

ISE III sample exam

Topic task

This task gives the candidate the opportunity to display their command of the language of the grade while delivering a formal oral presentation on self-selected and personally-relevant topics. The Topic discussion task is where the candidate and examiner have an authentic discussion on the ideas and opinions given in the formal topic presentation.

The examiner will signal the start of this task by saying:

'We'll start with the topic presentation. Please begin when you are ready.'

The examiner will make notes on the content of the presentation for the subsequent discussion. The candidate concludes the presentation by inviting the examiner to ask questions or comment, and the examiner signals the start of the topic discussion task by saying:

'Thank you. Now I'd like to discuss some of the points you have made.'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions and makes comments to elicit the language functions of the ISE level.

At the end of the Topic task, the examiner says:

'Thank you. That was interesting. Now we'll move on to the Collaborative task.'

The examiner then signals the start of the Collaborative task as below.

Collaborative task

An initial prompt from the examiner gives rise to interaction controlled and maintained by the candidate.

The examiner chooses one of several prompts. These prompts are changed annually. An example is given below. Before reading the prompt the examiner will read the following instructions:

'For the next part, I'll tell you something. Then, you have to ask me questions to find out more information and make comments. It's your responsibility to maintain the conversation. Are you ready?'

Sample prompt:

'In the last few years, many previously unspoilt regions of the world have been opened up to tourism. I'm concerned about the long-term effects of this.'

The candidate is then expected to ask questions and make comments in order to elicit further information from the examiner and develop the conversation, using the language functions of the ISE level.

At the end of the Collaborative task, the examiner says:

'Thank you. Now we'll move on to the Conversation task.'

Conversation task

This is an opportunity for a realistic exchange of information, ideas and opinions.

In this task, the examiner will choose one of the subject areas from the list below:

- ▶ Independence
- ▶ Ambitions
- ▶ Stereotypes
- ▶ Role models
- ▶ Competitiveness
- ▶ Young people's rights
- ▶ The media
- ▶ Advertising
- ▶ Lifestyles
- ▶ The arts
- ▶ The rights of the individual
- ▶ Economic issues

The examiner signals the start of this task by saying:

'Let's talk about...'

Once the candidate has responded, the examiner asks questions and makes comments to elicit various functions of the ISE level. The candidate and the examiner share responsibility for maintaining the conversation.

When the Conversation task is complete, the examiner says:

'Thank you. Now we'll move on to the Listening task.'

Independent listening task

The examiner reads some instructions to introduce the task. The candidate may ask for repetition or clarification.

Below is an example from the sample exam:

'You're going to hear part of a radio programme about routine. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?'

The examiner then plays the recording once. After the recording has played once, the examiner says:

'Now can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?'

When the candidate has answered the question, the examiner will hand them blank notepaper and a pen/pencil and will say:

'Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me the different ways the speaker evaluates the need for routine in our lives and whether you think he comes to a conclusion. Are you ready?'

The examiner plays the recording again.

After the recording has played a second time, the examiner says:

'Now tell me the different ways the speaker evaluates the need for routine in our lives and whether you think he comes to a conclusion. I'll stop you after one minute.'

The candidate has up to one minute to respond and may refer to their notes.

Sample audio script

In my recent book, I discuss the subject of routine and the effects it has on our lives. Actually, my original idea was to look at the working methods of successful creative people like writers and artists to see if there were any helpful lessons to be drawn. The more people I examined, the clearer it became that there was one thing the vast majority of them had in common: they had a regular working routine and stuck to it strictly, even obsessively. Their habits and routines often ended up being more like rituals. To take one example, the composer Beethoven apparently used to start each day with a cup of strong coffee made with exactly sixty coffee beans, which he insisted on counting out personally. And that's by no means the oddest ritual I discovered.

Obviously we don't all have to behave like that, but it does appear that routine is something most of us need. Most humans function better when they have some kind of structure to their lives. In fact, without routines for day-to-day activities, nothing much would get done. Transport wouldn't run on time, schools and workplaces would be in a permanent state of chaos, and so on.

So, society as a whole seems to favour, or even require, people with regular lifestyles. But there's a growing body of research suggesting that too much routine is bad for personal well-being, and it's this aspect that much of the book is concerned with. Breaking up your routine and doing something new, it appears, increases your happiness. It's not just a case of getting bored: routine also increases our sense of time passing by too quickly. When nothing new is happening, we're not so conscious of events and simply don't notice the days and weeks slipping away.

There's also an interesting connection between time and memory, or more exactly two kinds of connection. Firstly, a lot of what people accept as naturally increasing forgetfulness as they get older is actually more to do with their lives becoming predictable. It's not so much that they forget things that have happened but that they didn't really notice them in the first place because they'd become so automatic. The other thing that strikes a chord with me as I get older is the explanation for why childhood memories seem so vivid. When you're young, everything is new and your brain is working overtime to take everything in, so your impressions of events are much more memorable. What we need to do is to try and recapture that sense of newness by disrupting routines and actively seeking out new experiences.

Answer key – examiner checklist

Gist: Routine is beneficial to some extent. But it is important to break routine and try new things for happiness and memory (any broadly similar formulation acceptable).

- ▶ Successful people known to have routine, for example, Beethoven
- ▶ Not always healthy though – can become like a ritual
- ▶ Some routine is vital – transport, schools, etc
- ▶ Also, people seem to need some routine to give structure to lives
- ▶ Society needs people to have routine
- ▶ BUT – doing new things is important for happiness/well-being – it means time doesn't seem to pass so quickly
- ▶ Also, newness important for forming and maintaining memory – memory loss in older age can be due to predictability
- ▶ Conclusion? Speaker appears to conclude that a degree of routine is important for individuals and society as a whole but that it is very important to avoid becoming too predictable.