ easily since it is a sustainable product.

Questions 10 - 13

Complete each sentence with the correct ending, A–F, below.

Write the correct letter, A-F, as your answer to each question (10, 11, 12, 13)

10. When squeezing the cork and releasing the pressure, you can see
11. Cork oaks prefer
12. Harvesting the cork is regarded
13. Cork might spoils the content of the product as this contains

A. warm and sunny climates.
B. needs patience for cork production.
C. the chemical compound called 2,4,6 trichloroanisole.
D. as a very specialised profession.
E. it returns to its original size and shape.
F. can be recycled easily as this is a sustainable product.

Answers:

(Note: The text in italics is from the reading passage and shows the location from where the answer is taken or inferred. The text in the regular font explains the answer in detail.)

1. *True*

   Explanation: *Cork is a magnificent material derived from the cork oak tree's thick bark (Quercus suber). It's long-lasting, supple, buoyant, and fire-resistant, making it excellent for a wide range of uses.*

2. *False*

   Explanation: *The cork oak's bark has a unique cellular structure that science has never been able to duplicate, with roughly 40 million cells per cubic centimetre.*

3. *Not Given*

4. *True*

   Explanation: ***Traditional bottle stoppers will be made from over 60% of cork*** *and remainder will be used into construction trade, cork board and cork tiles are ideal for thermal and acoustic insulation and the cork's granules are utilised for concrete manufacturing.*

5. *False*

Explanation: *Cork can be recycled easily as this is a sustainable product.*

6. *Oak tree's*

   Explanation: *Cork is a magnificent material derived from the cork oak tree's thick bark (Quercus suber).*

7. *Ancient egyptians*

   Explanation: *Ancient Egyptians used cork to seal sarcophagi (stone coffins)*

8. *Trichloroanisole*

   Explanation: *As the cork contains the chemical compound called 2,4,6 trichloroanisole (TCA), which forms when the plant phenols, chlorine and mould interacts*

9. *Recycled*

   Explanation: *Cork can be recycled easily as this is a sustainable product.*

10. *F*

    Explanation: *It's also pliable, so you can squeeze it and see it return to its original size and shape as soon as you let go of the pressure.*

11. *A*

    Explanation: Cork oaks can be found in a variety of Mediterranean countries, including Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Morocco. They prefer warm, sunny climates with at least 400 mm of yearly rainfall and no more than 800 millimetres.

12. *D*

    Explanation: *Harvesting the cork is considered as a very specialised profession.*

13. *C*

Explanation: *As the cork contains the chemical compound called 2,4,6 trichloroanisole (TCA), which forms when the plant phenols, chlorine and mould interacts, its usage begins to decline for materials for bottle stoppers.*