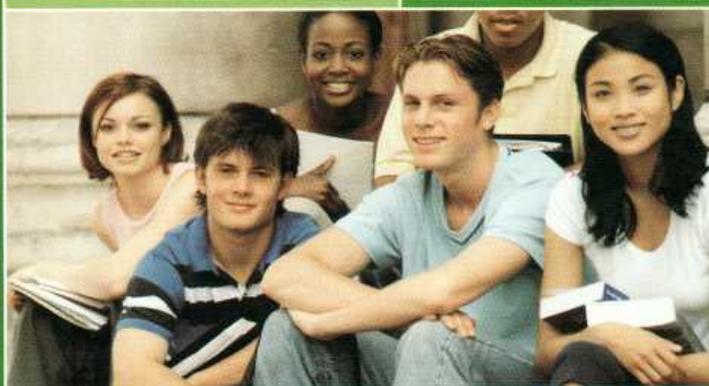


Intensive IELTS

Speaking

New Oriental Education & Technology Group
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I: And what kind of books do you like to read?

C: I like to read novels, all kinds of novels, especially those written by famous writers.

I: And do you have a favourite writer?



Well, in my view, climate probably has quite a lot to do with the way we design and build our houses. For instance, in countries where it snows a lot, we can easily find houses built with a steep roof so that snow can't settle on the roof, and you know, damage the roof.



NTV

Công ty TNHH
Nhân Trí Việt



NHÀ XUẤT BẢN TỔNG HỢP
THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

Intensive IELTS Speaking

New Oriental Education & Technology Group
IELTS Research Institute

NTV
Công ty TNHH
Nhân Trí Việt


NHÀ XUẤT BẢN TỔNG HỢP
THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

Intensive IELTS Speaking

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Published in Vietnam, 2014

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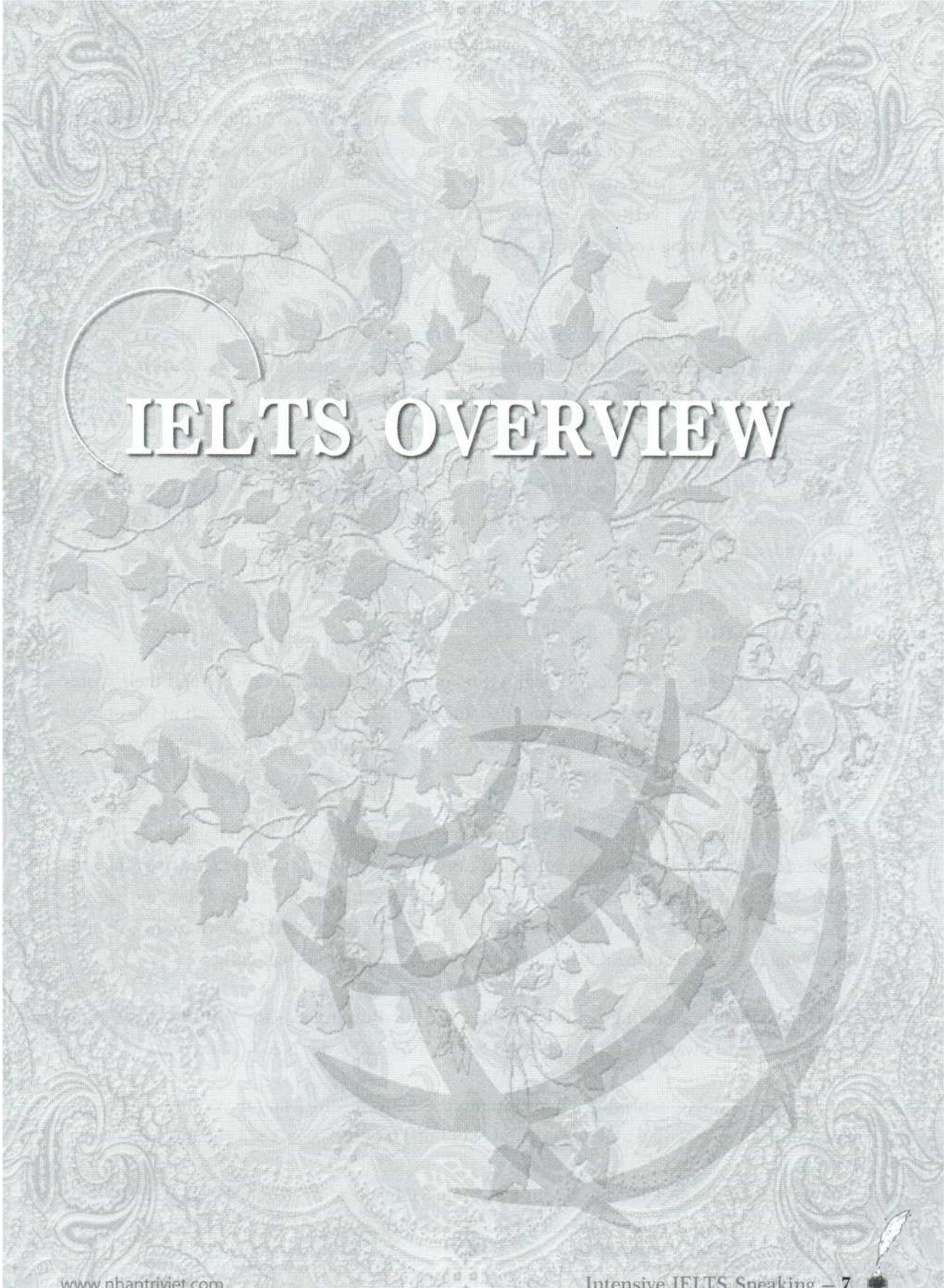
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IELTS OVERVIEW

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Intensive IELTS Speaking – 7 

Score processing, reporting, and interpretation

All IELTS marking takes place at the test centre by trained markers and examiners. Markers are trained to understand the IELTS marking policy and are required to demonstrate that they are marking to standard before they are allowed to mark Listening and Reading tests. Markers are retested every two years to ensure that their marking remains up to standard. Systematic monitoring and double marking of a proportion of answer sheets are carried out at each administration.

Examiners for the Writing and Speaking tests are recruited and trained in line with agreed standards. They are required to demonstrate that they are marking to standard every two years in addition to ongoing monitoring of their performance.

Candidates receive scores on a Band Scale from 1 to 9. A score is reported for each subtest. The four individual subtest scores are averaged and rounded to produce an Overall Band Score. The Overall Band Score and the four individual subtest scores are reported in whole or half band, e.g. 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0.

Overall Band Score

Candidates receive a Test Report Form setting out their Overall Band Score and their scores on each of the four subtests: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. Each of the subtest scores is equally weighted. The Overall Band Score is calculated by taking the mean of the total of the four individual subtest scores.

As mentioned earlier, the Overall Band Score is reported in whole or half band. For the avoidance of doubt, the following rounding convention applies: if the average across the four subtests ends in .25 or above, it is rounded up to the next half band; if it ends in .75 or above, it is rounded up to the next whole band; if it ends in .125, it is rounded down to the previous whole band; if it ends in .625, it is rounded down to the previous half band.

Thus, a candidate achieving 6.5 for Listening, 6.5 for Reading, 5.0 for Writing, and 7.0 for Speaking will be awarded an Overall Band Score of 6.5 ($25 \div 4 = 6.25 = \text{Band } 6.5$).

Likewise, a candidate achieving 4.0 for Listening, 3.5 for Reading, 4.0 for Writing, and 4.0 for Speaking will be awarded an Overall Band Score of 4.0 ($15.5 \div 4 = 3.875 = \text{Band } 4.0$).

Similarly, a candidate achieving 6.5 for Listening, 6.0 for Reading, 6.0 for Writing, and 6.0 for Speaking will be awarded an Overall Band Score of 6.0 ($24.5 \div 4 = 6.125 = \text{Band } 6.0$).



Listening and Reading

The IELTS Listening and Reading tests contain 40 questions, and each correct answer is awarded one mark; the maximum raw score a candidate can achieve on a test is 40. Band scores ranging from Band 1 to Band 9 are awarded to candidates on the basis of their raw scores.

Although all IELTS test materials are pretested and trialled before being released as actual tests, there are inevitably minor differences in the difficulty level across tests. In order to equate different test versions, the band score boundaries are set so that all candidates' results relate to the same scale of achievement. This means, for example, that the Band 6 boundary may be set at a slightly different raw score across versions.

The table below indicates the mean raw scores achieved by candidates at various levels in each of the Listening, Academic Reading, and General Training Reading tests, and it provides an indication of the number of marks required to achieve a particular band score.

Listening		Academic Reading		General Training Reading	
Band Score	Raw Score out of 40	Band Score	Raw Score out of 40	Band Score	Raw Score out of 40
5	16	5	15	4	15
6	23	6	23	5	23
7	30	7	30	6	30
8	35	8	35	7	34

The Academic and General Training modules are graded to the same scale. The distinction between the two modules is about genre or discourse types. The Academic module may contain source texts featuring more difficult vocabulary or greater complexity of style. It is usual that, to secure a given band score, a greater number of questions must be answered correctly on a General Training Reading test.

Writing and Speaking

When marking the Writing and Speaking tests, examiners use detailed performance descriptors which describe written and spoken performance at each of the 9 IELTS bands.



Writing

Examiners award a band score for each of the four criteria: Task Achievement (for Task 1) or Task Response (for Task 2), Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. The four criteria are equally weighted.

Speaking

Examiners award a band score for each of the four criteria: Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, and Pronunciation. The four criteria are equally weighted.



Chapter 1

IELTS Speaking Overview & Marking Criteria



I. Overview

The IELTS Speaking test is the same for both Academic and General Training modules. It is different from the other modules of the IELTS test because it is a one-to-one interaction between a candidate and an examiner. The three parts of the test aim at assessing the candidate's communication skill. In any actual test, the Speaking test is recorded.

The Speaking Test Format

Task	Time	Task description
Part 1 – Introduction and Interview	4–5 minutes	The examiner introduces himself or herself and confirms the candidate's identity by asking questions about the candidate. Next, the examiner asks the candidate several questions of familiar topics.
Part 2 – Individual Long Turn	3–4 minutes	The examiner asks the candidate to speak for 1–2 minutes on a particular topic. Information is given on a card and the candidate has 1 minute to prepare before he/she starts. The examiner asks one or two questions after the candidate's presentation.
Part 3 – Two-way Discussion	4–5 minutes	The examiner invites the candidate to participate in a discussion of a more abstract topic related to the topic on the card in Part 2.

1. Part 1

Part 1 involves a general introduction. Here, the examiner checks that he or she has the right person by confirming the candidate's name, origin, and identification. This part is also designed to help the candidate relax and it takes only a few seconds. The examiner may start with the following:



Good morning, my name is Andrew. Can you tell me your full name, please? Or:

What should I call you? Or:

OK, can I see your identification, please?

Then, the examiner will ask the candidate about familiar topics, such as studies or jobs, name, home town, family, as shown in the box below.

Your studies and job

Studies: subjects studied, why you're studying, things you like/dislike about your course, what qualification you will gain, etc.

Job: main responsibilities of job, things you like/dislike about it, etc.

Your name, family and home town

Name: who gave it to you, any special meaning, etc.

Family: family member, location and appearance of your family home, etc.

Home town: whereabouts, notable features, weather, etc.

You may also be asked about familiar topics in life, for example, free-time activities, language learning, future plans, etc.

- **Free-time activities:** hobbies and interests, shopping and fashion, reading, music and TV, sports and exercise, etc.
- **Culture:** holidays and festivals, birthday, wedding, food, punctuality, transport, etc.
- **Language learning:** how long, most difficult aspect of language learning, etc.

2. Part 2

Part 2 is the individual long turn talk. It provides an opportunity for the candidate to deliver a long, uninterrupted response. The examiner will give the candidate a cue card with a subject such as education, family, work, interests, and lifestyle and some cues or a few guiding questions on the card. These questions are short and the structure of the questions is simple.



TOPIC CARD

Describe a teacher who has greatly influenced you in your education.

You should say

who the teacher is

what subject he / she taught

what was special about him / her

and explain why the teacher influenced you so much.

The candidate is provided with a piece of paper and a pencil in order to make some brief notes for his or her talk.

Possible notes

Mr. Le Nam
sports
nice
national volleyball team
encourage students
interested in everyone
never give up

The candidate must talk for 1 to 2 minutes on this topic. He or she is expected to demonstrate an ability to construct a long sample of English of about 200 words. The examiner will evaluate the candidate's fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range, and pronunciation.

The teacher that really influenced me a lot was Mr. Le Nam. He was the sports teacher when I was in high school.

He was in his thirties at that time and I'd say all my classmates admired him because he was kind of a hero to us and also because he was very nice. As far as I can remember, one thing that was special about him was that he'd been on the national volleyball team. I don't think he ever actually won a medal or anything like that. But for us, just the fact that he used to represent our country was really something. Actually, he was a very good teacher, very responsible and dedicated, you know.



I guess the thing he taught me was to have a fighting spirit. I mean he always encouraged us to do our best in sport, even if we were terrible at it. He used to say "It doesn't matter if you win or not. The important thing is to do your best and keep going." He also taught us a lot about health and maintaining a positive attitude towards life. And compared to other teachers, he seemed to be more interested in everyone. Luckily, we still keep in touch and I often go to see him on holidays.

After the candidate's talk, the examiner will ask 1 or 2 brief questions in order to finish off this part, which takes about 3–4 minutes.

Possible questions:

- a. Do your classmates like Mr. Le, too?
- b. How much time did you spend on sports classes every week in high school?

Common topics

- **People:** family members, friends, film stars, sports stars, neighbours, teachers, a happy/successful person, children, a character in a TV programme or a film, etc.
- **Places:** rooms and buildings, a place you would like to visit, a natural place, a lake or a river, a shop, a supermarket, a garden or a park, etc.
- **Objects & Animals:** a gift, an old object, an expensive thing you want to buy, a vehicle you want to have, a card or a letter, a photo, a toy, an animal, a book, etc.
- **Culture & Education:** a way to relax, a special meal, a dish, a sport, a TV programme, a film, an advertisement, a website, a subject, newspapers or magazines, a wedding, important changes, a story you heard when you were a child, a cultural difference, etc.
- **Events:** sporting events, family events, a long-distance trip, happy events in your childhood, a project you finished with others, an exhibition, the first day in school/at work, etc.



3. Part 3

Part 3 is the most complex testing part. Here, the examiner will prompt and lead the candidate to a series of questions on the topic spoken about in Part 2. For example, in Part 2, you have described a favourite teacher and in Part 3, you will possibly talk about education in your country.

Possible questions:

- a. How has education changed in your country in the last 10 years?
- b. What changes do you foresee in the next 50 years?

Some other Part 2-related questions may be:

- How do the expectations of today's school graduates compare with those of the previous generation?
- How beneficial do you think it is to group students according to their level of ability?
- What can be done to solve the problems in your education system you mentioned just now?
- What qualities are required of a good teacher?

These questions are usually more demanding and require some critical analysis on the part of the candidate who will be scored on how effectively he / she can develop the abstract ideas on the IELTS Speaking test.

The examiner is still in control but allows the candidate to produce long utterances or discuss the questions. These questions and discussions may take 4 or 5 minutes.

Some common questions in Part 3 may be classified into the following topics:

- computers' effects, communication tools, Internet
- preserving traditions (architecture, handicraft, festivals, cooking, etc.)
the importance of cultural events
- education
environment, wildlife conservation, pollution
public transport



celebrities' role in society
the ethics and qualities of journalism
advertising
TV's effects on children and family
censorship

- family, generation gap, friendship
human nature (happiness, etc.), older people and children
gender differences



II. Marking Criteria

When assessing a candidate's oral skill, the examiner will use detailed performance descriptors based on the four criteria below:

1. Fluency and Coherence

Fluency refers to the way a candidate communicates in English. It doesn't mean the faster the candidate speaks, the better. Fluency means a steady flow of speech. Another key issue is how well ideas are put together and what kind of structures are used to connect one idea or one sentence to another.

2. Lexical Resource

Lexical resources refer to the vocabulary the candidate uses. The interviewer will see if the candidate uses limited or a wide range of vocabulary in his/her speech and if he/she uses the words in the correct way or not. The interviewer also examines the flexibility and variety of the candidate's vocabulary, i.e. if he/she has different choices of words to use or has to repeat the same limited number of words from time to time.

3. Grammatical Range and Accuracy

The interviewer will be looking to see if the candidate uses English grammar properly in speech. Does he/she use the correct tense when talking about things in different time? The interviewer will also examine the variety of sentence patterns the candidate uses, i.e. if the candidate demonstrates the ability of using both simple and complex sentence structures.

4. Pronunciation

The interviewer will see if the candidate speaks with reasonably understandable English pronunciation and how close his/her pronunciation, intonation and rhythms are to those of a native speaker of English.



IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and Coherence	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features develops topics fully and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech 	
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language develops topics coherently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully with occasional inaccuracies uses paraphrase effectively as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures flexibly produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic / non-systematic errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is easy to understand throughout, with L1 accent having minimal effect on intelligibility uses a wide range of phonological features to convey meaning effectively
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation with some inappropriate choices uses paraphrase effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist 	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies generally paraphrases successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can be understood throughout, though mispronunciation may occasionally cause momentary strain for the listener

IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors (public version)

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice rarely attempts paraphrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces some acceptable features of English pronunciation but overall control is limited and there can be severe strain for the listener
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks with long pauses has limited ability to link simple sentences gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pauses lengthily before most words little communication possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only produces isolated words or memorised utterances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot produce basic sentence forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speech is often unintelligible
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no communication possible no rateable language 			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not attend 			





Chapter 2

Common Speaking Shortcomings & Preparation





I. Common Speaking Shortcomings

1. Giving short answers

Unprepared candidates tend to answer with *Yes* or *No* only or other similar one-word answers. In this way, they cannot convince the examiner of their ability of English.

2. Using broad generalisations

Some candidates give too many broad generalisations when giving answers. Also, some others frequently use the expression *such as* when listing, which both takes time and expresses nonsense.

3. Talking about complex subjects

When giving answers, some candidates may try to express ideas or concepts that they do not really understand.

4. Getting stuck on vocabulary

Candidates may often get stuck on vocabulary but they are not able to describe what they mean by using a phrase or a sentence to express themselves.

5. Giving rote answers

This is the most common problem examiners usually encounter in the IELTS Speaking test.

Certain candidates memorise set responses which will make them sound false and as if they are making a speech.

6. Using incorrect tenses or personal pronouns

Incorrect tenses or confusing personal pronouns are often used by candidates during the test.



7. Paying too much attention to grammar and pronunciation

Many non-native speakers attending an IELTS interview are worried very much about making mistakes in their grammar and pronunciation, so they cannot communicate effectively though the examiner will, after all, expect some mistakes as English is their foreign language and people naturally make mistakes or errors.

II. Preparation

Before the intended test day

Many learners preparing for the IELTS Speaking test worry how they can achieve their goal. The best way and also the only way is to do plenty of practice before the actual test. Below are some suggestions you should follow.

1. Enhance your English communication skill

You should try to enhance your communication skill in the following ways.

i. Expose yourself to everyday topics as often discussed in newspapers or on radio and TV programmes. Make it your habit to read newspaper and magazine articles, particularly those that discuss issues and contain arguments and opinions. Also, listen to radio discussions and watch interviews on current affairs programmes on the television. Not only does this give you some excellent listening practice, but it will build your background knowledge for the issues that may come up in both the Speaking and the Writing tests. Choose an issue. Record all the vocabulary you will need to discuss that issue – note words raised in the news articles or programmes (TV, radio, newspapers). Try to do one of these every day. When you consider an issue, decide what would be your position on the issue, especially the steps you will need to take to reach your desired position and how you would overcome any possible problems in discussing it. Be prepared to use descriptive and comparative language. Also, practise using conditional sentences to discuss, for instance, hypothetical issues from a broad or world view.

ii. Get a friend to ask you the questions and practise giving long, full answers. Do this again and again. It does not matter if you do the same question frequently, as you will give better and better answers with more and more information. The more often you practise this, the better you will get.



iii. If you do not have a friend who can do this, then you can do it by yourself. You just look at your list and imagine that someone has asked you the question. Then, off you go. You can do this at home: you can talk to the cat, the mirror, or do it on the way driving to work. It may feel a bit strange at first (talking by yourself), but it works and you will improve. You do not have to do either method i or ii, you can mix both. It all helps.

On the test day

Below are some suggestions you should apply on your test day.

1. Look your best

Although people are not supposed to ‘judge the book by its cover’, some people unconsciously tend to do that. If you do not look credible enough, they may not even start listening to what you have to say. You do not need to wear gowns or tuxedos, but simply wear clothes fit for the occasion. Your clothes should be neat and free of wrinkles, not too loud that people would rather stare at it than you. You should be pleasant-looking, not only paying attention to your clothes but your faces and gestures as well.

2. Be humble

You should admit it when you make a mistake during your talk and apologise for that mistake. There are times you may forget a certain term. Instead of pausing for a long time or using a word you are not sure of, it is better to ask your examiner. Examiners would appreciate your humility and even relate to you more because they know you are just like them, a human capable of making mistakes and forgetting things.

3. Be self-confident

It is understandable that you will be under considerable tension created by the examination situation. Almost everyone is nervous when they speak in public or in testing situations. High levels of anxiety can, in fact, affect a candidate’s performance. However, much of this anxiety can be overcome by good preparation, familiarity with test details and a positive attitude. You should believe in what you are saying. If you do not sound convinced by what you say, you cannot expect anyone to believe it. It is important that you are relaxed when taking this test. Nevertheless, take a deep breath and try to look self-assured. The examiner is trying to assess your language communication capabilities. He/She will not be able to assess you unless you speak up.

As this is a face-to-face interview, you should also show positive body language and a confident posture.



4. Relax and speak as confidently as you can

Candidates who are not able to participate fully in the conversation may not achieve their potential band score. This may be because they have not been able to demonstrate the level of language they are capable of producing.

Maintain eye contact with the examiner. Although theoretically you could speak great English with your head down, the fact is you may not come across as confident. Although there is no mark for confidence, you need to present yourself in as positive ways as possible.

5. Use hesitation devices

The most important thing which will help you in the Speaking test is to use English in everyday conversations. While waiting for collecting ideas to express yourself, you may use some useful “fluency fillers” below.

1. **I mean, you know, you see, what I mean is that** used to explain what you have just mentioned

Example:

We are wasting our time. I mean/You know/You see/What I mean is that we spend most our time not living in the moment. We are either regretting the past or worrying about the future.

2. **By the way, talking of, speaking of** used to introduce a new point or to change the topic you are speaking about

Examples:

My mother does most of the cooking at home. She cooks really delicious food. By the way, my favourite food is hot pot.

My favourite month of the year is September, with the blue sky, fresh air and many holidays. Speaking of holidays, Christmas is coming.

3. **Anyway, anyhow** used to come back to a certain point you have previously mentioned

Example: *Anyway, to answer your last question, I do love classical music.*

4. **As far as I know, as far as I can see, as far as I'm concerned** used to show your own viewpoint

Example: *A lot has been lost and, as far as I can see, little has been gained.*



6. Use correct tenses, a variety of grammatical structures, and linking devices

When giving answers, you should try to use various tenses that are accurate. In addition, compound and complex sentences employed correctly will be highly evaluated. Lastly, do not forget to add appropriate linking devices to make your talk sound coherent and natural.

7. Expand on topics

Most questions will be open questions rather than closed questions. An open question gives the candidate a chance to give an extended answer. You, hence, make use of this opportunity to show how good your English is. Try and give as full an answer as you can so that you show the examiner that you are comfortable at talking at length and can communicate well. Without your talking input, the examiner cannot grade you very well.

Part 1 Tips

Part 1 is known as **Introduction and Interview**, which lasts 4–5 minutes. Firstly, the examiner will greet you and then introduce himself or herself and check your identity. Next, the examiner will ask some simple ‘getting-to-know-you’ questions which will help him or her not only to find out a little about you but also to help put you at ease. You should bear in mind that the best way to take the Speaking test is to be relaxed and speak naturally. Importantly, giving full, relevant answers to the examiner’s questions at this phase will create a good start for your Speaking test.

The following tips will greatly help you.

1. Avoid giving short, uncommunicative replies to closed questions

Most questions in this part will be open questions rather than closed questions. But if the examiner asks you closed questions (namely, questions beginning with *Have you ...*, *Do you ...*, *Is it ...*, etc. and generally answered by a single word, a *Yes* or *No*, or a couple-of-words answer), remember to give a direct answer and then expand it.

Examples:

Q: *Where are you from?*

A: *I'm from Ho Chi Minh City. (Don't stop here. Go on speaking!) It's the biggest city in the south of Vietnam. It's not only a modern city but also has a lot of history. In fact, it's a lovely place to live.*



Q: *Have you visited any English speaking countries?*

A: *Yes. (Don't stop here. Go on speaking!) I went to England last year and spent two weeks seeing the sights. A couple of years ago, I went to Singapore with my parents and had a great time.*

Q: *Do you play any sports?*

A: *No. (Don't stop here. Go on speaking!) I'm not really interested in playing sports. I like watching sport on TV and I really enjoyed keeping up with the Olympics recently.*

However, do not just ramble on in order to keep talking. You need to be coherent and able to take turns.

2. Offer examples to help you to explain a statement

An open question gives a chance for a candidate to give an extended answer, so give more information by describing and explaining.

Example:

Q: *Why are you preparing for the IELTS test?*

A: *Because I need it for my studies. (Don't stop here. Go on speaking!) I've been offered a place at a university in England to do an MBA and I need to show my level of English.*

Q: *Can you tell me about your family?*

With this question, you have to give an extended answer, and of course, the examiner hears plenty of English which will help him or her to evaluate you. So, make good use of the opportunity to show your command of English.

3. Respond naturally to some "social English"

A certain examiner may say something which seems to help you to feel relaxed. You, therefore, should not be confused but try to respond naturally and appropriately.

Examples:

Q: *How did you come here today?*

A: *I came here by bus/taxi/bicycle.*

Q: *It's a nice day today, isn't it?*

A: *Yes, it is. It's the best season of the year.*

Q: *Your T-shirt looks beautiful!*

A: *Thanks. This is my favourite one.*



Part 2 Tips

Part 2 is called **Long Turn**, which lasts between 3 and 4 minutes (including 1 minute's preparation time). The examiner gives you a topic card and you have to speak about the topic without interruption for between 1 and 2 minutes.

Topic cards

Example 1

Describe your favourite type of weather.

You should say

- what the type of weather is
- how often you experience this type of weather
- what you like doing in this weather

and explain why it is your favourite type of weather.

Example 2

Talk about something you use to help you in your studies.

You should say

- what it looks like
- what it does
- how often you use this object

and explain why it is important to you.

The following tips will greatly help you.

1. Use your 1 minute's preparation time wisely and make notes of the points you would like to make
2. Organise your talk

Your talk should be well organised. Typically, for the second topic card above, the introduction will include the object itself and maybe a brief description. The main body of your talk should describe its functions. Then, you should go on to talk about how often you use it. You can then end with an explanation of why the object is so important.



3. Try to avoid giving a very dry, unimaginative introduction

You should not start by saying something unimaginative, such as *The object I'm going to describe is ...* Do use a memorable start, for example: *If I was about to lose everything and could only save one thing, it would be my ...*, or *I've got several things that mean a lot to me, but the one that really stands out is my ...*

4. Expand your answers

You should say as much as you can about the points given in the topic card so that you can fill up your one or two minutes' talk.

Notes

- If you are concerned about not having enough to talk about for 1 to 2 minutes or running out of time before you have finished, you have to practise as often as possible. Time yourself and ask a friend for feedback.
- One of the things you must do in both parts of the Speaking test is to employ a wide range of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

Part 3 Tips

Part 3 is called **Discussion**, which lasts between 4 and 5 minutes. It is the most complex testing part. In this part, the examiner will prompt and lead the candidate to a series of questions on the topic spoken about in Part 2. These questions will be more demanding and require some critical analysis on the part of the candidate. You will be scored on how effectively you can develop the abstract ideas on the IELTS Speaking test.

Note that in Part 1 of the test, questions cannot be changed or reworded. In Part 3, there is more flexibility. If you do not understand a word in the question, or the question itself, it is possible for you to ask for repetition or clarification.

Your final score may mostly be decided by your performance in this part. Thus, do as best as possible without trying too hard or getting yourself into problems.



You will certainly impress the examiner if you apply some useful tips below:

1. Do not repeat what you have talked about in Part 2 since the questions in Part 2 relate more to your personal experience while Part 3 requires more general, extended, or in-depth responses.
2. Develop language that is appropriate for the task. For example, employing phrases such as *similar to* or *different from* are useful for a comparison and contrast topic.
3. If you need time to collect your thoughts, use expressions like *That's a good question, Well, let me think ...*
4. Do avoid answers with only *Yes/No*. Try to come up with complete answers, offer examples to back up a certain statement, or expand your ideas as much as you can.
5. If the examiner asks a question that you do not understand, take control of the situation with questions such as those that appear below. Responding like this will show evidence of your communication skills.
 - a) If the examiner uses a word or phrase that you do not understand, say something like:
Sorry, but could you explain what you mean by ...?
I haven't come across that word/expression before. Could you explain what you mean?
 - b) If you simply did not hear something that was asked, respond with:
Excuse me, I didn't quite catch that. Could you say that again?
I'm sorry, but would you mind repeating that?
 - c) If you want to make sure you have understood what the examiner has asked, you could say:
Do you mean ...?
When you say ...?
Are you asking ...?
6. Do not memorise answers in preparation for the test. The examiner will hear that you are not speaking naturally and will change the topic.
7. Use a wide range of lexis and structures in your talk as this is one of the major marking criteria.
8. Maintain eye contact with the examiner. You need to present yourself in a confident way by looking directly into his/her eyes.





Chapter 3

Typical Questions in Parts 1, 2, and 3 & Suggested Answers



I. Part 1 Typical Questions

Confirmation

1. Good morning, my name is Jake. Could you tell me your full name, please?
2. And what shall I call you?
3. Can I see your identification, please?
4. Does your name have any special meaning?
5. Do you work or are you a student?

Topics

Studies

6. What is your major?
7. Why did you choose your major?
8. How do you like your major?
9. What do you like most about your studies?
10. Is there anything you don't like about your studies?
11. How do you like your life in the university?
12. Is your university a good place to study in?
13. What do you think of the training you got in the university?
14. How was your high school experience?

Work

15. Where do you work?
16. When do you go to work every day?
17. How do you get to work?
18. What do you do for a living?
19. What are some of your responsibilities? I mean, what does your job involve?
20. Tell me about a typical day at work. What do you do on a daily basis?
21. How do you like your job?



22. What do you like most about your job?
23. Is there anything you don't like about your job?
24. Which part of the day do you like best?
25. What made you decide to get into this field?

Home Town

26. Whereabouts is your home town?
27. Let's talk about your home town or village. What kind of place is it?
28. Could you tell me something about your home town?
29. What kinds of landscape are there in your home town?
30. What are the main tourist attractions in your home town?
31. What are the people like in your home town?
32. What place in your home town do you like best and tell me why?
33. What places in your home town might a visitor be interested in visiting, and tell me why?
34. Do you think your home town is a good place for a young person to live?
35. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in your home town?

Accommodation

36. Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in.
37. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the kind of housing you live in?
38. Which do you prefer, a flat or a house?
39. Which floor do you live on, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of living on that floor?

Family

40. Can you tell me something about your family?
41. What do your family members do for a living?
42. What do you and your family like to do together?
43. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of big families?



Hobbies and Spare Time

44. What kind of hobbies do you have?
45. How did you become interested in your hobby?
46. What do you do in your spare time?
47. Do you like to be with a group of people or alone when you're free?
48. How do you spend your weekends?
49. How do you spend your free time?
50. What kinds of things do you like doing when you're not working?
51. Do you like doing these things with a group of friends or by yourself?

Reading

52. What kinds of books do you like to read in your spare time?
53. Do you like reading books and newspapers?
54. Where do you like to read books?
55. Do you discuss the books you read with friends?
56. Is reading popular in your country with young people?

Sports

57. What is your favourite sport?
58. Why do you like it so much?
59. What sports are played in your country?
60. What is the most popular sport in your country?
61. What are the sports facilities like in your home town?

Films and TV

62. Do you often go to the cinema/theatre?
63. Which cinema do you often go to?
64. Do you prefer to watch films in the cinema or at home?
65. Do you like to watch alone or with your friends?
66. What kind of films do you like?
67. Who's your favourite film star? Can you describe him/her to me?
68. Do you often watch TV? What's your favourite programme?



Music

69. How often do you listen to music?
70. What kind of music do you like?

Clothing

71. What kind of clothing do you like best?
72. What kind of clothing is popular in Vietnam?
73. What kind of clothing do children usually wear?
74. What does traditional clothing in Vietnam look like?
75. How do older people feel about younger people's clothing?

Future Plan

76. What sort of accommodation would you most like to live in when you get to England?
77. What problems or difficulties do you think you may have in Britain/Canada/Australia?
78. Can you imagine what life in Britain/Canada/Australia will be like?
79. What do you want/intend to study?
80. Which university are you going to study at?
81. Why did you choose this university?
82. What are your plans in Britain/Canada/Australia/New Zealand?
83. What are you going to major in?
84. What kind of differences in the cultures are you expecting between Vietnam and New Zealand?
85. What do you intend to do after you graduate?
86. Are there any special places you want to see in Canada? What are they?
87. What kind of things do you want to do in Canada that you can't do here?
88. What are your goals in life?

Foreign Language Studies

89. How long have you been studying English?
90. Do you think English is important for Vietnam?
91. What do you think of English?



92. What is most rewarding about learning a foreign language?
93. What do you think is the best way to study English?
94. What aspect of English do you find the most difficult?

Weather

95. What is the climate like in your home town?
96. What is the weather like in Hanoi?
97. How would you compare the climate in your home town with other cities?
98. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the weather in your home town?
99. What is your favourite type of weather in your home town?

Food

100. What kind of food and dishes do people eat in your home town?
101. What is the main food in Vietnam?
102. In what ways has the diet of people in your country been changing?
103. How has your diet changed?

Festival

104. Tell me about the biggest traditional festival in your country./What's the biggest traditional festival in your country?
105. What do you do during the Tet holiday?
106. Can you describe one of the main festivals celebrated in your country?

Changes

107. What changes have taken place in your home town in the last 20 years?
108. Has your life changed in the last 10 years, and if so, in what ways?
109. Is there anything you'd like to change in your life?
110. How different is your life from the lives of your parents?
111. Has tourism changed Vietnam very much?
112. Has the transport changed over the past 20 years in Vietnam?



Travel and Holiday

- 113. Do you enjoy travelling?
- 114. What do you usually do on your holidays?
- 115. Is there anywhere you would particularly like to visit on your holidays? Where and why?
- 116. Let's talk a little about travelling and transport. For a long trip, how do you prefer to travel?

Transport

- 117. Which type of transport do you usually use in your home town?
- 118. Which type of transport do you prefer for travelling long distances?
- 119. What's the traffic situation like in your home town?

Buildings

- 120. Does your home town have a lot of modern buildings or are they mostly traditional?
- 121. Which buildings do you prefer to look at?
- 122. Could you describe the traditional architecture of your country?

Birthday

- 123. How important are birthdays in your country?
- 124. How do Vietnamese people celebrate their birthdays?
- 125. Do you like to celebrate your birthday with your parents or with your friends?
- 126. What do children get for their birthdays in your country?
- 127. Which is the most important birthday for a Vietnamese?



► Questions & Suggested Answers

Confirmation

1. *Good morning, my name is Jake. Could you tell me your full name, please?*

My full name is _____.

2. *And what shall I call you?*

Most people call me _____.

3. *Can I see your identification, please?*

Yes, here is my identification.

4. *Does your name have any special meaning?*

Yes, my name does have some special meaning. My first name means “peace”. My English name was given to me by one of my high school teachers, and it does not have any special meaning really.

5. *Do you work or are you a student?*

a. I’m a student. I’m doing computer science at the National University.

b. I work for a large European car maker. I work on car design. In fact, I run the Design Department.

Studies

6. *What is your major?*

I major in Accounting, which is part of the School of Business at my university. I mainly study the international accounting system as it relates to foreign trade.

7. *Why did you choose your major?*

Because I’ve always enjoyed working with computers, and I was always good at maths. I was fortunate to have a computer in my home when I was in high school, and I spent quite a lot of time just playing around on the computer. My parents bought me all sorts of books on computer programming, and I just started to read them and pick up the ideas in them.



8. *How do you like your major?*

- a. I enjoy it, actually. I didn't know that much about it before I studied it, but I'm glad I chose it because it suits me a lot. My father actually suggested that I major in Accounting, because he thought that I'd enjoy it, too.
- b. I don't like it at all. I wish I could switch to a different one, but it's next to impossible to change majors. I just hope that when I get a job, I won't have to do a lot of work related to my major.

9. *What do you like most about your studies?*

I just like learning the principles, and I like solving problems successfully. I also like getting to know my classmates and working with them.

10. *Is there anything you don't like about your studies?*

Generally, I like my subjects, but I hate the examination system. There are too many examinations, and most of the time we have to memorize lots of things in books. I'm not very good at that and I find it's a waste of time and energy. Other than that, I quite enjoy my time at school.

11. *How do you like your life in the university?*

- a. I don't like it very much. The dormitory's very crowded, the food is tasteless and my teachers aren't very inspiring. When I was a high school student, I was looking forward to university life so much. I'm quite disappointed because it's really not what I expected.
- b. I like it a lot. Sometimes it is a little hard to live in the university, but I have made many good friends and I enjoy my major. It was hard at first to live apart from my parents, but I think that it has been a good change for me. I am much more independent and more able to deal with troubles on my own. My courses are mostly interesting too, so I'm glad that I chose the major I did.

12. *Is your university a good place to study in?*

Oh, sure. The university is quite a prestigious one, famous for its teaching quality. But what I like best is the library, which is said to have the biggest collection of books on horticulture. I can always find something exciting when I study in the library.

13. *What do you think of the training you got in the university?*

- a. I think most of my courses will be helpful in the future. My university has tried very hard to keep up to date with the latest developments in our field. There were some compulsory classes that I didn't like, such as politics and history, but overall, I think



I was provided with a pretty good education. I don't think it's possible to learn everything you need to know about a future career, but I'm satisfied my courses have given me a good start.

- b. I don't think it was very good. There were some compulsory classes that I had no interest in. Also, our facilities were not very modern, so there were many things we couldn't do.

14. *How was your high school experience?*

- a. I had a good high school experience because I was at a good school, and I made so many good friends there. I think I was lucky to have good teachers.
- b. I think my high school experience was not a happy one because I seemed to always be under a lot of pressure, and for some reason I always seemed to have bad luck. When I got to university, my luck started to improve.

Work

15. *Where do you work?*

I work in the main office of FPT Software Company. It's located in the E-town building, Tan Binh District, Ho Chi Minh City. I've been working there since 2000.

16. *When do you go to work every day?*

I am required to get to work at 8:00 o'clock, but sometimes I get there at 7:30 o'clock, or even earlier.

17. *How do you get to work?*

I drive a car. I own a Toyota, and each morning I have to fight through the traffic. Sometimes I wonder if having a car is really worth it.

18. *What do you do for a living?*

I'm an engineer. But my day-to-day work involves quite a lot of management. In fact, I'm in charge of software development and maintenance, and have a dozen or so engineers working under me to handle the technical side of the work.

19. *What are some of your responsibilities? I mean, what does your job involve?*

I'm a sales manager. I'm in charge of overseeing sales operations for all over Ho Chi Minh City. I have about 20 employees under me who are the regional sales representatives.



20. *Tell me about a typical day at work. What do you do on a daily basis?*

Most of the time, I sit behind a desk and answer phone calls. It's not a very active job, but I do enjoy it, except when I get a phone call from a very angry customer. Sometimes, they just want to shout at someone, and because I'm the first one to answer the phone, I get the full vent of their anger.

21. *How do you like your job?*

I enjoy it very much. It does have its ups and downs, but really it's quite a good job. I enjoy the people I work with too, which really can make or break a job. We work very well together and can trust each other to do our fair share.

22. *What do you like most about your job?*

- a. My job is challenging and interesting, and I think that the best thing about it is the satisfaction I get from solving problems. Each time I manage to make things go smoothly, I get a great sense of satisfaction.
- b. I guess I like the pay. I know that sounds cold, but in fact my job is very routine and so I just feel that at least the pay gives me some satisfaction.

23. *Is there anything you don't like about your job?*

- a. I think the worst part of the job is all the unnecessary bureaucracy that exists to do everything. I just wish that there could be simpler routines and not so many steps to everything.
- b. I think the worst part of my job is the long hours that I'm sometimes required to work. In my opinion, it should be redesigned so that I can be allowed to go home on time every night.

24. *Which part of the day do you like best?*

Going home from work! Well, actually, I should say stepping into my flat and greeting my baby daughter, who is now about 2 years old.

25. *What made you decide to get into this field?*

I didn't really plan to be a teacher at first, but my parents encouraged me to go into teaching. At first I really hated it, but after a while, I got used to standing in front of a room full of students. I enjoyed my classes and the challenges of teaching, so that's when I knew that teaching was the right profession for me.



38. *Which do you prefer, a flat or a house?*

Well, it depends on the condition that they are in. I'd probably have to say a flat, because you don't have to worry so much about maintaining it.

39. *Which floor do you live on, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of living on that floor?*

I live on the 1st floor. The advantage is that it's easier to get to, because you don't have to climb any steps. The bad thing is that it's a bit noisy, although we don't have to put up with too much noise from downstairs, since there is no downstairs.

Family

40. *Can you tell me something about your family?*

I have three brothers and no sisters. Both of my parents are still alive, and are still working. My grandparents on my father's side are both alive too, though my mother's parents have already passed away. I am also married. I got married two years ago.

41. *What do your family members do for a living?*

My father's retired, and my mother's still working as a nurse at Trung Vuong Hospital. My father used to be a city inspector. I have no brothers and sisters.

42. *What do you and your family like to do together?*

I guess we mainly just talk about a lot of things and then watch TV together. My parents and I like to visit people together. Sometimes, we go shopping together, but to tell you the truth, I prefer doing that by myself.

43. *What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of big families?*

Well, big families are probably good for children, because there are so many people to play with. But I think that big families also create a large burden for parents and it's difficult for each child to receive the attention he or she deserves.

Hobbies and Spare Time

44. *What kind of hobbies do you have?*

I'm a big football fan, even though I'm not very good at playing football myself. I love to watch the Arsenal on TV whenever I get a chance. I also play ping-pong and volleyball whenever I can.



45. *How did you become interested in your hobby?*

Since I was young, my father has always involved me in different activities. My father is a ping-pong coach in a high school. So, I always have a chance to follow him when he coached. When I was in the school, I got a chance to play with other students in other sports. So, that's how I developed an interest in different sports.

46. *What do you do in your spare time?*

I like to play on the computer and surf the Internet. Once I get on the Internet, I find that time really passes very quickly. Before I realise this, several hours have passed and my back and neck are aching. I also like to go for walks and read novels.

47. *Do you like to be with a group of people or alone when you're free?*

I like being with a group of people. It's livelier and I feel more at ease, especially when I feel that my friends are also having a good time.

48. *How do you spend your weekends?*

I usually sleep in on Saturday morning if I can, study in the afternoon in the library, and go out with friends in the evening. On Sundays, I like to go shopping and just spend time walking around outside if the weather is nice. If I don't have much money, I still like to go window-shopping, and I get almost as much pleasure out of that!

49. *How do you spend your free time?*

I attend training courses in the evenings. However, as a mother, I also take my son somewhere on the weekend. For example, I may drive to the suburbs or the countryside around Ho Chi Minh City and go fishing, swimming or mountain climbing. I enjoy family life very much.

50. *What kinds of things do you like doing when you're not working?*

I'm kind of an indoor type of person, so I like reading most. I'm interested in reading all kinds of books and newspaper or magazine articles, especially those on current issues. I just want to be informed of what's going on in the world.

51. *Do you like doing these things with a group of friends or by yourself?*

I prefer being with my friends and family. I'm kind of an outdoor type. I like to go swimming or play badminton with my family or friends during weekends or holidays. If I have a longer vacation, I usually travel to further away places all over the country.



Home Town

26. *Whereabouts is your home town?*

Da Lat, a popular tourist destination. It is located in Lam Dong province.

27. *Let's talk about your home town or village. What kind of place is it?*

My home town's a small place, just outside Ho Chi Minh City. It takes about an hour to get there. The people there are mostly farmers, but a lot of young people work in Ho Chi Minh City. It's a quiet place and I like it.

28. *Could you tell me something about your home town?*

a. Well, it's quite big and it's the capital of Vietnam. The population's about 7 million and it's famous for its historic sites, especially for the Vietnam War. The city will host the 2019 Asian Games.

b. Okay. Well, my home town is Ho Chi Minh City and I live in District 3, about 3 kilometres from the city centre. As you probably know, Ho Chi Minh City is the political and cultural centre of Vietnam, and it's quite a historical place as well. It's huge – about 8 million people live in it now – and it seems to be getting bigger every year.

29. *What kinds of landscape are there in your home town?*

a. Hanoi is located on the right bank of the Red River. It has several scenic lakes. Also, the Old Quarter has the original street layout and architecture of old Hanoi.

b. Nha Trang's a coastal city, so the main landscapes are the beaches and bays. There are also some nice hills nearby.

30. *What are the main tourist attractions in your home town?*

The Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and the One-Pillar Pagoda are among the tourist attractions. These are the two that are most well known. They are also symbols of Hanoi. They attract most visitors, but there are quite a lot of other famous sites as well.

31. *What are the people like in your home town?*

They're usually very friendly, but a bit conservative. People still hold onto a lot of old customs and traditions, which is what I mean by conservative. But I think people there are very hospitable and kind. If you ask someone for directions, they'll always try to help you out, or find someone else who can.



32. *What place in your home town do you like best and tell me why?*

I like the Hoan Kiem Lake, known as the Sword Lake, best because it's very beautiful. It is one of the major scenic spots in the city and serves as a focal point for its public life. In the early morning, it's very peaceful. The older people practise their Tai chi, while the younger people just run around and play. I like it a lot.

33. *What places in your home town might a visitor be interested in visiting, and tell me why?*

I'd recommend the Old Quarter, the Temple of Literature, and the One-Pillar Pagoda. Those are the most famous places in the city, and I think they best represent Hanoi.

34. *Do you think your home town is a good place for a young person to live?*

- a. Yes I do, because it's got a lot of opportunities and the entertainment facilities are quite good. You can get a decent job here if you have some skills, and you can make a lot of good friends if you have a good personality.
- b. No, I think if you're young, you'd be better off going to a bigger city with more opportunities. In my opinion, my home town is more suitable for an older crowd, who enjoy a more peaceful life. Younger people get bored with the way things are here.

35. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in your home town?*

I think the biggest advantage is that it's a place where you can find a good job with a good salary, if you try very hard. Also, the people are quite kind and generous. The main disadvantages are the traffic and pollution problems. If you stay in my home town, you will know that these are the two things that everyone here does not like.

Accommodation

36. *Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in.*

I live in a two-bedroom apartment with my parents. The apartment's not big, but we've made it very comfortable to live in. We live on the third floor, and there's no lift in our apartment. The highest floor is the sixth floor, so whoever living on the sixth floor has to climb up and down every day.

37. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of the kind of housing you live in?*

Let me think. The biggest advantage? I guess it would be the convenience of it. I can do anything I want. As for the biggest disadvantage, some people might say the space, but I think the biggest disadvantage of living in a flat is that you never really get to know your neighbours.



Reading

52. *What kinds of books do you like to read in your spare time?*

I like reading biographies of interesting people. I like these because they teach me something and also I find that other people's lives are sometimes even stranger than the lives of people in fictional stories.

53. *Do you like reading books and newspapers?*

Yes, I like to read *The Saigon Times Daily* and *Tuoitrenews*. I usually read as much as I have time for, which is sometimes quite a lot. Both of these newspapers are in English, and I find that it really is a good way for me to practise my English.

54. *Where do you like to read books?*

I suppose it depends on the book. If it's just a normal novel, then I'd rather read it at home in my room. But if it's an e-book, I'd rather read it on my computer.

55. *Do you discuss the books you read with friends?*

Yeah, if there's something interesting in them. For example, some of the things people say in the biographies make good quotes and I like talking about these people to others.

56. *Is reading popular in your country with young people?*

No, I'd say that it's getting less popular. There are just so many other things to do that we don't really have to rely on books that much for entertainment. I think TV is the main reason. It's just easier to watch a show than to read a book.

Sports

57. *What is your favourite sport?*

My favourite sport is football. I've been playing it regularly for about a year, and I'm quite crazy about it now.

58. *Why do you like it so much?*

Football is a team sport which requires little in the way of specialised equipment and is organised using simple, intuitive rules. I love the Manchester United, so that also makes me more interested in the sport as well.



59. *What sports are played in your country?*

Badminton and football are probably the most popular sports. They are popular because they can be played by both young and elder people of just about any physical build and ability.

60. *What is the most popular sport in your country?*

I'd have to say that football's really the most popular sport in Vietnam. There are literally millions of crazy football fans. Whenever there's a match on TV between Vietnam and another country, you can hear loud cheers and shouts all around the city whenever Vietnam scores a goal, and loud groans and moans when the other country scores.

61. *What are the sports facilities like in your home town?*

Hanoi has a lot of modern indoor facilities offering bowling, ping-pong, swimming, and other things. But, it's too expensive for most local people. Also, users have to belong to a club or to pay in order to use the facilities. There aren't very many sporting facilities that are free and open to the public.

Films and TV

62. *Do you often go to the cinema/theatre?*

- a. Yes. On Friday nights, I usually go and watch whatever's playing. It's kind of a family tradition that I started when my son was young.
- b. No. I'm not really interested in the theatre. I'd much rather read newspapers and watch TV than pay for the theatre.

63. *Which cinema do you often go to?*

There's a cinema just around the corner from my home. It's called the Galaxy Cinema. It's a chain of cinemas in Ho Chi Minh City that presents both Vietnamese and international films. Also, the ticket price is still fairly reasonable.

64. *Do you prefer to watch films in the cinema or at home?*

Oh, it's hard to say. I know it's cheap to buy a DVD and watch it at home, but you definitely get better picture and sound quality in the cinema. So on the whole, I like to go to the cinema to watch a film.



65. *Do you like to watch alone or with your friends?*

In most cases, I'd like to watch a film with my friends. The reason is that after watching the film, we can talk about it and I think it's a very good opportunity for discussion, an opportunity to learn.

66. *What kind of films do you like?*

I definitely like comedies best. I don't see why I should pay money to be sad or scared, so I really don't like sad films or horror films at all. I just like to laugh, and I like movies that can put me in a good mood.

67. *Who's your favourite film star? Can you describe him/her to me?*

I like Leonardo DiCaprio. I first saw him when he starred in *Titanic*. He's very handsome ... blond hair, blue eyes. He has this look about him that makes him seem very sad, but at the same time hopeful. I have his posters all over my room at home.

68. *Do you often watch TV? What's your favourite programme?*

- a. No, I hardly watch TV at all. I don't find any programme interesting. I think it's just a waste of time to watch TV.
- b. Yes, I like watching the news and I enjoy watching some of the serial TV shows that come on. But I have to keep up with them, which is a bit hard since I don't have a lot of time to watch them these days.

Music

69. *How often do you listen to music?*

Everyday. As soon as I get home I usually play something. I've also got a walkman that I use, and so I often put it on while travelling on the bus because I can't stand all the noise of the traffic.

70. *What kind of music do you like?*

Definitely classical music. I have nearly every famous classical work ever recorded. I could sit for hours in a room with my stereo turned up, just listening to classical music. I've also attended several concerts here in Hanoi, where world-famous orchestras have come to play the great works of Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin or other composers.



Clothing

71. *What kind of clothing do you like best?*

My favourite kind of clothing is very shiny, dark clothing. I like wearing very interestingly designed clothing when going out, and I like wearing clothes that are suitable for work.

72. *What kind of clothing is popular in Vietnam?*

From the twentieth century onward, Vietnamese people have worn clothing that is popular internationally. The *ao dai* is worn by high school girls and also by flight attendants and by women in special events. Men usually wear shirts and trousers when going to work and suits in formal occasions. Young people are wearing more and more brand-name clothing.

73. *What kind of clothing do children usually wear?*

Most of them have to wear school uniforms while at school. When they get home they change into all kinds of clothing. It's hard to say what particular style they like. Every child is different.

74. *What does traditional clothing in Vietnam look like?*

Well, for ladies, the traditional clothing for them is always the *ao dai*. It is long and is decorated with simple designs and made of silk. Men usually wear shirts with trousers.

75. *How do older people feel about younger people's clothing?*

I think most of them don't really like young people's clothes. They think they're too revealing or just too flashy. Also, they believe the girls are dressing too boldly these days.

Future Plan

76. *What sort of accommodation would you most like to live in when you get to England?*

I think I'll try to live in an apartment shared with other students – something like a one-bedroom or a two-bedroom apartment. I was told living in a dormitory is more expensive than living in an apartment. Besides, I prefer to cook my own meals, so living in a dormitory is out of the question for me.



77. *What problems or difficulties do you think you may have in Britain/Canada/Australia?*

I will probably have some trouble with English at first. I heard that once one gets used to using English all the time, it gets a lot easier to pick it up. I suppose I'll also need to learn how to do things in Canada. For example, I won't know how to buy a subway ticket and use the transport system, mail a letter, open a bank account, and other things. I think that it's pretty normal to face these troubles when one first arrives.

78. *Can you imagine what life in Britain/Canada/Australia will be like?*

I have seen many pictures of Canada. I'm looking forward to the fresh air and beautiful scenery. In some ways, I can just picture myself there. But, I've never been to Canada before, so what I picture now, I'm sure, is not even close to what it will actually be like. Even though some of my friends have already immigrated to Canada or are there studying, I can only get a partial glimpse of what it will be like. I'm looking forward to the adventure!

79. *What do you want/intend to study?*

I plan to study Business. Hopefully, at the Master's degree level. I've heard that if I can get an MBA from a university in the West, my chances of getting a good job in a joint-venture company are very good. If I can't get into Business, then I hope to study Computers. Business is really my first choice, though.

80. *Which university are you going to study at?*

It's a small university in eastern Canada called Mount Allison University. It has a very beautiful campus, but it's quite remote. The nearest town is at least an hour's drive away. It'll be quite a change from living in a big city, but I'm looking forward to the peace and quiet.

81. *Why did you choose this university?*

The London School of Economics is especially famous for business and economics. I think it's the best place for me to specialise in finance and banking, and the university has a good reputation among employers here in Vietnam.

82. *What are your plans in Britain/Canada/Australia/New Zealand?*

- a. I plan to study at Monash University and get my Master's in International Trade. That should take me about 4 to 5 years to complete.
- b. I plan to immigrate to Canada. I have a few friends who can help me there. I am a petroleum engineer, so I think it should be easy to find work in Calgary.



83. *What are you going to major in?*

I want to major in Mass Media Communications. I am interested in this area and I think it is something I can do quite well.

84. *What kind of differences in the cultures are you expecting between Vietnam and New Zealand?*

That's an interesting question. To be frank, I'm not sure, but perhaps I think the way of life there may be less stressful. The pace of life I've heard is a bit slower, so I'll have to try and keep myself from getting bored.

85. *What do you intend to do after you graduate?*

I plan to return to Vietnam and get a good job or if I have another good opportunity, I hope to do some further study in my field once I complete this degree. It's really hard to say what I'll be doing after my studies because I think that many doors will open to me once I complete a degree in Canada.

86. *Are there any special places you want to see in Canada? What are they?*

I want to see the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia, and I also want to visit Quebec. I have heard so much about the beauty of the Rocky Mountains. Also, I heard Quebec is quite different from the rest of Canada. Some of my friends told me that it's like visiting Europe. Even though I don't speak French, I think it will be a very interesting place to visit. Eventually, I hope that I can drive across Canada and really spend time getting to see all the famous sites.

87. *What kind of things do you want to do in Canada that you can't do here?*

I want to buy a car. In Vietnam it is so expensive to buy a car. Moreover, the streets in Ho Chi Minh City are always busy with traffic. Traffic congestion frequently takes place. So, driving is not convenient. Many of my friends bought a car once they arrived in Canada. It's quite funny actually, because many Vietnamese people are eager to buy their own cars. Another thing I want to do is to visit my former English teacher who lives in Vancouver now. I met her in 2002 when she taught me English at my university. We've kept in touch until now, so I hope I get a chance to meet up with her again.

88. *What are your goals in life?*

My short-term goal is to improve my English and go abroad to study. My long-term goals include adjusting to a new country, getting a good job, having a family, and eventually owning my own business. I have a lot of goals in life, but some of them are really just dreams. I mean, I don't think I'll ever be able to attain them all.



Foreign Language Studies

89. *How long have you been studying English?*

Hmm ... let me see ... that's hard to say. I started in junior high school. So, I guess you may say about 9 years in total, but it's been kind of "off and on".

90. *Do you think English is important for Vietnam?*

Well, I think it will help us become better in business and diplomacy. On the national level, it will help us have fewer problems when we do business or have relations with other nations. You know, I believe that language problems are often the main cause of misunderstandings.

91. *What do you think of English?*

I think it's a tough language, frankly. Maybe not the toughest language, but there are lots of things that make it confusing. It seems to be a language that's easier to pick up if you're just listening and using it regularly.

92. *What is most rewarding about learning a foreign language?*

Communicating. When you can communicate successfully, it makes all that hard work worthwhile. I love just talking with my foreign friends, and if they understand me, I feel quite proud.

93. *What do you think is the best way to study English?*

I don't know. I mean, I've tried all kinds of ways. I suppose the best way is to use it regularly and to try and memorise a lot of different words and expressions, but I guess I need a lot of persistence for that.

94. *What aspect of English do you find the most difficult?*

Well, that's difficult to say. I guess it's the grammar. I mean, it's simple enough to study the rules, but when I try to produce it, I always seem to make mistakes. I can write pretty well, but whenever I speak English, I seem to make grammar mistakes.

Weather

95. *What is the climate like in your home town?*

It's generally very hot in the summer, about 35 degrees Celsius. In the winter, it's cold – about 10–15 degrees Celsius. Spring and autumn are both mild and pleasant, with temperatures ranging from around 20 to 25 degrees Celsius. Oh, summertime is extremely humid as well.



96. *What is the weather like in Hanoi?*

In general, it's pretty dry. Winter is a bit cold. It is dry and windy. Spring is short and a bit cool. Summer is hot and a bit more humid, and temperatures can go as high as 36 degrees, so it can be kind of uncomfortable in the summer unless you have air conditioning. Fall is probably the best season – it's very comfortable – not windy, and neither too cold nor hot.

97. *How would you compare the climate in your home town with other cities?*

Well, there are definitely places that have a milder climate. My home town's weather is a little bit uncomfortable for some people in summer and winter. There are places where the weather is quite stable all year round. On the other hand, there are some places where the weather's even worse, like in central Vietnam.

98. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of the weather in your home town?*

Advantages and disadvantages? That's a difficult question to answer. Let me think for a second. Well, I guess the main advantage is that it's dry, so we don't have to worry about too much rain, and the rainy season is not too wet like in some other places in northern Vietnam. The disadvantage is that it can get floody here as the road system has not been upgraded, and when the streets are floody, well, that can be terrible to put up with.

99. *What is your favourite type of weather in your home town?*

Actually, I've never thought about that. I guess it would have to be a sunny but not too hot day. It would be cool, like the kind of weather we get in Da Lat all the year round.

Food

100. *What kind of food and dishes do people eat in your home town?*

Most people in Hue like spicy dishes because it's quite cold and humid there, so we need to eat a lot of chilies to help us adapt to the weather. It is said that people in Hue eat the spiciest food.

101. *What is the main food in Vietnam?*

Well, I'd say it's rice. Rice is the staple food in my country. Each major area in Vietnam might eat rice in different quantities, but I think it's still the main food and probably will always be the top one.



102. *In what ways has the diet of people in your country been changing?*

Well, we tend to eat more convenience foods now, especially fast food from restaurants like Lotteria and other fast food places. Also, I'd guess we are now eating a variety of dishes that we thought were big luxuries about 20 years ago.

103. *How has your diet changed?*

I don't think it has changed that much. I still eat the same things as I ate when I was a child. I guess the main change is that I have more time and money to go out for dinner.

Festival

104. *Tell me about the biggest traditional festival in your country. / What's the biggest traditional festival in your country?*

Definitely the Tet holiday. I suppose it's somewhat like Christmas in western countries. The Tet holiday is the only time when all families get together and stores and business are closed for several days.

105. *What do you do during the Tet holiday?*

I usually go back to my home town and spend a week in my parents' home. We eat delicious food, visit relatives and friends, and watch TV. I also like to contact my high school friends and see how they're doing and what they're up to. We give each other presents and we buy ourselves new clothes to wear for the New Year.

106. *Can you describe one of the main festivals celebrated in your country?*

Liberation Day, which is on April 30th, is a big holiday. We get a day off and there are fireworks displays in major cities. There are public performances and lots of brilliant lights decorating the city, and some of the larger cities hold parades.

Changes

107. *What changes have taken place in your home town in the last 20 years?*

Well, I'm pretty young, but my parents always complain that my home town's traffic is much worse, and they say that prices are a lot higher. But I think on the positive side, life is better, houses are in better condition and shops are numerous and modern. Also, restaurants are available and cleaner.



108. *Has your life changed in the last 10 years, and if so, in what ways?*

I think my life has changed. It's a bit more comfortable because my parents have more money than they used to have. I am a bit more responsible than I used to be, and not quite as carefree.

109. *Is there anything you'd like to change in your life?*

Yes, my dependence upon my parents. Right now, I'm quite dependent on them for money, so I hope I can be more independent in the future and one day be able to support them instead of their always supporting me.

110. *How different is your life from the lives of your parents?*

It's very different. I have had many more opportunities and a much more comfortable life than they had. I remember my father telling me stories about having just one egg to eat each week, and that was the highlight of his week. I can't really imagine life like that, so I'm grateful that I have a better life than my parents did. I appreciate their hard work to get us to this point in our lives.

111. *Has tourism changed Vietnam very much?*

Yes, very much in the last 20 years. Each year, we are getting more tourists coming to Vietnam thanks to the open-door policy. People see more foreigners and are used to the sight of them now. Vietnam is becoming more cosmopolitan, and people are getting to know more about the outside world.

112. *Has the transport changed over the past 20 years in Vietnam?*

Yes, a lot. We used to have very few bus lines years ago. Most people would use their bikes to get to and from places in the city. But now in big cities, there are more bus lines, so it's a lot more convenient. There are also more taxis in cities, and more people are using them as a mode of transport.

Travel and Holiday

113. *Do you enjoy travelling?*

Yes, very much. I've been to most of the major cities in Vietnam and I've also travelled to Thailand and Singapore. I think the more I travel, the more I want to travel. I just like seeing how other people live, and it's really amazing to learn about different cultures – much more exciting than just reading about them in a textbook.



114. *What do you usually do on your holidays?*

During my holidays, I try to catch up with friends and go out together somewhere. That's the only time I can relax and do something I enjoy. Other than that, it's really difficult because I am always busy with my work, and sometimes I have to work overtime.

115. *Is there anywhere you would particularly like to visit on your holidays? Where and why?*

a. Yeah, I guess the best places to me are beaches. You see, I really like beaches because I just like watching the water come in and I love riding up and down on the waves as they come into the shore. So places like Vung Tau and Mui Ne are great places to me.

b. Yes, I'd love to visit Sapa if I have a chance. Sapa is a frontier town and capital of Sapa District in Lao Cai province in northwest Vietnam. The people there are mostly minorities, and I've seen the landscape in some pictures. It's incredible. If I travel to Sapa, I'll take a train so that I can see the landscape throughout the journey.

116. *Let's talk a little about travelling and transport. For a long trip, how do you prefer to travel?*

In my country, if it's a long trip, I prefer taking a train. Not only is it more economical, but also the time has shortened tremendously in the past few years. Air travel is more expensive, and I don't think it's worth the extra cost.

Transport

117. *Which type of transport do you usually use in your home town?*

I use the motorcycle. It's fast and cheap and I can always trust it to get me to places on time.

118. *Which type of transport do you prefer for travelling long distances?*

Trains are better because they don't encounter any traffic jams, whereas sometimes in the bus, we get stuck in traffic. Also, in my country, buses may have more accidents, whereas with a train, you have a better chance of taking a good rest in a bunk bed.

119. *What's the traffic situation like in your home town?*

It's quite bad now, and I think it's getting more and more serious. The big problems are there are too many vehicles on the streets and there is not enough space. I think that building more roads sometimes just adds to the problem because people just buy more cars and motorbikes.



Buildings

120. *Does your home town have a lot of modern buildings or are they mostly traditional?*

Well, that's an interesting question. The downtown area has mostly modern buildings, and you'll see a number of skyscrapers. Outside the city centre are a few of those spread throughout the city, but there are more multi-storey houses.

121. *Which buildings do you prefer to look at?*

Well, I love the old-style buildings with the steep roofs and balanced style. I like all the symbol designs on them, too. But to be frank, for the sake of modernisation, these old buildings have little by little been put down for high-rise buildings.

122. *Could you describe the traditional architecture of your country?*

Firstly, the buildings are made of wood or bamboo instead of stone or metal. Secondly, they are very high and always have curved eaves. Thirdly, the traditional buildings have doors and windows that are adorned with paintings.

Birthday

123. *How important are birthdays in your country?*

I think they're now increasingly important in Vietnam, especially for children and old people. A birthday party is not only a celebration but also a good time for family reunion.

124. *How do Vietnamese people celebrate their birthdays?*

The celebrations vary according to different age groups. For young people like me, usually we invite our friends to eat out and then we go to a pub or a karaoke shop to have fun. For older people like my grandparents, the party is more elaborate.

125. *Do you like to celebrate your birthday with your parents or with your friends?*

Because I live far from my parents, I usually have a birthday party with my classmates and my friends. It's great fun!

126. *What do children get for their birthdays in your country?*

Oh, lots of different stuff. Candies, cakes, toy cars, teddy bears, something like that.

127. *Which is the most important birthday for a Vietnamese?*

I guess it's the 18th one, like in other countries. It's the time one becomes an adult. From then on, he or she has to take responsibility for his or her actions.



II. Part 2 Specific Topics

A. People

1. AN OLD PERSON
2. A TEACHER
3. A CHARACTER IN A TV PROGRAMME OR A FILM
4. A HAPPY/SUCCESSFUL PERSON
5. A NEIGHBOUR
6. A CHILD

B. Places

7. A FAVOURITE ROOM OR APARTMENT
8. A NATURAL PLACE
9. A HISTORICAL BUILDING
10. A GARDEN OR PARK
11. A SHOPPING CENTRE

C. Objects & Animals

12. A TOY
13. A BOOK YOU READ
14. CLOTHES OR JEWELRY
15. A VEHICLE
16. A BOOK YOU WANT TO WRITE
17. A WORK OF ART
18. A HANDICRAFT
19. A PHOTO
20. AN ANIMAL

D. Culture & Education

21. A WAY TO RELAX
22. A NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE
23. A FILM
24. A SPORT
25. A TV PROGRAMME
26. AN ADVERTISEMENT
27. A WEBSITE
28. A POPULAR GAME IN CHILDHOOD
29. A SUBJECT
30. A CULTURAL DIFFERENCE
31. AN IMPORTANT CHANGE
32. A WEDDING

E. Events

33. A LONG-DISTANCE TRIP
34. AN ENJOYABLE VISIT
35. A PROJECT



Typical Topic Cards, Suggested Answers, and Further Questions

A. People

1. Describe an old person who had an influence on you.

You should say

who the person is

when you first knew him / her

what kind of person he / she is

and explain why he / she has influenced you.

I think my father has the biggest influence on me. He used to be an editor working for *The Saigon Times Daily* but now he is retired at home. He's over 60 years old but looks smart. He's a little bit overweight, has a pleasant face, and always gives the impression of being someone who is very easy-going and nice. Indeed, my father is the most kind-hearted person you would ever want to meet and he's very popular in the neighbourhood.

I guess my father has taught me a lot about the most important things in life. For one thing, he taught me to live a healthy lifestyle. He likes exercise very much and on Sundays, my parents and I always go for a walk in the park close to my house. He has kept doing this for almost 10 years. Can you imagine? At first, I didn't quite like it. It is a drag getting up so early on Sundays, isn't it? But very soon, I got used to it and began to enjoy it actually. For another, my father has taught me a lot about optimism. He got through a lot of hardships to become an accomplished editor. He's not the kind of person that gets upset easily. I guess what I've learnt most from him is to maintain a positive attitude towards life, no matter what happens.



Further questions

1. What are the differences in attitudes between the young and the old toward life in Vietnam?

Oh, it's a very tough question. I believe there are quite a lot of differences. Let's take marriage as an example. My grandparents' generation seemed to gain security through marriage. They got married early. But nowadays, young people like me are much more concerned with developing as individuals. Usually, we try to have a stable job before we get married and start a family.

2. What is the main problem for Vietnam's old people?

That's hard to say. As far as I see it, I don't think there is enough entertainment for old people. My grandfather retired a few years ago. Every morning, he goes to a small park in the neighbourhood for a walk. But other than that, there are not other options for him. I hope the government will set up more leisure centres for people like my grandfather. They need to communicate with their peers and they're entitled to this kind of city service as well.

3. What's the attitude of the government toward old people?

Well, basically the government is very much concerned with the welfare of the old people. This can be seen from the many policies it has produced in the interest of the older people in fields like pension, medical care, etc. I can see that the government does not consider this age group simply as a liability, but as a kind of resource, with their experiences and wisdom, that can bring benefits to the society as a whole.

4. What aspects of society are not good for old people?

As I mentioned earlier, it seems there are not many public facilities where old people can exercise, talk to each other, and meet new people. But I guess there are other problems as well, like the pension scheme and medical care. Oh, there's one more thing, family planning also gives rise to serious problems as well. It seems there are not enough young people to support an increasing number of aging population.

5. Are there any influences that old people bring to your family?

Sure, first of all, old people set up positive or negative role models for younger generations. They can influence other family members in terms of interests, personality and things like that. For example, my grandfather likes painting very much and partly because of this, all my cousins are keen on painting as well. Of course, there are practical things, too. Old people can help with the childcare, which is obviously a relief for young couples that both work.



2. Describe a teacher who had a great influence on you.

You should say

- who the teacher is
- what subject he / she taught
- what was special about him / her

and explain why the teacher had a great influence on you.

The teacher that really influenced me a lot was Mr. Le Nam. He was the sports teacher when I was in high school.

He was in his thirties at that time and I'd say all my classmates admired him because he was kind of a hero to us and also because he was very nice. As far as I can remember, one thing that was special about him was that he'd been on the national volleyball team. I don't think he ever actually won a medal or anything like that. But for us, just the fact that he used to represent our country was really something. Actually, he was a very good teacher, very responsible and dedicated, you know.

I guess the thing he taught me was to have a fighting spirit. I mean he always encouraged us to do our best in sport, even if we were terrible at it. He used to say "It doesn't matter if you win or not. The important thing is to do your best and keep going." He also taught us a lot about health and maintaining a positive attitude towards life. And compared to other teachers, he seemed to be more interested in everyone. Luckily, we still keep in touch and I often go to see him on holidays.

Further questions

1. What makes a good teacher?

Well, different people have different ideas on this issue. But as far as I am concerned, a good teacher should be patient, responsible, and knowledgeable.

2. What is the most important quality of a good teacher?

Of course, different people value different aspects of a good teacher. In my opinion, being inspiring is the most important quality of a good teacher. Good teachers should be those that bring hopes to their students. They encourage and motivate their students to think on their own, act on their own and take adventures. As a result, they usually bring out the best in their students.



3. What are the differences between good teachers and bad ones?

Good teachers inspire students to study while bad ones ask students to obey orders. Good teachers are close friends while bad ones are bossy leaders. Good teachers make students eager to know more while bad ones make students fed up with studies.

4. What factors are the driving force for people to become teachers?

To be frank, it is really hard to tell. The answer varies from case to case. Some do it for their own interest. Some do it for parents' advice. Some do it for a sense of achievement. Some do it to make a long-held dream come true.

5. Why do some people choose to be a life-long teacher?

Maybe they do it because they think they find true happiness in giving. Helping others to grow up and giving them suggestions and advice seem to be a great cause. They want to contribute their life to such a cause.

6. What are the difficulties teachers may confront?

The difficulties may arise from many aspects. We are living in a world of the explosion of knowledge which makes it necessary for teachers to upgrade their knowledge all the time. Therefore, teachers must spend a lot of time and energy to improve their own qualities all the time. Meanwhile, students are getting increasingly critical. They want qualified, inspiring, and learned teachers rather than somebody that just teaches something in textbooks.

7. Did you ever act as a teacher?

Yes. As a matter of fact, I used to teach in a university in Can Tho City. I taught English. It was really an unforgettable experience. I got along very well with my students. We had a lot of good moments together.

8. What types of schools are there in Vietnam?

There are many kinds of schools in Vietnam such as primary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, vocational and technical schools, colleges, and universities.

9. How do single-sex schools and mixed schools differ?

Students in single-sex schools can be more focused on their studies while their peers studying in mixed schools are distracted by relationships between boys and girls. Mixed schools can provide a sound environment in which children's mentality can grow up healthily. By studying in such schools, they learn to deal with people of the opposite sex and know how to make friends with different types of people.



10. Between single-sex schools and mixed schools, which is better?

I don't think there is an easy answer to this question as too many factors are involved. The roles of students, parents and schools all need to be considered. But there is something to be sure of. That is, single-sex schools often provide a more academic environment while mixed ones provide a more colourful and exciting atmosphere.

11. What kind of schools would you like to send your children to study?

Mixed schools, definitely. I want my children to grow up with a healthy mentality. I will encourage them to make friends with both sexes. As women and men constitute the whole world, my children need to and must acquire an understanding of how people of different sexes behave. Otherwise, their life would always be incomplete due to the lack of knowledge of the other sex.

12. What do you think of private schools and public schools?

Private schools are usually better positioned to provide a high-quality teaching faculty, equipment, and facilities while public schools, funded by governmental revenue, sometimes may find it hard to do so. As a result, private schools' doors are only open to the students who come from rich families while public schools absorb students regardless of their families' financial standing.

3. Describe a character in a TV programme or in a film you like.

You should say

who the character is

when you first saw the TV programme or film

what kind of person the character is

and explain why you like this character.

I think many people in Vietnam have watched this film: *Forrest Gump*. The hero in the film – Forrest Gump – must have impressed me a lot.

The first time I saw this film was in my senior high. Forrest Gump is a mentally retarded person. His IQ is lower than that of an ordinary person. But out of everyone's expectation, he becomes a rich and famous fishing tycoon in the end.



It is a typical American-dream style of film. But this is not the reason why I like the film. This character is so attractive to me because of a sentence he always bears in mind: life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're gonna get. This is what his mother, who is his only relative, tells him before she dies. It is these words that make him believe that no matter what difficulty faces him, life will be better in due time. When I heard that line, tears welled up in my eyes. At that time, my whole life was centred on the entrance exams. Heavy peer pressure and fierce competition made me feel that I was in the middle of nowhere. His words as well as the whole movie reminded me that one day, I could also get something wonderful from this chocolate box – life. This injected new motivation into my study.

Someone may laugh at me because I turned to a mentally retarded person for encouragement. But sometimes, aren't we too wise to overlook the truth in life?

Further questions

1. What kind of film star is popular now?

The film stars with beautiful or cute faces are still very popular. But now a new kind of film star is on the rise – those who are gifted and have their unique styles. For example, Clint Eastwood, the lead actor in *Bridge of Madison County*. He is famous for his excellent acting skills and talent in writing and directing films. He won the 2005 Oscar Award, though he is in his 70s. This kind of film stars is not only popular among audiences, but also deeply respected by them. This is the new trend of film stars: you do not have to be good-looking, but you'd better have something different from others.

2. Is there more and more violence in films or on TV?

Yes, I think so. This is one of the issues that film and TV have raised. Some film companies deliberately produce films featured by violence in order to attract a particular audience, such as young people who are fond of extreme and adventurous films. This is true of some TV series. Meanwhile, more violence appears in TV news, for example the report of clashes between Iraq police and insurgent groups. Some advertisements contain violence too. On the whole, more and more violence is accessible to people, through film and TV alike.



3. What kinds of people like to see action films?

I think action films find their largest audience among young people, especially young males. They welcome the films with few conversations and much action. This has something to do with their group character. Young males are full of energy. They love quick-paced films and derive great visual enjoyment from watching action films. Also, people who believe that fighting is the best policy are also action film fans. They can identify themselves with the characters in the film. Some of them go even further to imitate those characters.

4. What will future films be like?

Well, this is a rather extensive topic. First of all, films in the future will have more varieties to cater to the tastes of different audience groups. Secondly, more and more advanced technologies will be employed in the producing process, such as digital technology. This will make the film-making much easier. Therefore, maybe ordinary people can produce films of their own. Also, films that can reflect future social problems will come out. For instance, as globalisation is accelerating, civilisation and culture clashes are unavoidable. In the foreseeable future, more films will centre on this theme.

5. Do you like a film that is made with digital technology?

Yes, I do. Digital technology enables the director to make what is in his mind into reality. It can break down the traditional limit on film production. Film directors can create some non-existent characters or settings according to their need. That's how some famous and widely loved films were produced, such as *Matrix* and *Star Wars*. Digital technology offers more fantastic visual enjoyment to us.

6. What kind of characters will people admire in the future?

To my understanding, in the future, people will admire characters that are ordinary people. They will be less fascinated by heroic characters because they are too far away from people's everyday life. On the contrary, less famous characters will come into prominence. Those characters in films are just like ordinary people in real life. In films, they have their own character weakness and are troubled by problems that people usually have in their lives. By watching films, the audience can relate themselves to those characters. Sometimes, they may get encouragement from these characters. So in the future, this kind of characters will be more and more popular.



7. Is there any difference between characters that men admire and those women admire?

I think the major difference is that men prefer female characters while women pay more attention to male characters. This difference results from the sexual appeal. Most heroes and heroines are very good-looking people. But there is not much difference other than this one. Both men and women admire brave, dynamic, generous, and capable male characters. At the same time, both of them adore those female characters that are kind-hearted, considerable, and gentle. It is human nature – always admire people with something they do not have.

4. Describe a happy / successful person you know.

You should say

who the person is

why the person is happy / successful

and how you know this person.

Well, I think my teacher Mr. Le Minh is the happiest person I've ever known. He teaches English Literature in the university where I am studying now.

I guess he has very good reasons to be happy. First of all, he has a very fulfilling family life. Mr. Le has two lovely daughters. Once he took them to his office. Guess what. The two girls made his office into a mess but Mr. Le was still quite cheerful. He always tells us that his daughters are the best gifts he has ever received in his life. Second, he loves his job. He loves teaching and believe me, he knows how to teach. He breathes life into the subject he's teaching. English Literature could be boring but he has the magic to make it fun. There's quite a lot of exciting discussion going on in his class.

But I believe the real source of his happiness is a love of life and a thankful attitude towards life. He's definitely not the richest man, nor is he the most talented. But he's quite contented with what he has now. I mean his family, his colleagues, and his work.

Mr. Le is the most popular teacher among the students in the English Department. He's also my hero, too, because he taught me more than English Literature. He also taught me that happiness does not come from outside. It comes from within.



Further questions

1. Do you want to be successful?

Yes, both in material terms and in spiritual terms.

2. How do you think about success/happiness?

For me, success/happiness is simply a matter of attitude. It's not about money or social status. Success/Happiness is about service, character, integrity, honesty, loyalty, commitment, truthfulness, being trustworthy ... doing your best for yourself, your family and your friends.

3. Can you be successful without money?

Sure, it depends on how you define success. There are many people who are not rich but who live up to high ethical standards.

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being famous?

Let me see. I think when people become famous, they can easily get more wealth and more satisfaction out of life. They can gain recognition from their peers and have access to more opportunities and resources. On the other hand, they will have to pay a high price as well. For example, they can't spend much time with their family. Some of them may get very depressed because of the stress from their work.

5. Why do most people want to be well known?

As I said before, once you become a celebrity, you will reap a lot of benefits, which an ordinary person can't even imagine.

6. How do film stars affect your life?

I think they have an influence on us in every way. Language, fashion, music, or even our diet. But apart from that, they become role models for us, especially teenagers.

7. Why do ordinary people want to know about famous people's private affairs?

I guess this is human nature, isn't it? If you are interested in a person, you will be curious about their hobbies, lifestyles, and so on.



5. Describe one of your neighbours.

You should say

who he / she is

what he / she looks like

whether you often see him / her

and whether he / she is a good neighbour.

I'd like to talk about my neighbour, professor Phan, who has lived next to us for about ten years.

He used to be my father's colleague and really looks like my father. He's not very tall, about 170 centimetres at most, I think. It is very easy to recognise professor Phan because he is bald on top and wears a pair of big glasses, which makes him look very professional and knowledgeable. He's very nice, friendly, and easy-going. When you have problems, he is the person you should turn to for he is intelligent and ready to help.

Now we don't see each other very often as I went to college in another city a few years ago. But I visit him whenever I go back to my home town.

Personally, I guess he is the best neighbour that one can have. He has influenced me a lot in learning English since my childhood. You know, in the 1980s when very few people had TV, he was given one by a foreign friend. Every Sunday morning, I would go to his house to watch a very popular English language teaching programme named *Follow Me*. Apart from that, he often encouraged me when I felt bad or did a bad job on an exam. I still remember he told me that as long as I tried, it did not matter what result I got on the college entrance examinations. I wish I could become a professor like him in the future.

Further questions

1. What is the difference between friends and neighbours?

It's a little difficult to tell the difference between friends and neighbours. In my opinion, I usually tell my friends about my secrets and share my happiness and sorrow with them. However, I rarely do so with my neighbours. On the other hand, neighbours live close to us and may help us whenever we need them while a friend may live far away.



2. Do you think it's important to get along well with your neighbours?

Of course. We should get on well with our neighbours because we live in the community.

3. How can you keep a good relationship with your neighbours?

Well, it's not difficult. We just treat them as our friends. We should visit them from time to time, taking a bottle of wine or something with us. And I am sure that they will do the same in return. If we have made a few dishes, why not ask them to our dinner? This would be a good way of keeping a good relationship. Besides, it would be a great idea for us and our neighbours to take a trip together. There's nothing better to know each other than exploring new places.

4. How do people communicate with others at present?

Great changes have taken place in the past several decades. For example, ten years ago, we liked to pay a visit to relatives and friends during the Tet holiday while now people prefer to exchange New Year greetings via e-mails, cards, or text messages. Another example is that in the past, Vietnamese people were interested in showing their hospitality and friendliness by sending some home-cooked food to their neighbours, while now people prefer to eat out even when friends visit.

6. Describe a child you are familiar with.

You should say

his / her name

how old he / she is

and what his / her hobby is.

I would like to talk about my nephew, Bin. He is about 5 years old. He has big eyes. He's a very lovely kid and always causes problems, you know, like most other children at his age.

He has interests that we normally expect a five-year-old may have. He likes toy cars, snack food, presents, and beautiful girls as well. But the thing he likes best is cartoons. He's fascinated by the stories and the characters. I guess his favourite is the Cartoon Network on Disney Channel, a sort of collection of cartoons of various kinds. My nephew is keen on that programme and every time he comes back from



the kindergarten, the first thing he does is to pick up a pack of corn chips and turn on the TV and sit in front of it, waiting for the programme to begin. Sometimes he even discusses the stories with his parents, who, every now and then, are quite impressed by his wild ideas and sometimes plausible arguments.

Anyway, like many other kids of his age, the little naughty boy grows up very happily.

Further questions

1. Who are happier, children nowadays or the ones 20 years ago?

I'm not very sure but I guess 20 years ago children were happier. Of course at that time, kids didn't have fast food like burgers or pizzas. They didn't have elaborate birthday parties or sophisticated toys. And they didn't have to take a lot of exams, either. I think even though children nowadays have easy access to all those luxuries, they have to face more challenges as well.

2. What do you think of adolescent education in Vietnam?

It's OK. But there's too much rote learning and duck-feeding. Traditionally, the classroom in Vietnam is teacher-centred rather than student-centred. Though there has been much improvement, there's still something wrong. I think apart from academic subjects, schools should provide training that develops other dimensions of personal growth.

3. What are the effects of pressures exerted by teachers and parents?

Obviously both parents and teachers have a great influence on children. In Vietnam today, there are still quite a number of teachers and parents who set too ambitious, if not unrealistic goals for their children. Too much pressure can only stifle their interest in studies.

4. What do you think of the problem that parents overindulge their children?

I think it's a serious problem in Vietnam. The rise in the living standard only makes matters worse. Take my cousin as an example. He's the only child of his family and everyone centres around him. The biggest problem that may arise is obviously children like my cousin don't have the opportunity to learn to survive independently, which is an essential skill in an ever-changing society like Vietnam. Another problem is that they may become too self-centred to care about other people.



B. Places

7. Describe your favourite room or apartment.

You should say

- where it is
- how long you have lived there
- what rooms and furniture it has

and explain why you like it.

My favourite apartment is my 2-bedroom apartment in Tan Binh District, where I have lived for 4 years. I don't have much furniture inside – two bookshelves, one table, one desk, a few chairs, two couches and a bed. My apartment is the most appealing to me for a few reasons.

First of all, I have a large living room which is consequently multifunctional. It naturally serves as a place to receive guests, but at the same time, it is also my private gym in which I do exercise to lose weight while watching TV. In addition, it is my café and dining room as well.

Secondly, my soft and comfortable bed contributes a lot to my fondness for my apartment. As everyone knows, people spend a lot of time sleeping which is very important for the recovery of energy. As a result, bed selection should be done carefully. I chose a reasonably soft and large bed so that I can spread out fully while I am resting.

Actually, I have listed only a few of all my reasons, but I am sure you have already felt how much I love my apartment by the couple of points I said above.

Further questions

1. Do you live in the city or in the countryside? What are the advantages and disadvantages of both areas?

I live in the city and I love the modern lifestyle. I know it's very quiet in the countryside, but it may be quite inconvenient when it comes to shopping, entertainment, and eating. Of course, living in the city has its downsides, too. But overall, I think I am a city person.



2. What is the difference between an old house and a modern house? Which one do you prefer? Why?

I'm not an expert on architecture but since there are many old houses in my home town, I think I can easily tell the differences when comparing them with the newly-built ones. First of all, it's the materials. Old houses usually have a wooden frame structure whereas modern ones are built with concrete and steel, which makes them more sturdy. Secondly, the old ones do not have modern facilities like central heating, security system, etc., I mean the things you can easily find in modern houses and skyscrapers. Personally, despite the modern amenities, I still prefer the old ones because they can give me a feeling that I'm back home.

3. Should the state provide cheap housing for low-income earners?

I feel it's really the responsibility of the government to provide housing, just as they should provide education, and ideally, health services. That's one of the reasons why we pay taxes.

4. To what extent does climate determine the kind of house we build?

Well, in my view, climate probably has quite a lot to do with the way we design and build our houses. For instance, in countries where it snows a lot, we can easily find houses built with a steep roof so that snow can't settle on the roof and, you know, damage the roof. But in warm climates, houses are often built with a verandah to keep the sun out of the rooms and to provide a cool place to sit there.

5. What will houses in the future be like?

It's hard to imagine but one thing is for sure. I believe houses in the future will be environmentally friendly and energy-saving. For example, there will be some kind of equipment that can transfer solar energy into electricity in every house. The electronic equipment in it will depend on such energy instead of electricity provided by a power plant.

6. Should we preserve old buildings?

It depends. I think we should try our best to protect buildings of historical interest like the City Museum or the Temple of Literature. The reason is that they are our cultural heritage, and they provide us with a gateway to understanding Vietnamese architecture.



8. Describe a natural place where you can relax.

You should say

where it is located

what kind of place it is

what you can do there

and explain why it is special to you.

I want to talk about Langbiang Hill, which is situated in Lam Dong province. It is within splendid surroundings twelve kilometres from the centre of Da Lat City. Although it is a little bit far from where I live, it is very convenient for me to get there, going by motorcycle.

It is a beautiful natural scenery that is famous for its pine trees prevailing over the whole area. Many people go there for the purpose of climbing and exercising. Last time, I went there with my classmates before the National Day Holiday. We enjoyed ourselves very much with the sightseeing and the fresh air that we seldom have nowadays in the city. I have never climbed a hill or mountain before that. It was my first time to have a try and I felt very excited, especially when I reached the top of Langbiang Hill.

Standing on the top of the hill, I felt as if I were standing at the top of the world. It made my mind more open and I could try to reflect on my life experience and think about the things happening around me. It really made me feel relaxed and peaceful.

Further questions

1. What is dangerous to natural places?

I think there are two factors that are endangering natural places. First of all, many places are being polluted, namely, water pollution, air pollution, and white pollution. Secondly, many natural places are far from the city centre where most people live and work. Due to long distances from, many people prefer to visit some places of interest near their home. Without many people going there, these natural places may not get enough money for maintenance, thus get deserted. I think that is something we definitely do not want to see.



2. What kind of pollution is the public most concerned about?

I think many people are concerned about water pollution in Vietnam. For one thing, we are suffering from water shortage and many people are wasting water and not aware of the fact. Meanwhile, many factories let chemicals go into the rivers without restrictions. This has caused severe water pollution in many areas.

3. What is your attitude to the environment?

I believe environmental protection is a necessity as well as a duty for everyone. Vietnam has long been advocating sustainable development, which means that the development of this generation will not cause damage to that of the next generation. I think that's what we should do.

4. What can you do for the environment?

I think we can do many things. Although we cannot launch some big projects to prevent the environment from getting polluted, at least we can do some small things that can beautify the surroundings, such as recycling waste paper, newspapers and batteries, not wasting water or electricity, etc. We should change our lifestyle before it is too late.

5. What is different from your grandparents' views on the environment and yours?

I don't think my grandparents care so much about the environment as we young people do. In their time, there were no environmental problems, at least not so severe as it is now. As the country develops, there are many problems during the process. Additionally, there is a lot of information about this heated topic. We are more familiar with the issue and more aware of the current situation. That's why we are more concerned about environmental protection.

6. Why do you think people like to go to natural places?

Modern people are faced with too much pressure and competition from all sides in terms of work, study, and relationship. A good way to relax is to go to natural places to enjoy the beautiful scenery and fresh air. This will help them temporarily forget all their troubles in life. There is nothing to worry about but relax. They get more refreshed and better prepared for their work or study afterwards.

7. Do you think people should be charged when coming to natural places?

I think it is necessary. The government may need money to maintain those places and to improve the facilities there. Consequently, people can better enjoy themselves there and it can also help effectively regulate the place.



9. Describe a historical building.

You should say

what it is and where it is

when it was built

what kind of building it is

and explain why you like to talk about it.

Well, the historical building I had a chance to visit is the Temple of Literature, which is one of the most famous old structures in Vietnam, and it is also the must-see travel destination for almost all visitors who arrive in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam.

The temple was built in 1070 at the time of King Ly Thanh Tong. Then, it was reconstructed during the Tran dynasty (1225–1400) and in subsequent dynasties. The temple is located to the south of Thang Long Citadel. It was originally built as a university dedicated to Confucius, scholars, and sages. This building is extremely well preserved and is a superb example of traditional-style Vietnamese architecture. Despite wars and disasters, the ancient architectural styles of many dynasties as well as precious relics can easily be seen. It shows one of the most typical architectural styles in Vietnam, composed of wood and tiles. Along the paths are hundred-year-old trees that have witnessed ups and downs of history.

I'd like to talk about the Temple of Literature for a few reasons. Firstly, the Temple of Literature is an amazing and magnificent building. It is one of several temples in Vietnam with "Quoc Tu Giam" or the Imperial Academy, which was built inside the temple. The stone statues and inscriptions dotted throughout the temple still retain many of their original features as the most renowned landmark of academia in Vietnam. I've been there once to visit and explore the Vietnam's first national university. Visiting the Temple of Literature, which has now become a memorial to education and literature, I have discovered historical buildings in a revered place that saw thousands of doctors graduate.

Besides, I also feel that the Temple of Literature is the symbol of Vietnamese culture. Originally the university only accepted aristocrats, the elite, and royal family members as students before eventually opening its doors to brighter "commoners". Successful graduates had their names engraved on a stone stele which can be found on top of the stone turtles. That's why we're all proud of this ancient structure.



More importantly, I believe that the Temple of Literature is attractive for visitors from all over the world. This historical site is ranked as one of Hanoi's most important cultural places and is steeped in Vietnamese history. And I'm convinced that if you ever go there, you'll definitely be impressed and amazed.

In summary, those are the reasons why when it comes to old buildings, the Temple of Literature is the first one that comes up into my mind.

Further questions

1. How do people in your country feel about protecting historical buildings?

People have begun to realise the importance of protecting historical buildings. Historical buildings are a precious heritage of significant historic values that reflect the culture of a people with a 4,000 years' history. People feel the necessity to protect historical buildings because they are tired of the identical, block-like, unfriendly concrete skyscrapers.

2. Do you think an area can benefit from having an interesting historical place? In what way?

Sure. I believe an interesting historical place passes on the culture of its people. It inspires people's interest in history. People learn history while visiting these places. It also serves as a good example to promote people's consciousness of the need to protect historical places. Historical sites are also good resources for tourism. Local people can benefit a lot economically if a site attracts many tourists. However, the important point is that people have to protect it.

3. What do you think will happen to historical places or buildings in the future?

As our country is under large-scale construction, many historical places or buildings may be torn down. Some may disappear due to the neglect of protection and repair. Though some people have begun to realise the importance of protecting historical places, it is still not an issue that draws great attention from the general public. In addition, we have had little policy support or the authority has not got enough money for the protection of heritage sites. When people fully realise what they have lost, it is too late.

4. You mentioned history. How were you taught history when you were at school?

History was a subject that we had to learn in order to sit for history examinations. We just read lots of books and listened to the history teacher. This is mostly a passive way of



learning. We were told to remember historical figures, events, and other facts. We learnt mechanically, and we were not really interested in those numerous facts. Also, we were given little chance to analyse what lay behind historical events.

5. Are there other ways people can learn about history, apart from learning at school?

The Internet is a quick and convenient way to access abundant information and vivid pictures, but the information may not be well organised. People feel at a loss dealing with too much information. I think one good way to learn about history is watching serious historical newsreels. Visual images can inspire people's interest in learning. Historical places and cultural relics are things that can teach us a lot about history. People often easily know more about the past and feel proud when they visit historical places.

6. Do you think history will still be a school subject in the future?

I guess so, but I hope it will be taught in a much more interesting way than it is nowadays. Besides, it will not be just the boring and compulsory reciting of historical facts. It is going to exist as a school subject because younger generations should know something about what happened to their nation and the world in the past. They can observe present reality better if they learn about history. There are many other ways to learn history, but we have to admit that school is the place where history can reach the largest number of young people. The subject should inspire interest in the past, not stifle it.

10. Describe your favourite park or garden.

You should say

where it is

what you see

what you do in it

and explain why you like this park or garden.

Well, I am going to talk about a small park near where I live. It is a very quiet and lovely place.

The park is within walking distance from the apartment building I live in. The park is a square-shaped one. The best part of it is an open-air patch of land in the middle, which may serve as a dancing ball in the evening, attracting quite a lot of old people from around the park. In the southeastern corner of the park, there's a small piece of



land with pebbles on it, where people can walk on barefooted. It's very much like a massage for our feet and it feels good. My mum loves that! But what I like best is the sports facilities in one corner of the park. Every morning when I get up, I usually take a walk in the park and do exercise. It's a fresh start, isn't it?

Of course, there are other reasons I like this park. It is also a very good meeting place for the neighbourhoods around it. The busiest time in the park probably is the morning. There are quite a lot of people and a lot of talking and laughing, which is quite good, I think. Nowadays, many people have a very busy lifestyle, they don't even have time to talk much outside of the office. Therefore, the park provides a fantastic opportunity for people to talk and to get to know each other.

Further questions

1. Is it necessary to have your own garden?

It isn't necessary but it would be lovely if I could. It would be a wonderful place for BBQ, wouldn't it?

2. What would you use a garden for?

First of all, I would plant some trees and flowers. Gardening can be a great way to relax, you know. Second, a garden would be a good place where I can read, listen to music or simply take a nap.

3. What is the influence of parks on our life?

Parks can be perfect getaways in cities. Plus, it is said they are also good for the urban ecosystem because they can absorb heat and greenhouse emissions.

4. What do people often grow in the garden?

In Vietnam, people often grow various flowers like roses and daisies. I guess if I had a garden, my mum would definitely grow a lot of vegetables. She used to do that when she was a child.



11. Describe your favourite shopping centre.

You should say

- what it is
 - where it is located
 - what you can buy there
- and explain why you like it.

I'm not quite keen on shopping actually, so I don't know much about those fancy department stores in Ho Chi Minh City. If I have to go shopping, it's for daily necessities like food and shampoo, and things like that. The supermarket where I do most of my shopping is Big C, a chain supermarket, I suppose.

It's not very far from the place where I live. It's within walking distance.

As I told you, I go to Big C mainly for things I need every day. Big C has everything one may expect of a big supermarket: rows and rows of shelves, full of beautifully packaged stuff. One can get anything they need.

I quite like this supermarket. First, it takes only five minutes to get there. No one likes one that takes them an hour at least simply to get there. Second, Big C has everything I need. It's like a one-stop thing. I don't have to buy groceries in one shop and CDs in another. It's quite convenient, especially for those like me, who don't want to waste a lot of time shopping. There's another reason why I like it. There are quite a number of fast food restaurants and bookshops near the entrance. So if I feel tired, I can have something to eat or pick up a book and have a nice cup of coffee. I like that.

Further questions

1. Why are there a lot of big stores?

As competition is fierce in modern societies, shop owners are trying every means to cut costs in order to get greater profits. The mode of operation employed by big stores may guarantee this and thus more big stores appear.



2. What are the main differences between small stores and big stores?

There are a lot of differences between small stores and big stores. Big stores provide a greater variety of goods while the choices are limited when one goes shopping in a small store. In addition, big stores make more ads than small stores and prices are lower in big stores than in small stores.

3. Do you think small stores will disappear in the future?

Well, it's hard to say. You know, small stores have their own advantages. For example, it is easier to run a small store than a big one for it occupies less space. Investment may be smaller and the risks may be lower.

4. What do you think is the best way to advertise?

TV or newspapers, I suppose. Both of them are the most popular mass media among people. TV commercials can provide a vivid image of stores while newspapers carry more information.

5. What are the differences between men and women when they go shopping?

Well, women like window shopping. They rarely make a sudden decision to buy something and are interested in comparing prices at different places. As for men, what they are concerned about most is the quality and how soon they can get it. As a result, men usually go directly to a certain store and make their purchasing decision as soon as they think the products are of good quality.

6. What do you think of online shopping?

Well, the most important advantage of Internet shopping is convenience. People usually do online shopping from their homes or offices to save time and the hassle of going to a mall. The disadvantage of online shopping is that computer images of products can hardly compare with piles of racked and shelved clothes that can be touched for quality and tried on for comfort.

7. What do you think of the use of credit cards?

First of all, there's the advantage of convenience. We don't have to carry a lot of cash along. They are also good for organising our budgets. If I charge everything each month, I'll have a complete record along with my checking account of where my money went. However, one huge disadvantage of credit cards is that because it's so convenient, it is easy to make purchases and start buying things that we cannot afford to.



C. Objects & Animals

12. Describe a toy that you have received which is very important to you.

You should say

what the toy is

who gave it to you

when the person gave it to you

and explain why the toy means so much to you.

The toy I am going to talk about is very special to me. It is a doll I used to play with for quite a long time.

My parents gave it to me when I was four as a birthday present. I consider it special because it was a very high-tech doll at that time and I was very proud of it. It would cry if I hit it or accidentally dropped it. Interestingly, when I put a kind of dummy into its mouth, it would immediately stop crying. Then, I let go of the dummy, it would laugh happily. Sometimes, it would make some noises like a real baby.

It brought a lot of fun into my childhood. At that time, not many kids had this kind of doll and I liked to show it to my friends in the kindergarten. It made me a star among the children and sometimes, we would play with the doll together. It is the first present that my parents bought me and it means a lot to me. Although it can cry or laugh no more, I still keep it. Every time I see it, I remember the happy times playing with it and the smiles on my parents' face.

Further questions

1. What are the differences between the toys which boys like to play with and those girls like to play with in your opinion?

Usually, boys like to play war games with model guns, shouting at and killing their enemies. Boys are fascinated with video games. They like to collect sort of game cards and compete with each other. Boys like to play the games that girls often regard as somewhat violent. On the contrary, girls like to play quietly with their dolls, with each other, or alone. Girls like to play something close to real life. Someone acts as a father and another one acts as a mother, with a doll as their child. They have some small things like spoons, bowls, dishes, towels, bikes, cars, and so on.



2. What role do toys play?

First of all, children consider toys as their companions. In big cities, some families have just one child. People don't live together with other relatives as they used to and parents are often out working. Therefore, kids are often left alone at home. In this case, toys are very important to them as a kind of companion. Secondly, many toys are made to develop children's intellect and interest, thus lay the foundation for their future study and work. Those toys are designed to train children's ability and to exercise their hands and even the whole body.

3. What kinds of toys do Vietnamese children usually play?

Boys like to play with toy guns, toy cars, and robots with a remote control. They like to play ball games and video games. Meanwhile, girls like to play with dolls and they like to play something close to real life with their peers. Many children nowadays are fascinated with computer games. A computer to them is like a toy, not a tool any more.

4. Has there been any change for the last 20 years?

Yes, definitely. Firstly, children have more choices now. There are millions of kinds of toys they can choose from. Secondly, the quality is becoming better and better. As a matter of fact, toy manufacturers take into consideration the safety of their products. Thirdly, more and more toys are serving as a tool to train children's ability. Children can learn things while they are playing with toys.

13. Describe a book or story you read when you were a child.

You should say

what the name of the book is

who gave it to you

what it was about

and what influence it has had on you.

Well, I would like to tell you something about *The Children's Encyclopaedia*, or literally, *The One Hundred Thousand Questions*. I read it when I was a kid.

I got this set of books as a birthday gift from my father when I was 6 years old.

As you can guess from the name, the set of books covers many areas that a child might be curious about. It taught me about geography, biology, chemistry, and physics. Of course, at that time I wasn't able to distinguish the difference between the subjects,



but the books attracted me so much as a collection of the natural mysteries in my eyes. I loved these books and read them whenever I could. Never before had I been so attracted to a set of books. Besides reading the books, I also carried out the experiments mentioned in the books. Until now, I can still remember the feeling of satisfaction when I had first lit up a light by connecting wires and batteries.

This set of books has had a great impact on me. It proves that my frequent access to the books not only cultivated at a very early age my interest in natural sciences, but also helped me build strong experimental skills through the hands-on experience. Yes, *The Children's Encyclopaedia* definitely is the set of books I liked reading most when I was a child.

Further questions

1. When do Vietnamese children usually start reading? Reading what books? Why?

I think if I'm right, Vietnamese children, like children of other countries, generally start reading at four or five. For them, parents usually select easy cartoon books as they can draw children's attention and they're easier for them to understand. Later, there are plenty of choices for children: books of Anderson's tales, fairy tales, easy Vietnamese poems, and so on. These are among children's favourite.

2. What games do Vietnamese children usually do to help them read?

Well, I think in many kindergartens and schools, children are often invited to do role-play and acting to help them read. They can make reading interesting and will help children have a better understanding about the stories.

3. What do you think of starting to read at a very early age? Is it good or bad? What are the ways to solve the negative impacts if there are some?

It's hard to give an absolute "Yes" or "No" answer to this question. Starting to read at a very early age can be highly appreciated if it is carried out smoothly and properly. It is widely known that the early intellectual development is crucial for a child's growth. Therefore, proper amount of reading for young kids is very welcome. However, this shouldn't be overdone. After all, people should have laughter and happy memories besides books. So I think if properly managed, starting to read at an early age is good for children.

4. What do you think of the Internet's impact on reading?

The Internet has influenced reading significantly. Before, people read things printed on paper such as books, newspapers, letters, and so on. Now, people have abundant access to



electronic information. We read through the computer screen: PDF files, e-mails, online downloadable newspapers, etc. This has not only brought us great convenience, but also saved us lots of paper. Well, I'm satisfied with the changes the Internet has brought to our reading habits, though there is still space for improvement on Internet reading.

5. Do you prefer the traditional way of reading or online reading?

I think I like both of them. There are different aims for different reading. If I'm to read for a recreational purpose, I would choose to have a book in my hands, sitting comfortably, and enjoy the book in a relaxing way. However, if I'm to read for a paper task, I would choose online reading, because software is capable of finding the exact information I would like to find in an e-book. That is obviously much more convenient than searching information through index. Therefore, I think it really depends on an actual situation to decide which one to choose.

6. Through what way, do you think, can make people enjoy reading?

My advice for this problem is to read what you like and what you are familiar with. There is an old saying that interest is the best teacher. Interest, as I see it, is the most important factor for readers. Only by having an interest can people have initiatives to read on their relevant topics. Therefore, to begin with, the most interesting topic will help people enjoy reading.

7. Will the way people read change in the future? What kind of changes will there be?

I expect there will be changes in the way people read in the future. As the Internet is developing rapidly, in the near future, e-books should be much more popular than they are today. It is possible that online reading will replace printed books, becoming the most important source of reading. I also expect the advent of audio textbooks so that it is more convenient for people to read. At that time, people will be able to listen to these books when they drive to work or do exercise. That is quite a fancy picture.

8. What kinds of books do people prefer when they are at different ages? What will you prefer reading when you are old?

Well, I suppose people do have different preferences over books when they grow. Young people like me may enjoy reading adventure stories. Middle-aged people will have preferences over love stories. I guess when people grow older, they may like reading stories they read when they were young. It's like a kind of nostalgic state of mind. To me, I think when I become old, as I've just mentioned, I'll probably re-read my old books to refresh the good feelings and happy memories.



14. Describe the clothes / jewelry on your special occasions.

You should say

what it is

who bought it for you

on what occasions you wear it

and explain why you wear it on such occasions.

It is an Esprit jean mini-skirt I bought for myself as a birthday gift in the first year of my college life.

I wear it on my birthdays, of course. I need to keep the special moments when I am still young enough to wear a mini-skirt. Since I have fallen in love with playing tennis, I usually wear it when playing tennis with my friends on a summer afternoon. Mini-skirt, beautiful sunshine, energetic girls, all these convince me that we are young and we can enjoy every minute of our life. Besides, girls like to show their slender legs, and a mini-skirt is the best choice. When invited to an informal party, wearing a mini-skirt makes me feel like a princess, especially when a boy asks me to dance.

I feel confident when wearing my skirt, so every time I am hosting a school ceremony, I wear it. Though everybody is looking at me, all my nervousness will be gone. I believe confidence, youth and passion are the spirit of Esprit jeans. When I feel low, I will walk alone on campus in my mini-skirt, thinking about happy memories.

Further questions

1. Talk about the style of a kind of clothes.

Clothes worn by hip-hop singers are now quite popular among young people. This kind of clothes looks special for its large and loose style. The colour of the clothes is simple, mainly black and white. It emphasises the unique character of a new generation and stands for a street culture which is passionate and dynamic. Young people declare their identity by wearing this kind of clothes.



2. Do you think clothing now is more important than before? Why?

Yes, it is much more important than before. Clothing is not for the simple purpose of keeping warm any more. It is something people wear to show their status, character and taste. People care about what to wear on different occasions because they believe dressing properly will leave a good impression on others. Some people even say that we are what we wear.

3. What type of clothing do you wear in different occasions?

Basically, I prefer clothes of simple styles such as jeans and T-shirts when I am on campus or with my friends. But when attending parties or formal get-togethers, I will choose dresses and high-heeled shoes. We'd better wear a suit or a white blouse when we go to work because it looks efficient and capable. Girls are usually dressed in a lady-like way when with their boyfriends.

4. What information can you find in another person's clothing?

We can read a lot from a person's clothing because, to some extent, the way people dress reflects their personalities, tastes and attitudes towards life. People who are confident and passionate usually wear colourful clothes. Those who dress in an avant-garde style care about lifestyle and are sensitive about fashion. Brand-name zealots emphasise tastes of life and usually expect a lot from life.

5. What is fashion? What are the differences between men's fashion and women's fashion?

Fashion is a lifestyle about optimism and brightness. Everyone can have his or her own unique and wonderful understanding of life, thus forming his or her view of what is fashion.

A car is the symbol of a man. For men, cars are the fashion that they are ever after. Social status, personal achievement, and male dignity are what they pursue, so they will probably define fashion from these aspects, whereas for women, fashion is something that can add to their female charm. Latest fashions, perfumes, and cosmetics are always at the centre of their attention.

6. On what occasions will people change their type of clothing?

People favour clothing that they have been used to. They change their type of clothing on the occasions that they think important to them. They want their styles of clothing to be considered proper and be recognised by other people. People especially care much about what they wear when facing people they have a crush on. That's why it usually takes a long time for girls to choose clothing before meeting Mr. Right.



7. Do you like fashionable clothes or traditional clothes?

I am in favour of fashionable clothes because they make me feel part of the youth world. Fashionable clothes pass us the newest trend of the fashion world. We have very beautiful traditional clothes, but they don't seem to fit me.

8. Talk about traditional clothes in Vietnam. Why do people like to dress in traditional clothes? Is there any special meaning?

We have traditional clothes such as *ao tu than*, or the so-called 4-part dress, and *ao dai*. Both of them are perfectly designed and convey unique Vietnamese culture. *Ao tu than* was designed as the dress of peasant women and widely worn by women in North Vietnam centuries before the *ao dai* came into being. *Ao dai* is the favourite of Vietnamese women because it best exposes the beauty of oriental women. It is almost the symbol of Vietnamese women. People like to dress in traditional clothes because they feel special when wearing them. This is something only for Vietnamese women. Besides, there is a "return to the ancient" movement in the fashion world. So traditional clothes can be the most fashionable.

9. Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of policemen in police uniforms.

Policemen in uniform look professional and trustworthy. The uniform gives a sense of security and stateliness. But it is unfair for policemen to wear the same clothes all the year around as it tends to be uncomfortable.

15. Describe a vehicle you want to have.

You should say

what it is

what features it has

when you can buy it

and explain why you want to have it.

Well, I like cars, and I hope that one day I can have my own car which is a BMW.

One thing I expect on my BMW is that it is equipped with GPS so that it can offer me advice on the most convenient driving route during rush hours. Since I'm a crazy fan of music, and I would like to enjoy my favourite music while I'm driving, I hope that my BMW will have a state-of-the-art audio system. I'm sure driving in that kind



of BMW will be a fancy thing to do. About why I'd like to have a BMW, I think there are two reasons. One is that it is much more comfortable to drive in a BMW than in a sedan because it offers more legroom. As much of a tall man as I am, extra legroom is very important for me. Another thing that attracts me to have a BMW is that it is safer to drive in a relatively large vehicle. After all, safety is a most important concern for many drivers.

Well, about when I can buy one, I don't think that will happen in a short time. As I know, BMWs have average higher prices over sedans and they do have a large consumption of petrol which will also cost quite a fortune, so I guess when I'm able to have a BMW, I'll probably be in my forties.

Further questions

1. How do you come here in the morning?

I came here this morning by taxi. It's quite convenient, only took me seven minutes or so to arrive. I always choose to take a taxi on important occasions like today. Well, of course, it costs much more than going by bus.

2. How many kinds of transport are there in Vietnam? What efforts does the government make to improve public transport?

Well, there are many kinds of transport: city bus, railway, airplane, coach, ship, and so on. People choose different transport means in accordance to their need. About the efforts to improve public transport, in Ho Chi Minh City, I think the government has invested a lot of money to build an underground train system. The city bus system has also improved a lot. Now we have more bus routes to choose from, and there are more buses running on the streets to meet the demand of the urban people.

3. Would you please make a comparison between the status quo of transport and the situation in the past?

Now in megacities like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, we have wider streets and more flyovers than before. Furthermore, new ring roads are built one after another to relieve the pressure in city centres. However, despite these efforts, traffic pressure doesn't seem to be relieved, because every day, there are a large number of new cars flowing onto the streets. Compared to the past, now we have a much heavier pressure on transport. I think that's the most apparent change in transport.



4. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of cars.

Cars provide people with an easy and convenient way to travel around, near and far. With the development of the road system, it is possible to get to most places in the city by car. However, it is not always to find a parking space for cars, and during rush hours, traffic congestion often takes place, so driving becomes a big problem. These are what I consider disadvantages of cars.

5. Do you like riding a bike? Is it safe? How about driving a car?

Yes. Like most Vietnamese people, I do ride a bike. In the past, particularly when I was young, I enjoyed riding a lot. However, as I'm growing older, I have gradually lost the interest in riding. There are two main reasons. Firstly, it's dangerous to ride since we Vietnamese people often ride without a helmet, and in many places, lanes are not separated for automobiles and bikes. Secondly, it saves energy to take a bus especially when going to far places. Of course, I like driving a car most. If I were rich enough, I'd definitely choose to drive.

6. Some people prefer short excursions while some choose long-distance travel. What's your advice for travellers?

My advice for travellers is not to forget to enjoy the beauty around you while you're taking time and money visiting distant places. I don't think that only by travelling to far places can offer us a better holiday experience. Actually, time and expenses don't allow many people to travel far often. In this sense, short excursions have their advantages. They're convenient and cheap. Actually, there are lots of beautiful sites around Ho Chi Minh City, and I do think them fine destinations for excursions.

7. What do you think of walking? What kind of people do you think like walking?

I find walking a very easy and effective exercise to keep my body healthy. According to a report, proper amount of walking exercise can be beneficial to our heart and lungs. About what kind of people like walking, I guess they're people who find doing sports too hard. Like them, I don't like to get myself too tired from exercising. For me, walking is much easier and doesn't require a lot of strength.

8. What kind of car do you want to buy if you have enough money?

Well, provided that I'm wealthy enough, I would like to buy a Bentley sedan. When I was in secondary school, I read an article about Bentley cars. I was deeply attracted to these cars because many parts of them are delicately handcrafted with luxurious materials. Bentley cars are not mass-produced, and that's what I value most. I believe this will make the driving experience with Bentley unique.



16. Describe the kind of book you would like to write (e.g. textbook, history book, story book).

You should say

what kind of book you would like to write

what you would write in your book

and what kind of people would read your book in your opinion.

The book that I'd like to write is something like an autobiography.

It's interesting to put down the things one has experienced and the places one has visited. That is something unique and distinguishes one from another. I would write about my life, about the heart attack I got when I was a child, about the growing pains I suffered, the love I gave and received. I would write about my friends, my family, the cities I've been to. Because it is exactly these events that formed my character and made my life full of stories. It feels good to share with others your story or your experiences.

My book is meant mostly for my family I'd reckon, for my children, or even my grandchildren to learn about my story, my happiness and sorrows. That's gotta be fun and of course meaningful doing this, I mean writing the book. I don't want to write anything boring that one has to cram for before exams.

Follow-up

1. When would you plan to write it?

I've actually started writing a diary and I got some articles published in some journals.

2. Do you like writing?

Yes, very much. For me, it's a good way to relax and look back on the past.



Further questions

1. What is the most important quality of a writer?

It all depends on the nature of the books he/she wants to write. For instance, he/she has to be faithful to the facts and objective if one wants to write a textbook or history book. You've got to be serious about writing that kind of stuff. As for fiction writers, they should be imaginative.

2. Why do people choose to write for a living?

I guess early last century, writing was the only possible means of making a living for women. Nowadays, many choose to write out of their personal interests. What's more, they can get paid for their interest.

3. What kind of difficulty would a writer face?

Financial instability, I guess, especially for freelance writers. The lack of inspiration is also terrible; writers usually come up with bottlenecks when they want to write something.

4. What do you think of libraries in your society?

They're quite important nowadays though I admit in the past when knowledge was not fully desired, many libraries were torn down and many books burnt to ash. In this new era, such things won't happen again. What's more, libraries are not only a place of serious learning but also a great place to have fun and entertain oneself.

5. How can libraries encourage people to read/learn more?

In many ways, but the most significant one is it is in the libraries that one can have free access to new books of vast varieties.

6. What do you think of the government spending money on libraries for the general public?

I totally agree that the government has many other issues to be concerned with while the budget is usually limited. But spending on libraries is always a wise choice, because it never does harm to a nation if its government encourages its people to learn more.



17. Describe a work of art.

You should say

what it is

where you saw it

what it is about

and how you like it.

Honestly, I'm not very keen on painting or sculpture, so this is really a tough topic for me. But if you ask me to talk about a painting, the one that comes to my mind first is the Mona Lisa, an oil painting by the famous Italian Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci. You've possibly heard of this masterpiece.

Well, actually, I've never seen the original painting, which is said to be on display in the French Louvre Museum. I remember the first time I saw it was when I was in primary school. It was a reproduction in the book on art history.

The picture is really amazing. The painting shows a woman looking out at the viewer with an "enigmatic smile". When you look at Mona Lisa, no matter where you stand, you find her looking at you and smiling at you.

My arts teacher told us that the Mona Lisa is perhaps the most famous piece in art history and is, perhaps, the most widely known portrait in the western world. My teacher also told us that you could learn a lot about other cultures from painting, which I believe is quite true. I think while I'm studying in the UK, I will sure go to Paris to have a look at the original painting.

Further questions

1. What kind of paintings do people in your country like?

It's hard to say, but traditional paintings like landscapes and calligraphy are quite popular.

2. What can you learn from western paintings?

First of all, there are the practical things like painting techniques and skills. Secondly, you can also learn a lot about western culture and religion.



3. Some paintings are very expensive, but people still want to buy them. What do you think?

I'm not very keen on painting, so I don't quite understand why some paintings are sold for an astronomical price. But maybe beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

4. What can you get from painting as a hobby?

It's a great hobby and like any other hobby, it gives you great pleasure and you can get tremendous satisfaction. And it is a kind of escape, too.

5. Should painting (arts education) be part of school curriculum?

Oh, definitely. I think painting should be included in the school curriculum. You know children can learn so much from painting. They learn to concentrate and to observe carefully, which can help them with academic subjects.

18. Describe something you made by yourself.

You should say

- what it is
- when you made it
- how you made it

and explain why you made it.

I want to talk about a wallet I made while I was a child. It was made of paper, actually. As a child, I dreamt of having a lot of adult luxuries that my parents wouldn't buy, so the only way out was to make them.

Once, I made a paper wallet with front and back covers and a lot of small bags in the middle by cutting paper and gluing them together. So I could carry paper notes, coins, and even a photo separately in different layers. Plus, I got a built-in notebook for taking notes, getting phone numbers. I even stuck some index cards inside the front cover for reminders and to-do lists. It folded up like a square and looked totally uncool, but I was proud to have it as a child.

I made it then only for fun and also to show off, but now I think it helped with my creative development. Until this day, my mum still keeps it for me. It's one of the best memories of my childhood.



Further questions

1. How can children benefit from making crafts?

Crafts can be great fun and are also very useful. They include sewing, knitting, making things for your home and more. These crafts can make children creative and imaginative and develop their manual skills to work out interesting and beautiful things. It also develops their special interests and skills.

2. Is a creative mind important?

Yes, I think so. Creativity is an essential quality required for future success. It doesn't matter what industry you are working in, we all need a bit of creativity. I am a teacher, and I need a bit of creativity to make my class fun.

3. Are there any differences between things made by hand and those by machinery?

Sure. First of all, if we are talking about a handicraft like a kite or a sculpture, then the one made by hand will probably be sold for a higher price than the one made by machines because it involves much more effort and a bit of creativity. Second, I don't know what you think about this, but personally, I think handmade things are better quality than machine-made things, and therefore are more durable.

19. Describe your favourite photo.

You should say

what it is about

when and where you took it

who took it for you

and explain why it is important to you.

Well, I'm going to tell you something about a photo I like very much. The photo was taken on my commencement almost two years ago. In that year, we graduated from high school and as part of the commencement ceremony, all the graduates of our class, as well as the teachers who had ever taught us during the 7 years, gathered in front of the admin building and had this photo taken.



Of course, the guy who took the photo was a professional photographer. It was not an easy task to put 30 people in one photo. So there was quite a lot of shouting and arguing and laughing. Everyone was cheerful and looking forward to the days to come.

A few days later, everyone got the picture. I framed it and nailed it to the wall in my bedroom. The reason why it is important to me is that it always reminds me of my fellow classmates, with whom I spent one of the best parts of my life. Though we don't contact each other as often as we used to, we still think of each other.

Further questions

1. What role do photos play in your life?

Oh, my photos are part of my life. A photo album is like a record of one's life experiences, isn't it? It can be a collection of our best memories, like the places we've been to, the people we love, and the happy occasions we have.

2. What do you think of the role of photos in the mass media?

Honestly, I can't imagine a newspaper without photos or other graphic illustrations. Photos in the mass media sometimes can say more than words or comments.

3. Why do people take photos?

Generally speaking, people take photos because they want to remember special occasions. Photos can be a permanent record of our life experiences.

4. Where do people often take photos?

If we like to take photos, we will do it anywhere and any time. Mostly, people take photos when they are visiting some historical sites or scenic places.

5. When do people often take photos?

People take photos on happy or important occasions, like a graduation ceremony, birthday parties, wedding receptions, or the birth of their children.



When I listen to it, I feel relaxed because it seems that I live in a world where there are nice people, clear streams, fresh air, vast farmland, country roads with plenty of daisies and beautiful sunshine. All the pressure, panic and anxiety due to the fierce competition of a quick-paced society disappear. Listening to country music makes me think that life is beautiful and comfortable and it refreshes and prepares me for a new day.

Further questions

1. How do people around you relax?

Many of my friends do sports which they believe can refresh themselves. Sports make them forget all the trouble at work. Some prefer to watch movies while others read comic books and novels, among which *Harry Potter* is the most popular one. Sometimes, a lavish dinner can also relax and satisfy them because they need to give themselves a treat for hard work.

2. What are the differences in ways of relaxing between men and women?

I think most men do not like to expose their pressure. They may ask several friends out to pubs to have a drink and let the alcohol take away all the trouble in life. Some of them may choose to do sports. Both are silent ways to relax. On the contrary, women tend to share their feelings. For them, talking with families and friends about their worries or anxieties is the best way to relax.

3. How do most people relax themselves? Why do they choose it?

I guess most people will choose to sleep when they need to relax. There is nothing better than a good sleep after a hard day's work. People feel depressed when they are under pressure or when they are tired. A good sleep can give their body as well as their mind a good rest.

4. What are the traditional ways to relax for Vietnamese people?

Greatly influenced by the religion of Buddhism which emphasizes the quietness of the soul, a lot of Vietnamese people like quiet ways of relaxing, among which meditation is a good one. Playing chess, fishing, having tea and shadow boxing are all ways of relaxing favoured by Vietnamese people.



5. What are the differences between pressure people are undergoing now and that they underwent 50 years ago?

50 years ago when there was not sufficient supply of commodities and basic needs of daily life, people struggled to feed their families. Material inadequacy and poor living conditions caused a lot of stress. The pressure people are undergoing now is basically anxiety caused by fierce, sometimes even cruel competition. In a quick-paced society, people have to work hard to maintain a decent life and not be left out by the changing world. But maybe some pressure is added by people themselves. They expect too much from life.

6. What do you think is the importance of relaxing?

Relaxing is very important because we all need to recharge ourselves with energy and prepare ourselves for the coming days. It is also out of a necessity to keep a healthy mind as well as a healthy body.

7. Talk about your view of pressure and why there is so much of it in our life.

Pressure comes from every aspect of our life. We take responsibilities of the society and the family. We seek jobs in an increasingly shrinking job market. We expect a better life, so we press ourselves to work harder than ever. For many young people, pressure also comes from relationships. They need to make a relationship last longer, and sometimes they get hurt. They try to perfect themselves in front of the opposite sex.

8. People always try to be more successful than their friends. Is it one of the many causes of pressure?

Definitely. This is called peer pressure. People compare themselves with their friends because they don't want to be the weaker one. It is understandable that everyone wants to be important in life. They feel threatened when they are surpassed by their peers.

9. In what way do you think pressure will develop in the future? How are we going to solve it?

We will face new pressures in the future. As new technologies come out, there must be a group of people feeling anxious. They are afraid that they cannot keep pace with modern technologies. In the job market, more and more work originally done by people will be taken by machines, so it is more difficult for people to find a satisfying job. What we can do is to arm ourselves with knowledge and not to panic. Also, we should believe we can find new ways to relax and make life easier.



20. Describe your favourite (wild) animal.

You should say

what it is

how you know about it

what it is like

and explain why you like it.

My favourite animals are dogs. They are said to be one of the brainiest animals in the world. They can help people in many ways. They can lead the blind, sniff out drugs and even rescue accident victims. Helpful as they are, most dogs are not very big. Oftentimes, the dogs I see stand no more than half a metre and weigh no more than 200 pounds. I like dogs very much. They can usually read the emotions of their owners. They can tell whether their owners are happy or upset just by judging from the owners' voice. In addition, dogs are very loyal to their owners. Stories abound in which dogs saved their owners at the cost of their own life. Indeed, they are humans' pals and I love them for this quality.

Further questions

1. Do you have a pet? What is your point of view on raising pets? Can you talk about its advantages and disadvantages?

Yes, I have raised a dog for three years. Her name is Kiki. In my opinion, raising pets is usually a delightful experience but it may also bring some troubles. On the one hand, raising a pet gives people a chance to learn how to love and be loved by another creature. In addition, a pet can always keep its owner company, so the owner will not feel lonely. On the other hand, raising pets can give rise to several problems. For example, dog waste or cat waste on the street of a community is neither pleasant to the eye nor good to the environment. Plus, too many barks or miaows can produce another source of noise pollution.

2. What do people in your country think about raising pets?

In my opinion, people in my country love to raise pets. As a nation that has a history of over 1,000 years, the Vietnamese people cherish the relationship between humans and nature. We always seek to strike a balance between nature and human society. Raising pets has helped us find that point at which we can live peacefully and happily together with animals.



3. Are there any safari parks in your country?

I think so. In order to protect animal rights, our country has set up a number of nature reserves in which animals can move freely and enjoy 100 percent freedom in whatever aspect. By doing so, wild animals can get back to the world under the rule of the jungle, restore their nature and become true animals rather than slaves or clowns in their owners' lives.

4. In your opinion, what improvements should be made to zoos?

To my thinking, zoos need to be larger so that animals kept in zoos can be given greater space to live. Zoos need to improve the living conditions of animals. A better and more balanced diet is needed to ensure the healthy growth of animals. Besides, a cleaner living place is also necessary.

D. Culture & Education

21. Describe your favourite way to relax.

You should say

what it is

where you like to relax

what you do exactly

and explain why you like this type of relaxation.

My favourite way to relax is to listen to country music. After a long day's work, I need light and sweet music to relax myself.

Usually, I will turn on the radio while taking a bath. At weekends, I like to spend my day on a sofa, reading fashion magazines while listening to American country music.

I especially appreciate country songs by John Denver. Whenever I listen to his famous song *Take me Home, Country Roads*, I feel being taken back to my childhood and the small town where I shared happy memories with my friends. Music is something that can purify human mind, and country music can always bring out those memories of good old days.



10. What kind of pressure will people come across when they go abroad?

People are under pressure when they are in a new environment where there are no friends, no family members to turn to. Pressures also come from language barriers, culture shock, totally different lifestyles and values. They feel panic because they suddenly lose their identity in a new social background.

11. Who chat more online, men or women?

Generally, men like to play online games and search new information when surfing online, while women prefer to chat in an online chat room because women like to talk. Women like to imagine romantic things which might not exist. But since cyber love is not new to us nowadays, I think more and more men and women participate in online chatting.

22. Describe a newspaper or magazine you like to read.

You should say

what it is

when and how often you read it

which section you like most

and explain why you prefer this newspaper / magazine to others.

The magazine that I like to read is *The Saigon Times Weekly*. Under the supervision of the *Saigon Times Group*, it is an English magazine which greatly benefits English learners.

I began to subscribe to this weekly magazine when I was in high school, and I kept reading it for several years. It was a happy moment for me every week I received it. It is a very colourful magazine and designed for both foreign and Vietnamese readers.

The magazine is divided into several sections. Apart from sections such as news, sports, business and science, it also includes space for entertainment, society and culture. The entertainment and the science sections are my favourite. The entertainment section provides us with pictures and brief reports about super stars. The science section introduces very cute new electronic inventions and other inventions that are close to our daily life.

I prefer this magazine because it combines language learning and the timelines of news perfectly. It is more like a magazine specifically made for both the young and older people. The information it provides is just what everybody is interested in. News, editorials, fashion, models, movie stars, this magazine seems to meet the needs of readers of English.



Further questions

1. Do you often read newspapers or magazines? Which sections do you like best?

For me, reading newspapers or magazines is a daily necessity. I need to know what is happening around the world. I like sections talking about fashion, lifestyle and travelling. I am also interested in new breakthroughs in science.

2. Have you ever done something for your favourite newspaper or magazine?

I think if you buy a magazine, you read it and you introduce new information it conveys to people around you, then you have already done something very important for the magazine.

3. What are the differences between newspapers and magazines? What are their advantages and disadvantages respectively?

Firstly, newspapers are much stricter than magazines on the aspect of timelines of the information they provide. That is why most newspapers are dailies, while magazines are usually weeklies and monthlies. The second difference is that reports in newspapers should be comprehensive but brief, and the information should be precise and views objective. Readers get a great deal of information by reading newspapers. In contrast, magazines usually focus on one aspect of life and go deep into it. Readers get pretty much information on one issue. Lastly, newspapers are usually cheaper than magazines.

4. Which group of people prefers reading newspapers? Why are they willing to buy newspapers?

Elderly people who are not used to other access of information, such as the Internet or TV, prefer reading newspapers. People who have flexible work places may prefer newspapers because it is more convenient.

Some people are willing to buy newspapers because they are cheap but they provide comprehensive information.

5. What are the differences between newspaper reporters and magazine reporters?

Newspaper reporters work on a flexible but busy schedule. They need to get first-hand news, so they are the witnesses of many great events. They provide facts but little personal opinions. They have to be really quick in piecing together information. Magazine reporters pay more attention to the significance of a certain event but not the timelines. They are allowed to work out an article during a relatively long-time span, but they have to dig deep into an event. Magazine reporters only need to focus on one topic. For example, a reporter for a travelling magazine only needs to write things on this aspect.



6. What are some qualities of a good journalist?

The most important quality of a journalist is to be highly professional. That means a good journalist should be objective and not be influenced by his or her own opinion. A good journalist is supposed to be honest and sensitive to new information.

7. Do news agencies have the right to report everything? Can they criticise the government? Do they need to be restricted?

They can report everything as long as things reported are the truth. Newspapers are not only tools to provide information but also tools to promote social equity and reveal the dark side of society.

They can criticise the government if there is something for the government to improve. But they have to be restricted because we cannot make sure everyone in this profession performs legally. It is people in this profession that should be restricted but not the news industry.

8. Do you think that newspapers will lose many of their readers in the future? Why?

Newspapers will lose some of their readers as more and more people realize the efficiency and convenience of getting information from the Internet. Besides, the popularization of broad band will further distinguish the advantage of the Internet. Although there are many people sticking to the traditional way of getting information and the newspapers are making efforts to be more attractive, the Internet will snatch many readers from newspapers.

9. Will the Internet take the place of newspapers and magazines?

No, never. The development of the Internet may have a great impact on newspapers and magazines, but it will not take the place of them. The Internet provides more efficient and abundant access to information, but many people do not trust what is posted online. And people are curious but alert about this virtual cyberspace. In some ways, newspapers and magazines are more convenient than the Internet. For example, people read newspapers or magazines when using public transport on their way to work, and it is impossible to surf online when they are in a hurry. Besides, reading newspapers and magazines is a more healthy and natural way.



23. Describe a film.

You should say

the name of the film
when and where you saw it
what the story is about
whether it is a happy story or a sad one
and explain why you like it.

The film I would like to introduce to you is known to a lot of people, I suppose. It is an American film called *Titanic*.

I've seen it at least four times and the first time I saw it was in high school, and that was the year 1999. I saw it at home on a rented DVD because that's much cheaper.

The film tells a love story on the famous giant ship Titanic, which unfortunately sank on her virgin voyage. The main characters in the story are Jack and Rose. Rose is a daughter of a deceased English patrician. However, the harsh fact is that her father does not leave any asset for her and her mother to survive on. The only thing she inherits from her father is the noble status. To survive, she was engaged to an American businessman who she didn't like. Then on the Titanic, Rose meets Jack and they fall in love. But in the end, only Rose survives the accident.

I regard this film a very delicately made tragedy. I like it because the director created a very good stage, the Titanic, as the background of this bitter story. Through the mischance of the people on the ship, I gain deeper insights into the misfortune of Jack and Rose. Under the tragic atmosphere set by the director, the story becomes moving, touching, and particularly impressive.



Further questions

1. Which film has impressed you most so far?

Last summer, I saw a very excellent American film called *Cold Mountain*. The story is originally written by Charles Frazier and is shot by Director Anthony Minghella. It is a touching one telling how a Confederate soldier makes his way back to his home town, Cold Mountain, to find his love during the Civil War. The film has a very thought-provoking plot and my insight into the story is that wars change people in a way we can hardly imagine. Until now I can still feel the shock the story has brought to me, so I find this film the most impressive one so far.

2. What kind of film do you like?

I like science fiction. As a young man, I'm crazy about science fiction. From a very early age, I began to read science fiction novels, therefore it's not a surprise that science fiction films usually attract my attention. These films attract me not only because of their exciting plots, but also for their amazing special visual and audio effects. *Star Wars*, *Artificial Intelligence*, *Jurassic Park*, etc., all of these are my favourite films.

3. What kind of film do you think is more popular in your country?

Well, I'm a big fan of films and usually read reports about them. It appears to me that in my country, comic films usually have a better performance in the box office. I'm not going further to analyze the culture behind this fact, but I guess this is mainly because of how average people in my country identify the aims of films – to entertain themselves. Probably this is also the same in foreign countries.

4. What's the difference between children's and adult's tastes in films?

I think when choosing a film to see, young people may usually pay more attention to the visual effect attractiveness, while adults will place more value on the content of the film. Another difference is that youngsters, because they are more exposed to western culture, tend to like western movies, while at the same time, adults often like watching national films. A very good example is that Hollywood films are very popular among the youth, and local films often have a larger adult market.

5. Do you prefer to see a film at home or in a cinema?

Well, as for me, two factors will influence me on choosing whether to see a film at home or in a cinema. Firstly, I often choose to see a film in a cinema when it requires visual and audio effects. This is particularly true for high-tech films. As for literary films, I often watch them at home, simply because it's a fine place for quiet meditation and



appreciation. Another important factor preventing me from going to the cinema too often is the expensive price. To me, a student whose monthly budget is rather tight, seeing a film in a cinema is still a luxury which can't be enjoyed too often.

6. Is cinema important in Vietnam?

Possibly yes. It is the fact that the advent of the DVD has, to a great extent, reshaped people's habit of enjoying films and it has created huge losses for cinemas. However, cinemas in Vietnam still have a large consumers' market, and they play irreplaceable roles in the film industry. Actually, accompanied by the improved living standard, more and more Vietnamese people begin seeing films in a cinema, and the growth of the audience remains steady. Cinemas are now important in Vietnam, and I believe their importance will continue to increase in the future.

7. What's your opinion on film stars?

Well, I like seeing films but unfortunately I'm not a fan of film stars. It is usually the gist of the theatrical trailer rather than the particular film star whom I favour that attracts me to go to the cinema. After all, unlike other people, what I enjoy is the character in the film, not the person who plays the role. However, I think the influence of artists can never be overlooked, because they can be very influential on the results at the box office, which is considered highly important for filmmakers.

8. What's the difference between Vietnamese stars and international stars? Which are more popular?

In my opinion, the difference between Vietnamese stars and international stars is not on themselves but on their audience. Empirically speaking, Vietnamese stars have a larger market here in Vietnam and they have a diversified audience body, while for foreign stars, they have less audience and the young people account for a significant portion of their audience body. Cultural difference and the language barrier I think are the two major causes for this phenomenon.

9. Who do you think is the most famous foreign star in your country? Why?

Well, it's really hard to say who is the most famous foreign star here in my country. Personally, I favour the Academy Award winner Nicole Kidman. I value her because she's good at body language and she can skillfully interpret the different roles she plays. About other people's favourite, I think it has a lot to do with the audience's age and film choice. Since people have preferences over different kinds of foreign films and have limited access to them, it is reasonable that for the Vietnamese audience, there is no one foreign star that can be singled out as the most famous.



10. Do you see any changes in today's actors or actresses?

Well, it's hard to say. Certainly, I can see clear distinctions between today's artists and the artists of the past decades. They are different in the styles of acting. Seeing the films shot 20 years ago, it is quite easy to find that the Vietnamese actors or actresses were performing in quite an exaggerating way than people are doing today. Today's artists are much more natural both in their body language and delivery of lines. As for me, I appreciate the later style, and I believe it fits the taste of the majority of today's audience.

11. What is the most important condition for an actor or actress to succeed?

In my opinion, the most important quality to guarantee the success of an actor or an actress is the talent in acting. There are different vocations. Some vocations merely require people work hard to succeed, while some other vocations, at the same time, also expect people to have talent in doing the job, and I think acting is the kind of work that falls into this category. I find acting a very special vocation because without born talent, I wouldn't expect the success of an actor nor an actress no matter how hard he or she tries. This may sound strange, but it's really how I feel.

12. What's your view on the violence in films? Why is there so much violence in them?

To tell the truth, though I'm fully aware of the negative impact caused by the violence in films, I'm neutral with this social phenomenon. Yes, it's true that violence in films has indirectly led to lots of social violence, but I don't think films are to be blamed for. Rather, the people who are involved in social violence should be criticized for their incapacity to discern right and wrong. About why there is much violence in films, I think it's because films are shot to satisfy people's need to recreate, and many people do have a certain interest in watching violence, so in order to gain business profit, I feel it is justified for filmmakers to convey violent shots in the motion pictures.



24. Describe your favourite sport.

You should say

what it is
what clothes or equipment it involves

and explain why you like it.

Whenever I am faced with the question about my favourite sport, my answer is always the same: jogging. It has accompanied me for nearly three years and I hope I can keep this habit as long as possible.

It is said that the afternoon is the best time for exercise. When I am free in the afternoon, I will put on my comfortable clothes and running shoes, and then go jogging.

There are several reasons why I love jogging. First of all, it is very easy to do. Unlike basketball or football, which requires a particular place, jogging does not have a strict demand for a place. I live on the university campus, so usually I jog on the playground or simply on the campus road. Second, I do not have to pay a lot of attention on the exercise itself. I can always enjoy the beautiful scenery around the playground as long as I want. Next, jogging is a very good exercise for mental relaxation. After jogging for about 20 minutes, I will reach a point where all my troubles and pressure seem to disappear. At that time, I keep telling myself deep in my heart that it is so good to be alive; everything will be OK; enjoy your life! Generally speaking, I jog 45 minutes in a run. When I stop, physically I am a little tired, but psychologically I feel refreshed. This is the major reason I love jogging.

To me, jogging is not merely my favourite sport. Now it has become a very important part of my life.

Further questions

1. Why do some people not like sports?

In my opinion, the major reason is that those people regard sports as an extra burden. They have not realized the importance of sports to their health and life. Some people are simply too lazy to do exercise. Lack of time is their usual excuse. There are also people who feel too ashamed to do sports, either they are overweight or afraid of being laughed at.



2. What kind of sports do Vietnamese people like? Why?

I think the widely loved sport is badminton. Shadow boxing is very popular, especially among the seniors. As Vietnam is more ready to absorb good things from abroad, sports are also one field. Nowadays, many imported sports, such as yoga, are widely practised by Vietnamese people.

3. Should the government support sports?

I think so. Doing exercise is a very good way to improve people's physical condition. How often people practise and what kind of exercise they do is an important indicator of their quality of life. If the government supports sports, more public facilities will be offered and more people will realize the importance of sports.

4. Why do young people like some dangerous sports, like bungee jumping, even though some have injured or lost their lives?

Young people are always fond of exciting experience, which offers an outlet for their energy. They are proud of being adventurous. Another reason is that nowadays, young people may face considerable pressure from their family, study or relationships. Dangerous sports can serve as a channel through which they can let go of the pressure, even though it only lasts a very short period.

5. What is the difference between young people and old people in their attitudes towards sports?

I think there are quite a lot of differences. For old people, the most important thing is to keep good health and fully enjoy the rest of their life. For young people, however, good health is not the only thing they are concerned with. Experience is also a concern. That's why many young people are quite interested in extreme sports and outdoor sports.

6. Compare the advantages and disadvantages between indoor and outdoor sports.

Every coin has two sides. Both of them have advantages and disadvantages. For indoor sports, it does not rely much on the weather, and there are modern facilities offered. But sometimes it is too crowded in the gym, especially on holidays or at weekends. Thus, the air is stuffy and people cannot get enough room to practise. As for outdoor sports, the air and room are relatively better than that of in the gym, but people cannot practise when the weather is bad. Meanwhile, the facilities cannot match those in the gym.

7. Should tobacco companies be allowed to sponsor sports activities?

I do not think tobacco company sponsorship is a good idea. It is true that sports events which need a large sum of money, such as the Olympic Games, need commercial



sponsorship. It allows organizers to provide better conditions for the athletes and to publicize this activity. But if tobacco companies are among the sponsors, this activity is actually advertising for these tobacco companies, which is not in line with doing sports. Anyway, organizers can always find other sponsors besides tobacco companies.

8. What do you prefer, exercise alone or on a team?

I think it depends on what kind of exercise we are doing. Some sports like basketball, football, and ping-pong need more than one person to practise. There are also sports that are very tiring, so people need encouragement from each other when needed. On the contrary, some sports, for instance jogging or fishing, require a comparatively quiet situation. So it is better to practise them alone.

25. Describe a TV programme.

You should say

- what the name of the programme is
- when you watched it
- what it talked about

and explain why you like this programme.

Talks with Stars talk show is a popular TV programme.

I watched this programme for the first time about two years ago. By that time, this programme had been on TV for one year and become popular since then.

In each episode, the programme invites one artist or two to share with the audience their career and life experiences. They can be singers and dancers, photographers and directors, actors and actresses, and so on. The show offers us a full depiction of the stars. It tells the audience stories that are behind the success of the famous figures – the hardships, the tears and the happy moments as well.

This programme makes us feel that those stars are ordinary people like each one of us. They, too, have experienced hard times. They, too, have made mistakes and suffered from them and then drawn lessons from them. Thus, it shortens the distance between the audience and the stars. They look more like real people. That is the most important reason why I like it so much.



Further questions

1. What are the features of night programmes? And is there any difference between the past and the present?

I think people tend to be more emotional and sentimental at night. So night programmes appeal more to their emotions. They are inclined to be slow-paced and quiet. Generally speaking, there are fewer noisy programmes, such shows with lots of action or concerts.

As the economy develops and Vietnam becomes more open to the rest of the world, night programmes are improving as well, in terms of variety and quality. In the past, there were fewer night programmes and they did not last long into the night. At present, there are more and more night programmes being put on television to enrich people's lives, especially people who are inclined to sleep late.

2. What influence do TV programmes have on children and older people?

For children, I think TV programmes definitely have a great influence on them. As children, they have limited access to the society. The major means for them to get to know the world is through TV programmes, especially the programmes designed for children. They have a great influence on children in terms of arousing their interests, shaping their characters and helping them to know more about the society.

For older people, TV programmes first serve as a kind of company, especially for those who live alone. They always keep their television set on, feeling as if someone is talking to them and they do not feel lonely. Secondly, the programmes keep them in touch with the world and they will not feel left out by the society.

3. How are TV programmes developing in your country?

They are developing very fast in terms of variety and quality. They are developing with the nation's rise in the world. Many programmes made in foreign countries are increasingly coming in. Now we can also watch English programmes both produced in our country and imported from foreign countries.

4. What is the current situation of modern cinema in Vietnam?

I'm not optimistic about the situation of modern cinema in Vietnam, because more people prefer to watch DVDs at home alone or with friends. Although they offer facilities of high quality, many cinemas are reported losing money. The situation is that the DVD industry is flourishing and there are too many pirate DVDs that the cinema seems to be unable to compete with them.



5. What do you think of the situation that many people watch DVDs instead of going to the cinema?

I think the situation is understandable. Personally speaking, I prefer watching DVDs at home to going to the cinema. Firstly, I can watch DVDs alone or with my friends instead of sitting in a cinema where I cannot speak loudly and cannot move as I like. Secondly, I can pause in the middle when I have to answer the phone or go to the bathroom without missing any part of the film. Last but not least, I can rewind or repeat some parts which I am interested in to see more closely and clearly.

26. Describe an advertisement that you have seen and that interested you.

You should say

when and where you saw it

what it was about

what you felt about it

and explain why you found the advertisement particularly interesting.

I want to talk about an advertisement for a shampoo from Clairol.

It goes like this: "Do you want to know how in fact Sleeping Beauty woke up?" says a sexy male voice. Then Sleeping Beauty comes into sight. She is lying in her bed, sleeping soundly. Suddenly she smells something, and then wakes up and goes directly towards a pond with an open bottle of Clairol shampoo near it. She is obviously fascinated by the fragrance when she uses the shampoo to wash her hair. The next scene is of the Prince coming and Sleeping Beauty is back in her bed with her beautiful and fragrant blond hair down to the shoulders. This is the end of the advertisement and we can imagine that the Prince will kiss Sleeping Beauty to wake her up and they will live happily ever after. In fact, we know that what actually wakes her up is not the kiss but the shampoo.

I feel this advertisement is very creative and original. It shows the prominent feature of the shampoo – fragrance to good effect. It rewrites a very famous fairy tale and gives it a new meaning. I like the hair of Sleeping Beauty in particular, for it is very smooth and attractive after the washing. Personally, I think it is very successful because many of my friends bought this shampoo because of the advertisement.



Further questions

1. How does advertisement influence people?

On the one hand, it offers a lot of information about a certain product or brand. It leads the trend and direction of purchase. Besides, good advertisements can also be considered as a form of art. On the other hand, there are some fake advertisements. Those are the advertisements which contain false information. In other words, they lie in the advertisements. When people buy things because of false advertisements and then realize they have been cheated, they may lose confidence in other products. If this kind of thing continues to happen, it would cause a vicious circle. In addition, advertisements which involve sex or violence may have a bad effect on children.

2. What do you think advertisements should specifically pay attention to?

Honesty is the best policy and it should be the first element taken into consideration in the advertising business. They should not exaggerate or lie about the effect of the product in the advertisement and should consider the influence the advertisement has on children. They should eliminate scenes which are not suitable for children to watch.

3. Do advertisements have a great influence on children and their parents? Why?

Yes. Advertisements supply children and their parents with information and keep them in touch with the latest trends and fashions. But some scenes in advertisements are not suitable for children to watch, such as the ones involving sex or violence. These kinds of advertisements certainly have a bad influence on children. Sometimes children want to buy a certain product after watching its advertisement and their parents have to buy it. This may lead to children getting the bad habit of purchasing and wasting money. They may think that they can get whatever they like. If their parents do not buy them the thing that they like, it may cause tension between the two generations.

4. Why are many Vietnamese people willing to pay a lot for brand-name products?

First of all, living conditions are getting better. People are richer than before and able to pay for expensive brand-name products. Secondly, brand-name products are of high quality and offer good after-sales service. To some extent, brand-name products show their status. It makes them feel good to show off in front of other people.



27. Describe a useful website you have visited.

You should say

what the website was

how you found the address for this website

what the website contained

and explain why it was useful to you.

Well, the first website that comes to my mind is Google, one of the most famous search engines in the world.

It's the first website I've ever known and also the most frequently visited. I got its address because it was contained in my computer, from this you can see how influential it is. It is just like the root of the tree for the global Internet, starting from here, you can reach all kinds of information. The front page is simple, well-designed and informative. We just need to type in what we need to search for and in a few seconds, the whole world appears on the computer screen.

To me, it's useful because it's not complicated, like an ATM machine. It's also like a bus with no conductor; I can go anywhere and won't lose my way home. For example, when I want to find some materials for my thesis, I use Google because it's more brief and efficient than libraries. What matters is there are flaws existing in the Google website. Sometimes the search result is not accurate enough and some of them are even unavailable. Basically, Google is a miracle.

Further questions

1. What effect has the Internet had on the way people generally communicate with each other?

Quite a lot, I think. For example, I'm now far away from my parents, but they can see me and talk to me simultaneously on Yahoo Messenger or Skype, and we do not feel that far away geographically any more. Compared to the telegraph years, it's a shocking change already.



2. Why do you think the Internet is being used more and more for communication?

Once again, take myself as an example. I still remember the time when I expected a very important letter, I had to wait for days or even months! But now through the Internet, e-mail, or chat room, it's a matter of seconds. Now 6 girls are living in a room at the dorm, and they own 5 laptops! From this number, you can clearly see why we all think the Internet is being used more and more for communication.

3. How reliable do you think information from the Internet is? Why? What about the news on the Internet?

Whether the information is trustworthy, I think, should be judged by different situations. Because people hide their identities on the Internet and speak freely, they are not supposed to be responsible for their remarks. About news, I have not considered it much; actually all forms of media have false information, not only the Internet. Personally, I think choosing a website with credit would reduce the possibility of getting wrong information.

4. Why do you think some people use the Internet for shopping? Why doesn't everyone use it in this way?

Well, the reason is simple. It's so convenient, you know, you can do shopping anywhere at any time, in your office and at home. Still, many people do shopping not simply because they are running out of daily necessities or clothes. For them, shopping is great fun. That's why there are still a number of people who are not keen on Internet shopping.

5. What kinds of things are easy to buy or see online? Can you give some examples?

I suppose things which are rarely seen on the market or only can be bought in foreign countries or digital products. For example, my friend bought a Barbie which has been limitedly produced from the US on the Internet.

6. Do you think shopping on the Internet will be more or less popular in the future? Why?

Definitely it will be more prosperous in the future as its strengths are clearly seen: efficiency, quickness and convenience. Also, as the credit system is growing gradually in every country, we can foresee that shopping on the Internet will be more popular in the future.



28. Describe a popular game that children play.

You should say

- what it is
- when you played it
- how many people are needed
- how to play it

and explain why you think it is interesting.

The game that comes to my mind is a game called "The Eagle and the Chicks". It is great fun and easy to play.

When I was a child, I played this game very often. The game needs at least five kids to start, and the more kids participating, the more fun it is. One child will play the "eagle" and another child as the "mother hen". The rest of the kids will be the "chicks", lining up behind the hen, with both hands holding on to the clothes of the chick in front. In the game, the eagle tries to catch one of the chicks, who then takes his or her role as the eagle. The mother hen tries to protect her children with her arms stretched.

"The Eagle and the Chicks" enjoys great popularity among children in my country. They definitely get great excitement. In addition, they learn how to work as a team, which is an essential skill later in their life.

Further questions

1. What is the difference between boys and girls in terms of playing games?

I think that boys like to play games that require more physical strength, whereas girls like to play games that require social skills. In general, the games they play more or less reflect the roles they are going to play when they grow up.

2. What is the difference between adults and kids in terms of playing games?

Sometimes there is no difference. Some adults play games like crazy, while overall kids play games in order to learn. In general, they play games mostly for fun.



3. What is the difference between games played in the past and those played nowadays?
Actually I don't see many differences. Football, basketball, ping-pong have been with us for decades and remain the most popular sports games.
4. Can you give me more examples of different games?
Oh sure. Hide-and-peek is a popular game among children. And playing-house, too, where children pretend to be adults and play the roles of father and mother. That's great fun.
5. What age do you think is the best time to play? Why?
There's no "best" time. One is never too old to play.

29. Describe a subject you have taken in school.

You should say

what it is

who taught it

what you learned from the subject

and explain why you like it.

I'd like to talk about my favourite subject, English. I have always been excellent in English since high school. This is thanks to my first English teacher – my mother. By the time I studied in her class, she had taught English for 15 years. She was the course coordinator, responsible for syllabus design and young teacher training.

My mother used a very special teaching method in the class. The whole class was divided into four groups, competing with each other. The group who answered the most questions correctly in the class would be given some prize at the end of the lesson. Most students prepared for the lessons very well in order to answer the teacher's questions correctly. We found it very exciting and tried to earn more points for the group.

I have learnt not only the English knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, but also communication skills and team spirit. You know, I was one of the group leaders, so I needed to communicate with my group members so that we could cooperate well with each other and win the prize.



Further questions

1. What subjects do you like to learn in high school?

My favourite subjects in high school are English and history. I'm always curious about other cultures and what happened and are happening on the other side of the world.

2. What subjects should you learn in high school?

I think in my country, children get a very strong education in academic subjects like maths, physics, English, and so on, but they are not offered lessons that develop their social skills and life skills. I wish I could learn how to drive or how to cook in school.

3. What do you think of the teachers in your school?

I like most of them because they are nice, patient, and conscientious about their job, but sometimes they are very rigid and strict with us.

4. Could you give some suggestions on child education?

Well, the most important thing, I think, is to arouse children's interests in learning rather than force them to learn more than they can manage. In my country, since school education is still quite exam-oriented, many students have concentrated too much on textbooks and rote learning, neglecting the physical and spiritual dimensions of personal development.

5. What are the benefits of self-teaching and being taught by teachers?

I think both ways have their advantages and disadvantages. Self-teaching gives students freedom to choose what they learn and the pace to learn at. You know how you can learn better, after all. However, education isn't only about learning. It also provides students with social experiences and develops their social skills. Teachers play a very important role in the process. They can help their students, guide them a little bit, organize discussions, etc. So maybe the best way is to combine them both.



30. Describe one thing you find interesting about cultural difference.

You should say

what it is

how you learned about this cultural difference

and explain why you think it's interesting.

I was abroad once while I was in my secondary school, and in my current college, which is affiliated to the Vietnam Foreign Ministry, I have a lot of chances to get in touch with foreign people. They are either worldly renowned scholars or diplomats from around the world: the Arabian world, the European countries, North and Latin America, and Africa. Foreign culture is then becoming a very vague term. The more people I meet, the harder it is to generalize. It's like asking a foreigner who's spent years in Vietnam what Vietnamese culture is. However, I can still talk about a most recent case that happened though it was not interesting. One of my classmates failed a course because he got a problem identified as plagiarism by a professor from the UK. I mention this because none of my Vietnamese teachers drew our attention to this issue. Since I attended college, we have always been warned in the first classes given by all 12 foreign teachers that plagiarism is seriously banned. We have been given detailed training on how to make quotations and write bibliographies. Though the situation in my country is improving, it is still far from enough. I regard this a difference in the degree of respect to people's intellectual property. Plagiarizers are called intellectual thieves by my foreign professors. That's what I see about cultural difference, and it's also an issue I should now pay more special attention to.

Further questions

1. Do you think it is necessary to learn foreign culture when learning English?

It depends on the expectations of learners. For most people, English is just considered a tool necessary for their work. They learn English because they need to read foreign information on their business for reference. For example, an engineer learns English to understand the latest information in his area. Therefore, background knowledge about English culture isn't strongly desired. However, for people who have higher expectations on their English proficiency, foreign culture is a vital element in knowledge storage. After



all, language and culture are not two solely independent concepts. Anyway, learning foreign culture is highly appreciated and can very positively broaden one's scope, not merely within the area of language learning.

2. Do you think that foreign languages are easier to learn if you have an interest in their culture?

Yes, I think so, but they are easier to learn if learners have a talent in language learning. I weigh this factor more than interest. The question is how people develop interest in an area. People are not born with interests in certain fields, but people are born with special talents. This has been proved scientific. Many language learners don't work hard but can still command beautiful language. That is because they are linguistically talented. I think that people have interest in the fields they are good at, not that they perform better because they have that interest. For example, I'm interested in English because I'm capable of doing it. Therefore, I think talent, particularly in language studies, is more important than interest.

3. Is it necessary for people to go abroad to study English?

It depends. People learn English for various reasons. For many of them, English is not that useful considering the nature of their work, but under the current inappropriate system, it is a necessary skill in many posts in order to get promotion. I think for them, there's no need to spend time and money to learn a foreign language overseas, because what they need is to pass a required exam.

Furthermore, many people simply cannot afford the expensive price. However, for people who need to have further analysis in English literature and linguistic studies, an overseas studying experience is undoubtedly very necessary.

4. How do you think living in a foreign country can help you understand more about your own culture?

It helps a lot. We have a phrase called "culture clash". It is like when you lose something, you begin to appreciate its existence. Only when placing oneself in a different culture can one feel the existence of traditional values in his or her home country. Culture is intangible, and during most of the time, it can't be seen but can only be experienced. I've been to the States once, and it wasn't until then when I began to have realistic ideas about what cultural difference is. I guess that's why cultural exchanges are highly encouraged.



31. Describe an important change in your life.

You should say

what it is

what the effect on you is

how you feel about it

and explain why it is important.

Actually, that sounds kind of unusual but one of the turning points in my life was when I got my first bicycle.

I remember it was a present my father gave me on my seventh birthday. It was a brand-new bicycle. You know, back in the 1980s in Vietnam, having a bicycle was really something, especially for a boy of only seven.

That was a very important day for me. For the first time, I could go out on my own and go as far as I wanted to. I used to polish the bicycle every day and take really good care of it. Of course, that only lasted a few months, and then I lost interest in it.

I think the reason that it was an important change for me is for the first time in my life, I realised what a fantastic thing it was to be free, and to go anywhere with your free will. That was the beginning of a lifelong craving for travelling. By the time I graduated from university, I had almost been to most of the major cities in Vietnam. And now I'm thinking of the world outside Vietnam. Of course, as a return for his kindness, I will buy my father a brand-new car on his 60th birthday.

Further questions

1. What changes are you going to make in the future?

I don't know. But the immediate one is that I will go and study in the UK. I believe it is going to be another important change in my life.

2. What do you think are the main changes over the past 20 years in Vietnam?

Well, that's a tough question. I think there are drastic changes in Vietnam in the last 20 years, in economic terms and in social terms. But the one I feel the strongest about is that the living standard is rising dramatically.



3. Are there any new changes that are taking place right now?

Vietnam is a dynamic and ever-changing country. There are always new things and new ideas coming out. But the one that comes to my mind first is a heightened awareness in environmental protection. Both the government and the citizens are becoming increasingly concerned with the world we live in.

32. Describe a wedding that you attended.

You should say

when it was

who got married

what happened at the wedding

and how you felt about it.

Well, I'm going to talk about my own wedding. My wife and I got married in late September, in my home town, Can Tho City. We held the reception 2 months later in Hanoi, my wife's home town.

We had quite a large reception, about 200 guests, I believe. My wife wore a traditional *ao dai*, but I wore a modern business suit.

We had a lavish dinner consisting of different dishes from various provinces. Of course, there were formal speeches, the exchanging of wedding rings, and so on. Afterwards, most of the guests indulged themselves in the wedding feast. Quite a number of my friends and I got drunk. My wife was unhappy about that but she was OK the next day, though.

Also, we took a lot of photos and we even videotaped the ceremony and the reception party. My wife and I watched the videotape again and again. We believe that was the happiest moment in our lives.



Further questions

1. What's the difference between Vietnamese weddings and western weddings?

I've never been to a western wedding reception, so I'm not sure of the differences. However, there are some differences which you can tell from common sense. In Vietnam, the wedding is held either at home or in a grand hotel, while a western wedding is most likely to be held in a church. There's one more difference, which I'm not very sure about. My friends told me that in English-speaking countries, the brides often dress in white, which stands for purity. But in Vietnam, red is the colour for such happy occasions.

2. What's the difference between weddings in the past and now?

I think weddings have changed a lot over time. When I was a child, weddings were mostly held at home and most relatives came to the groom or bride's house to give a hand. But now receptions are usually held in a big hotel and there is not much preparation of cooking at home. Also, the new couples take a lot of photos not only before the wedding party but also during the ceremony and reception.

3. What kind of people will be invited to the wedding?

Generally, friends and relatives of the bride and the groom will be invited.

4. What wedding gifts do they bring?

Well, wedding gifts are almost the same – an envelope with money in it.



E. Events

33. Describe an exciting trip / long-distance trip you made.

You should say

when you made the trip

where you went

what you did

and explain why it was exciting.

Last summer I had a very nice holiday with my parents in Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa province. It is a very famous coastal city in Vietnam. The place is very beautiful, and each year thousands of tourists spend their holidays there.

We spent four whole days in Nha Trang. We spent our time visiting tourist sites along the coastal area. The blue sky, navy sea, white beaches, my eyes are filled with beautiful landscapes. My parents and I also took the golden chance to swim and enjoy the sunbathing on the comfortable beach. One more thing worth mentioning is that I also tried scuba-diving there. It was so fascinating. I swam very close to the coral beds and beautiful fishes swam beside me elegantly. Never shall I forget such a unique experience. Well, of course, that did cost me a lot. Apart from seeing the sceneries, we also had a lot of delicious seafood like lobster, crab, oyster, and so on. Even today, I can still clearly remember the feast I enjoyed there.

For four years, as my parents were always busy with their business, my family didn't have a chance to spend a nice holiday together. That's why this trip to Nha Trang has been a very exciting one for me. I'll always treasure this long-distance trip as my best memory.

Further questions

1. What is the vehicle that Vietnamese people often use when they travel?

I think people usually choose the vehicle in accordance with the distance of their destinations. Coach, train, airplane and ship can all be possible choices for travellers. Generally speaking, people in Vietnam prefer to use mini-vans when they travel. I guess this is because mini-vans bring about convenience and freedom for those who use them.



2. What do you think is the difference between individual and group travel?

I think if people choose to travel alone, they can have a more flexible travel plan than group travellers. There is no holding to a strict time schedule and travellers can stay at a particular sight as long as they want. But for group travel, I think it's advantageous in terms of cost. For group travellers, tickets, rooms and board are booked by a travel agent. In this way, travellers can save money for their trip and they'll have less concern about things while travelling.

3. What do you think are the pros and cons of travelling?

I like travelling and I've been to many places both locally and abroad. I think travel is a very good way to relax myself from the heavy pressure of working and studying. Moreover, it gives me chances to broaden my knowledge and to meet interesting people in different places. However, travel is usually time and strength consuming and sometimes it can be very expensive, so I think, definitely, it's not a good choice for everyone.

4. There are a lot of foreign visitors coming to Vietnam nowadays. What's your comment on that?

I think it's great that more and more foreign visitors are coming to Vietnam. I find two advantages of this phenomenon. One is that visiting Vietnam is a very good way for foreign friends to learn about our country and our traditional values. It is widely recognized that the best way to learn about a country and its culture is to actually visit the place. Furthermore, when these tourists return to their home countries, they will describe what they've seen to their friends, and I believe it is a good chance to publicize Vietnam with countries in the world.

5. Why do many people travel abroad? What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages?

I travelled once to the USA and that was several years ago. I cherish this fantastic experience not only because I've got chances to see some of the world-famous tourist sites, but more importantly, the cross-culture experience is interesting and it has actually helped me gain a better understanding about our own culture in comparison with foreign culture. I guess this is the major advantage of foreign travel as well as the reason why people like to travel abroad. Of course, there is one very obvious disadvantage of travelling abroad: that is expenses are too high for a majority of people to shoulder.



6. What's your comment on the prospect of Vietnam's tourism industry?

I expect there will be a prosperous future for Vietnam's tourism industry. So far, tourism in Vietnam is not a major GDP contributor. However, during the last decade, resulting from an improved living standard and a switch of consuming pattern, more and more people begin to choose travel as a way of recreation, and the tourism industry in Vietnam has witnessed a significant growth. Now the industry still grows steadily under the current prosperous economic climate.

7. What kind of foreign people do you think choose to travel in Vietnam? Why do they do so?

I suppose foreign friends who choose to visit Vietnam are those who fancy the Vietnamese culture. The culture I mean here is a broad term. There may be people who are interested in natural sceneries like Ha Long Bay or Phu Quoc Island, while at the same time, there may also be people who are attracted by Vietnamese civilization, which is unique. Different people have different expectations on their trips to Vietnam. Whatever the expectations are, I believe for those travellers, Vietnam is the place where their eastern dreams are.

34. Describe an enjoyable visit.

You should say

what occasion it was

who visited you

what you did

and how your visitors felt.

On my 25th birthday, I invited a lot of friends over to my home. The party was scheduled for 6 p.m. On the morning of that day, I ordered a birthday cake from the baker's in my neighbourhood. Then I went shopping in a supermarket and bought many balloons, 25 lotus-shaped candles, vegetables such as cabbage, tomatoes, cheese, shrimp, bacon and salad dressing. You know, all the stuff needed to make a salad. On the afternoon of that day, I decorated my sitting room with balloons and candles and then at around 5 o'clock, I started to prepare dinner. When my friends entered my home at 6:00, their faces lit up immediately because of a romantic ambience. During that party, I received many gifts. We sat around the table and talked about beautiful memories of the past. We had a great time that night.



Further questions

1. Do you like people to visit you?

It depends. A visit to us when we are busy with our own business may be a headache. It makes matters even worse if we don't like the visitor. But it's a whole other story if a best friend of ours comes to see us and it happens that we are free.

2. Is there a difference between a visit from a family member and that from a friend?

Yes, sure. Usually a visit from a family member lasts a bit longer than a friend's visit. Other than that, I cannot think of any other differences.

3. If a foreigner visits you, what will you do to make the guest feel at home?

First of all, a friendly and warm welcome may make a guest feel at home. Food is also important. Maybe I'll try to prepare some food from his or her home country.

4. If a foreigner visits your country, what advice will you give him or her?

Certainly. I'll give them some pieces of advice, but the most important one is to be open-minded. I know some of the things they'll see, eat, or experience may look absolutely weird and exotic, but try them all. Then they'll discover new things that are worth experiencing.

35. Describe a project you finished with others.

You should say

with whom you finished this project

when it was

how you did it

and whether you received any benefits.

Up to this day, I still remember a project I was involved in when I was at college. I took part in a translation group because I wanted to improve both my English and Vietnamese. Then, a government agency wanted us to translate a manual on water supply from Vietnamese to English. It was a document of more than 100 pages. Our group decided to work together. We planned the steps we would go through and decided on the person in charge. Then we assigned the task, translating our respective parts, exchanging our translations with each other and correcting the mistakes. Finally,



we gave our translations to the person in charge for final editing. During the whole process, we spent a lot of time together translating and discussing. Sometimes we even had conflicts because of our different understandings of a word. Anyway, we ironed out all the difficulties and finished the job as scheduled. To our surprise, we got a bonus later for the translation as the agency was really satisfied with our work.

Further questions

1. Is cooperation important?

The importance of teamwork lies in the significant effect that it produces, especially when being properly applied and managed. It creates flexibility and coordination among members and enables them to use their talents and participate in making decisions.

It also provides a great deal of acceptance, understanding and physical interaction, which cannot be gained individually. That's why members rely on teamwork to get the feedback, attention and moral support which they constantly need. As a result, this leads to a great improvement in the quality of work produced, making the process more fun and less frustrating.

2. Do you like to work alone or with others?

I like to work with my classmates because I can share my ideas with them and get feedback. I don't think I'm independent enough to work alone. I get more motivated when working with others.

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a team?

Working in a team brings both benefits and problems. The benefit is obvious – the more people there are, the more ideas we collect. On the other hand, the biggest problem is that sometimes it takes ages to reach an agreement, especially when there isn't a strong leadership.

4. Should teamwork be encouraged in school? How?

Well, I think so. Schools in the first place are places where students learn the essential skills they need later in their lives. As to how to encourage teamwork, I think teachers should include projects as part of student assessment. Homework should be assigned in the form of mini-projects that involve groups of students rather than an individual.



III. Part 3 Possible Questions & Suggested Answers

1. Opinions on Social Issues

1. *What is your opinion of the birth-control policy?*

I think the birth-control policy is reasonable. Our country needs to control its population. How else can we make our nation strong and provide enough food and education for all the people? Perhaps in the future when our country is more developed, we can allow people to have more children. But for now, the government's policy on family planning is necessary.

2. *Do you think smoking is a problem that needs special attention?*

That's an interesting question. I think it is. A lot of people in my country aren't aware of the consequences of smoking on health. They just smoke because it's socially acceptable to do so. If more people knew they could get cancer from smoking, they'd probably stop, or at least smoke less. I know that the tobacco industry is a big business. If we tried to get rid of smoking, we'd also be getting rid of jobs, but at the very least, people should be told about the potential dangers of smoking. That way they can make an informed choice about whether to smoke or not.

3. *Do you think Vietnam's membership in the WTO will benefit Vietnam?*

Well, it's a big topic and many people are thinking about it. I'm quite sure it'll benefit Vietnam and other WTO members as well. Common Vietnamese consumers will benefit most from it because prices of imported products will go down. Also, the quality and after-sales service of national products will be improved. I guess the main danger we have to face is the new competition to our national industries, but I think they're up to the challenge.

4. *What do you think of the unemployment problem in Vietnam?*

I believe the problem is getting more and more serious now. Vietnam's a country with a large population and there has always been more labour than required. It was not a big problem in the past under the planned economic system, but now enterprises cannot afford the burden of a surplus labour force and many workers in state-owned enterprises are being laid off. Something must be done about it before more serious problems arise.

5. *What do you think is the most serious social problem in Vietnam?*

That's hard to say, but I guess it's overpopulation, even though we've made a lot of progress. Although Vietnam has a strict family-planning policy with one family having



no more than two kids, the population is already ninety million and it's still growing. It causes not only a shortage of food and shelter but also a lot of other problems like unemployment and crime. We can be flexible with this policy, but I think, in general, we need to enforce it quite strictly.

6. *What do you think about the environmental problem in Vietnam?*

The environment is becoming a more and more serious problem. Well, as far as I'm concerned, I think these problems are solvable if we work together. I also think that people should be more vocal to press for change and try to set good examples. The process is beginning to occur but the problem is that we have only scratched the surface of the problem. If we don't pay more attention to it, then we will have an unbearable quality of life.

7. *What do you think of using science in food production?*

I guess it's dangerous. We need natural crops to regenerate the soil and when we start playing around with nature, we may run into trouble. I think we are getting to a state where we will be dependent totally on our unnatural food processes, and when we have no ability to even use artificial ways to produce food, then we will face starvation.

8. *What do you think of advertising in sports and entertainment events?*

I think there are two sides to this issue. On the one hand, people say that to have sports, you must allow them to find ways to make money. After all, we can't have every athlete only sponsored by the government. On the other hand, when we let advertisements into sports, we are allowing big companies to control events.

9. *What do you think of violence on TV and in films?*

I'm very concerned about the violence on TV and in films. It's very bad now and it affects the way people think. Children get more aggressive and they use those characters as models. I think the worst thing it teaches people is that justice can only come by force. In that case, how can we trust the processes of negotiation and diplomacy?

10. *What do you think of the problem of piracy?*

I think it's a serious problem that we'd better start addressing because a lot of companies are hurt by it and it affects our foreign investment. I still see a lot of it going on in the streets and sometimes they can get quite pushy. I mean if I were involved in the clothing industry or music or film industry, I wouldn't want to sell my things in a place where the risk of having my stuff copied is too high. So, we'd better tackle this problem before we get countries complaining about us to the WTO.



11. *What do you think of media in your home country?*

I suppose it needs more improvements. It needs to have more services and start getting more specialized because many people are bored with what it currently offers. They would like to see more in-depth coverage of issues and more feedback from a wide section of society. Also, I know many people who think there should be more coverage of events that occur outside of Vietnam in the newspapers. I think there should be more channels. For example, I've heard that in some cities in North America, there are over a hundred channels with many specialized channels. I think we should have that kind of situation.

12. *What do you think of the transport system in your home town?*

Personally, I think the transport in my home town is terrible. The buses are just too old and need to be upgraded. For example, it's not that unusual to see a lot of buses broken down on the roads. As for the road system, it's obvious that the roads are not well planned. The roads are wide enough but don't give enough room to let vehicles exit. The side lanes are always congested and sometimes you can get stuck in a traffic jam for over an hour.

13. *What do you think of the education system in your home town?*

Going to university can help people get a good job in my country. But, many courses are too old and not very useful. Some professors have just recently graduated and are inexperienced in their field, or others are older and not very up to date with new developments. Also, we have to take all sorts of courses that are not directly related to our field. This, I feel, is a complete waste of time. We could be learning much more in our own field instead of spending time learning courses that have no use for our future.

14. *What do you think of key schools in Vietnam?*

I think it's an old system that needs changing. Not every intelligent student is accepted into a key school, even if they are academically able. Also, intelligent students shouldn't be segregated. They need to learn to deal with all kinds of students. Segregating bright students doesn't provide them with the skills they need to communicate and interact with others, which is what they'll need to do once they start working.

15. *What do you think of fast food restaurants in your country?*

Personally, I can't stand them and think there are now too many in big cities. Take Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City as examples. There are currently a great number of them and I think we don't need that many. The food is not very nutritious and to be frank, it's expensive as well.



16. *What do you think of the Olympic Games? Are they necessary for the world?*

I don't think I like the Olympics. In my opinion, they are a waste of time and money. There is just too much nationalism and pressure on the athletes. For example in the last Winter Olympics, there are countries threatening to boycott them or pull out for various reasons, and there are some unethical judging going on. I also think that they have become too commercialized and that they've been taken over by big companies.

17. *What do you think of the popularity of English in Vietnam?*

Well, it's quite natural. I mean the world is getting closer and closer and I think it's natural that the world begins to use a common language. That means if you want to do well in business, you should at least know a foreign language, especially English. Take the Internet as an example. There are lots of English websites, so you can get a much better range of knowledge if you know English. Some of the best industries in the future will involve international trade. If you are reasonably good at English, you will be in demand. So, the popularity of English is really for practical reasons. You can get a better job and you can probably have more opportunities.

18. *What do you think of school uniforms?*

Personally I think it is a good thing. I mean it's fine for some countries to let their children have a lot of freedom with their clothing, but I think that it only creates problems in many other places. I read somewhere that there is a lot of bullying that takes place in North American schools and that some kids are laughed at because too often their clothes are shabby. Another thing is that we stress more harmony and unity among our students. It's important for students to have this sense of unity or our nation will fall apart.

19. *Should children be punished in school?*

My opinion is that children should be punished but not too often. I think the best way to deal with children is to guide them through their mistakes and to try to help them see their own errors. I mean punishment should be used, but only when children believe that they can get away with something that they shouldn't do. Punishment cannot be the only way a child learns not to do something, otherwise he or she will only act out of fear of consequences without knowing whether it's truly right or wrong. For example, if a boy passes notes in class and is only punished, he may stop it only as long as the teacher is around. But when he comes to another class with a teacher who's not as strict, he might start doing it again. He hasn't realized why it's not the right thing to do.



2. Opinions on the Meaning of Various Aspects

20. *What does friendship mean to you?*

Well, that's a tough question. Let me see. I think it means almost everything to me except perhaps my family. Friendship, in my mind, means having people who, you know, will help you if you are ever in trouble. I think it's also people who you feel you can actually tell things to and they will listen. Friends are people who you don't need to be so polite to when you ask them to go somewhere – you can just phone them up and tell them “let's go somewhere” and you know they'll probably go. They are also people who have the same kind of sense of humor when you speak with them so that you will just laugh and laugh together.

21. *What does happiness mean to you?*

Well, it's a big topic. To me, happiness means a carefree life though it's impossible to be always carefree. Many people think of their childhood as being their time of true happiness because it was a time when they had little to worry about. Also, having a lot of very good friends is part of being very happy. It makes me happy to have some close friends who have a lot in common with me. I think happiness will double when it's shared with friends. Finally, happiness is knowing that you are useful, and knowing that you can help people when they need it. I feel happy to be able to help other people. It's pleasant to feel needed.

22. *What do clothes mean to you?*

In my opinion, they are a way of showing respect to people that you have to meet every day. If you dress too sloppily or cheaply, I think you are essentially saying that you really don't care about others and that is a bad thing. To me, clothes are a kind of presentation to the world and the clothes you wear are a kind of way that you present your character. If you present it with clothes that really don't match or have nothing unique to offer, you are not letting yourself have the best image that you can possibly have.

23. *What do you think education really means?*

Well, it's a difficult question to answer, but I think that essentially it means anything that may bring positive changes to you. It may be a skill or it may be some information to learn. I think it's also important to include any wisdom or moral lesson that can be learned. It's dangerous to concentrate too much on just skills because education to me also means something that gives you a way to shape your behaviour. For example, if a student is very good at mathematics but has poor social skills, he may use his skills to create some terrible weapons, rather than use them for peaceful purposes.



24. *What do you think "real love" means?*

It's a difficult question. I mean I don't know that much about this topic, but I suppose it means you would do everything you could for a person, even give up your life. I think real love is more than just passion. It must be a feeling that this person is so important to you that you would sacrifice everything you could for this person's well being.

3. Stating Your Standards

25. *What do you think the goal of education should be and tell me why you feel that way?*

Education should really be a time when you learn new ways of thinking and are challenged to go beyond what you know. But if I were to choose between learning useful things and learning for enjoyment, I would definitely choose learning for enjoyment. I don't mean just learning when I feel like it. Rather, I mean studying things that interest me. If I am truly interested in a subject, I will really try hard to learn it. I think the goal of education should also be to produce a well-rounded person. I mean a person who is not just good in one or two areas but a person who can show knowledge in quite few areas.

26. *What do you think is important in a friendship?*

I think honesty is an essential part of any relationship. When I am doing something wrong, a real friend should be able to tell me that I am wrong, though it may cause some hard feelings. Probably I will be angry in the beginning, but when I think about it, I will certainly thank him for that. Only a real friend could be honest enough to do that.

27. *What qualities do you think a good teacher needs?*

I suppose the basic qualities involve two things. First, a teacher must understand the process of learning and the ways to make learning more efficient and effective. Also, a teacher must have a good personality that motivates students to learn. I don't think it's necessary for a teacher to have a perfect personality, but at least they must show a passion for what they are teaching. The moment students sense that their teacher just doesn't care about the subject, they also lose their enthusiasm for it. Patience is a key quality too because if there is no patience, then students will be ignored.

28. *What do you think the goal of travelling should be?*

Well, I've never thought about that before. I guess the goal of travelling should be to enjoy yourself. For me, the goal I usually have is to have an experience that sticks in my mind for a long time and to give me a wider understanding of the world. I like to feel good about visiting a place and I like to think that the place made me a better person. In my opinion, many people travel just to feel that they are adventurous and to boast to



all their friends about all the places they have seen. But I think it is more important to truly relax and take time exploring things without having to follow some rushed plan of things to see.

29. *How should people be promoted at work, through experience or performance?*

That's a big issue in many companies. I'm not sure how I feel about this issue because I think both experience and performance are important. I mean if you've been working for a long time, it's natural that you would expect better treatment. On the other hand, I don't think it's right that experienced people should put little care into their jobs just because they think that their jobs are well protected because of seniority. In my opinion, people should be promoted based on a combination of experience and performance. If they do not perform well, they may be demoted or even laid off, but if they do perform well, they will be promoted. People who perform well but have little experience should be promoted but not too high because this will only discourage people who have worked in a company for a long time.

30. *What qualities do you think are important for a successful or good film?*

That's hard to say. A good film doesn't have to follow a certain formula. I think there are all kinds of good films and they don't have to be a certain style. The basic qualities are commitment and professional acting. I can't stand actors who star in movies with little concern about how to make their characters seem like real people. I think that the cinematography is quite important because without it, you are just resenting images without concern for the meaning they convey. If there is no concern for the way it is shot, then you might as well read a book, because the main features of a film that make it pleasing are its setting and artistic filming. These days, I think one criterion for a successful film seems to be just good special effects, but I don't care much about that.

31. *How do you define a good-quality life?*

I think a good-quality life involves no fear or thought that you are in danger or being unfairly treated. It's a life where there are no serious health risks and there are opportunities to enjoy yourself without feeling worried about the consequences. I mean if you're worried about pollution in the water or you are worried about crime in an area, then you have no opportunity to enjoy your surroundings though how rich you are. A good-quality life may be found anywhere in the world, but the conditions in some places make it easier than other places.



32. *What is your standard of a good place to visit?*

I guess the place should first have opportunities for me to see something that I don't see very often. Also, I think there should be some reasonable facilities for me to enjoy. For example, there should be, at least, some decent roads to get in and out and some decent place to see and the place should be relatively safe and clean. Also, it should offer some opportunities for sightseeing and entertainment without getting charged for everything. I mean there are just too many places that charge people for every step they take. In my opinion, this is wrong because good places shouldn't be another kind of tourist traps.

33. *What is your standard of success?*

In my opinion, success means reaching the goals that I have for myself, and it means I have achieved something that is not only good for myself but also good for others. I mean, if I have lots of money, that doesn't necessarily mean I'm a success. It could mean that I was lucky or I just happened to have talents. True success means meeting our goals, and if our goals are just to be able to raise a happy family, well that makes us a success already, I think.

4. Making Predictions

34. *What do you think of the future of Vietnam if Vietnam keeps an open-door policy?*

Personally, I think Vietnam's future is very promising. The open-door policy has brought many benefits to the Vietnamese. For example, our standard of living has increased, Vietnam has become a stronger nation economically, and we've learned a lot about the rest of the world. Vietnam needs to continue with the open-door policy in order for us to gain strength and respect as a world-class nation.

35. *Do you foresee there'll be more advertisements in the future?*

Well, I think so. My country is getting more and more foreign advertisements, and as more investments are coming in, I think this is something unavoidable. The concept of advertising on TV, for example, is just beginning to catch on among bigger companies, and as more and more private businesses grow and increase their advertising budgets, they may give TV a chance. Also, I think you'll see more and more advertising agencies that specialize in making good advertisements start up in my country and they will be in hot demand in the next few years.

36. *How do you think the Internet will change people's buying habits in the future?*

I guess the change will be incredible in the future. People rely so much on the Internet nowadays that they spend a lot of their time in front of their computer. More and more



people are buying things over the Internet, and I think this trend will continue in the future. People will not get out of their houses; they'll just shop at home. The key challenge before this happens is that stores must find a good way of delivering things at a low cost. This was the biggest problem for a lot of e-commerce-type companies in the past, but I have a feeling they'll become more skilled at it in the future.

37. *Do you think that the Internet is going to change the way we get news?*

Well, we have seen that change already. I get my latest news from the Internet. And I believe this will be the trend for the future if more and more people get wired up with the Internet. I'm not sure in the future whether newspapers will survive if more people get the news from the Internet. I think the main way it'll change the way we get news is that we will get the events immediately. We can now get a variety of sources. Also, people will become more sophisticated about things that are happening around the world and they will be able to make up their own minds about issues.

38. *Can you imagine what means of transport will be like in the future?*

I suppose means of transport will be fueled with different energy sources because there is no way that we can continue with petroleum for much longer. So I think when new energy sources come out, we'll see differently designed means of transport. I also predict that some means of transport will begin to use the air more often just for short distances because the road systems may not be maintained and repaired forever. We need to find other ways, so I imagine our cars will probably be flying and maybe there will be flying bicycles, too.

39. *What would life be like without music?*

That's difficult to say. Possibly we just take it for granted that we'll always have music but I guess if there wasn't any music, we'd suffer considerably because we need music to create some higher form of pleasure. We need music to get in touch with some of our deeper emotions. If I had no music, I'm sure I'd go crazy because music relaxes me and it's a great way to hear some form of communication, which I might not have time for if I didn't put on a song or two.

40. *Do you think the traffic problem will get better or worse in the future?*

Well, I'm not sure, but I have a feeling it will get better. It may be that the problem will get worse before it gets any better, but I think that there will be a time when something is actually done to tackle the problem. My feeling is that part of the problem will be solved when we actually start to regulate the number of cars on the roads. I also think that once the subway system is built, then the situation will get a bit better.



41. *Do you feel optimistic that environmental problems will be solved in the future?*

I may say that I'm optimistic, but only in the long term. I think they will, but only when people begin to realize that there's an actual crisis out there. I remember when it seemed that everyone was talking about the issue. Now a lot of people are just saying, "Well, nothing can really be done about the problem." In my opinion, people could do something about it if they really wanted to, but the problem is that they keep delaying the solutions. When they realize they cannot delay the process any more, then they will actually start doing something concrete about it.

42. *How do you imagine people's lifestyles will change in the future?*

I guess there will be some big changes in lifestyles. We'll be mixing our work and free time more and probably make more of our own choices about when to work and when not to work. I also think that children will become more and more independent and sophisticated and they will be shouldering more and more housework, as a growing number of households have two income earners. We'll also be experiencing more stress and more competition and we'll probably be making more and more friends from distant places.

43. *How do you think housing will change in the future?*

In my mind, the housing situation will see a growing number of private developers and more and more housing that is built up high. I think apartment buildings will get much higher and the basic facilities of most Vietnamese housing will be improved. Public housing will probably be upgraded and more responsibility will be placed on the owners to keep the housing clean and well maintained. But I think there will also be a big challenge in the future for public housing to keep pace with the growing demands of the middle class in my country.

5. Making Suggestions or Offering Solutions

44. *What do you think we should do to protect the environment?*

I think the main challenge is to set up an agency to enforce the standards we have already set. The key thing about a good, clean environment is the standards must be enforced so that the laws have some teeth to them. In addition, it's necessary to have good technical innovations so that the methods to do such things as water treatment can be developed. Also, it really takes a strong commitment by everyone to make sure the environment is always the top priority in every new plan that is created.



45. *How do you think global warming can be prevented?*

As far as I know, global warming is caused by the greenhouse effect, which results from too much carbon dioxide in the air. The government should take measures to limit the number of private cars and make efforts to develop the public transport system. Besides, we should try to replace fossil fuels with new, cleaner energy resources. Once we can reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the air, the temperatures will very likely stabilize and we can then feel that the situation is under control.

46. *How can we preserve our history best?*

I believe the best way to preserve our history is to make sure that we protect all the symbols of our history. Specifically, we try to set aside enough room for our old buildings and old sections of town to flourish. I think it's important to provide some re-enactments of history in our films, books and TV shows and also, if possible, through our tourist areas. Another very important way is by keeping good records of the events that take place and by getting a variety of interpretations of history.

47. *What should one do to prepare for a good trip to a country?*

I think travellers should get a good phrase book that they can use if they need to get things done. They need a basic level of expressions that will help them make their trip easier. There are some other things that they have to be aware of. For example, they need to beware of possible dangers and people who are trying to cheat them. They should also try to understand the history of that country because that will make some of the places that they're going to more interesting.

48. *What measures should be taken to reduce crime?*

Well, to start with, I think we should try to find the root of the crime problem. I mean you can't just scare crime away very easily. Sometimes it's because gangsters have managed to scare everyone from doing anything about the problem. Other times, it's just simply a fact that there are too many people who live in hopeless poverty and they feel they have no other ways to make a living. Then, it's important to increase our enforcement skills; that means getting more policemen and policewomen and trying to give them the best resources to do their job. Finally, there must be a justice system that's fair and those who have committed crime have to be punished severely. Once all of these things are done, I think crime will decrease significantly.

49. *How can traffic problems be best solved?*

In my opinion, the best way to solve this problem is by widening roads and building more flyovers at the exits. Ho Chi Minh City has successfully done this and now experiences fewer problems as a result. I also think that we may have to encourage people to take



public transport lines more often or simply ride their bicycles more. One more thing that should be done is to build better smaller roads that connect bigger roads. One big problem in bigger cities is that a lot of connecting roads are often blocked and so everyone has to squeeze into some exit roads to get from one area to another.

50. *How can the tourism industry be improved?*

I believe the first thing to do is to make it illegal for tour operators to collect commissions from various shops or stores and to simply increase the salaries of the tour operators. The second thing that needs to be done is there needs to be more control over the vendors in famous sites to make sure they don't harass visitors. It can be very unpleasant when people follow tourists everywhere to sell their things. Finally, I think that there should be more opportunities to do independent travelling by setting up more campsites and clean hostels to receive backpacking crowds.

51. *How can education be reformed to meet future challenges?*

I guess the best reform should be in the area of post-secondary education. I think it would be good to pour a lot of money into upgrading the facilities and attracting better university professors to work in them. Moreover, there should be more community colleges and smaller universities where people from all walks of life can attend. One more thing is there should be more opportunities for distance-learning programmes from various universities around the world so that many local students can get benefit from overseas education without travelling to other countries.

6. Explaining Reasons

52. *What do you think are the main reasons for the gap between the rich and the poor?*

The main reason is that there are some fields that are in demand and there are short supplies of labour, while other fields have too many people in it and the demand may not be that great. Well, if you ask me, I don't think we can expect everyone to become rich at the same time. Some people say that under the market economy system, it's natural for the most capable people to make a fortune first. Life is competition after all. Well, I can accept this partly, but I think we should still do more to raise the standards of people who are struggling in life.

53. *Why do people in Vietnam traditionally want to have a son?*

Well, in the past, sons were preferred because they carried the family name. Also, when they married, their wife would join the family. This means that the parents would gain a daughter-in-law. In contrast, when a daughter married, she would join her husband's



family. I think the bigger reason is that in the countryside, sons can help out more on the family's farm, just because they're stronger and have more endurance. There's still a sense that sons can earn more money and then take care of their parents better. I think this is changing because a lot of people are realizing that a daughter tends to take better care of her parents when they get older.

54. *Why does advertising have such a powerful influence on what people buy?*

In my opinion, advertising is a very powerful tool and it's getting more and more popular these days. In fact, many people don't have any real knowledge about a product, so most of the time they rely on advertising for information, which they think is trustworthy. If there is no advertising, consumers will not realize certain products exist, so they will not buy them. If advertised, certain products are introduced to consumers and as a result, they will be encouraged to make purchases.

55. *Why do people like sports so much?*

I'm not very sure because I don't really like sports that much. I suppose it's because sports represent a safe, fun, and fair way to compete. Sometimes in work or in our studies, we may feel things are not quite fair and even. Sports are fair and objective. There's also a social function of sports; getting together gives many viewers a chance to establish and make contact with each other. Sports are fun and they keep both the body and the mind in shape.

56. *Explain people's attitudes towards old buildings.*

Well, generally speaking, people are fond of them. I mean they are part of history and culture. But in the modern time, a lot of people are impatient to see their country develop and modernize quickly, so their attitudes towards old buildings may change. Well, we should preserve them if we can. However, if a more modern building needs to be built, why not build it?

57. *Why are so many people buying cars these days in your country?*

Well, that's an interesting question. I think it's mainly a face thing. It's as if riding a bicycle is a loss of face. I mean as soon as a person buys a car, people assume that he or she is doing well in life. They may not really need a car, and it doesn't really improve their actual quality of life, but it's nice to show others they have a car. There's also a sense of freedom a person gets when he or she drives a car. I don't know how to exactly explain it, but it's the kind of feeling that they are the master of their motion instead of relying on drivers.



58. *Do children know the difference between right and wrong?*

Well, I don't know much about this issue because I'm too young to be a parent and I'm no longer a child. But my guess is that they don't really. I think it takes a number of years before a person can really learn to know the real reason why something is right or wrong and it takes a long time for him or her to really sympathize with others in a sincere way. One example of this is a kid that teases others. He doesn't really know it's wrong until he is taught by his parents and teachers, so he will not do it again. Another reason he stops doing it is because he's afraid he might get teased. But does he really know it's wrong? I doubt it because he doesn't have the ability to know how to think and realize the hurt another person feels.

59. *Why are some arts popular and others not?*

Well, it's hard for me to say because I'm not an expert on art, but I think that the popularity of art depends on the deeper feeling a painting or work of art seems to generate. I mean if you look at art and feel nothing from it, then it can't get very far. Frankly speaking, a lot of art is just fashion and based on the fame or name of a certain artist. I mean most people don't really know the difference between one art and another, so they rely on the name. It's like name-brand clothing, I guess.

60. *Why do people like fast food?*

Well, I can't figure that out myself. Personally, it's not that convenient. Sometimes at lunch, buyers could be queuing for quite some time. It's not peaceful; it's noisy. The food is overpriced and not very nutritious. I think the real reason is the advertising and promotion is good and it has this kind of happy atmosphere that draws people in. People also like the idea of just getting some place to chat freely and not being interrupted by some waiter or waitress. Possibly, there may be some people who like to use their fingers to eat just for a change.

7. Explaining the Importance, Impact or Roles

61. *What role does tourism play in your country's economy?*

I think tourism is playing a more and more important role in our country's economy. Since the opening up of our economy, the number of tourists has increased dramatically, and this is a useful source of foreign currency for the country. Some places in my country have become almost a "must". For example, places like Da Lat or Nha Trang depend so much on tourism that they would literally disappear without it.



62. *What is the impact of technology on human beings?*

That's a big topic. Well, I guess we can say that technology is something that changes the pace of life without our realizing it. Suddenly, things are faster; travelling, communicating and computing are all faster, and then we get used to that increased pace and we don't think of it as being special any more. The impact can be quite a positive one if we direct this new efficiency in the right direction. Our concern is when this technology starts to make us less and less sociable with one another and makes us more impersonal.

63. *What role does natural beauty in nature play?*

I guess that places of natural beauty play a big role in our lives. We take pride in our country's natural beauty and it is a source of strength to us. When we think of our country, we don't just think of institutions and people but also natural places. These places help us to relax, to connect us with history, and inspire us to do great things.

64. *What role does music play in our lives? What is its function?*

That's difficult to say. In my opinion, by and large, music does play a big role in our lives. We kind of take it for granted, but we don't realize just how important it is. I think the biggest role it plays is that it communicates a kind of emotion to us and that emotion helps us to get in touch with what we have inside as a human being.

65. *What is the impact of western music on your country?*

I'm not an expert at this since I basically listen to our country's music, but I think the main impact is that it has enriched our lyrics and improved our language learning. Also, the impact is that music has become simpler and more directed at the young. Furthermore, western music has taught us to be a bit bolder with some of our feelings.

66. *What is the importance of playing sports?*

Well, it's an interesting question. Usually, we play them and have fun, but we don't really think about their importance. Perhaps the real importance of sports is just to have a good time. They release our energy and keep us in shape and that's all I think of for actual importance.

67. *Explain the impact of the Internet on our lives.*

I think the Internet is changing our lives because we can connect to the rest of the world without leaving the house. We can work at home without going to the office, we can get the latest news without buying a newspaper, and we can also make purchases at home. All these changes have already taken place in some people's lives. Also, we can now contact each other easily. This tends to make communication more frequent but it also makes it shallower, since we don't really write very long messages any more.



68. *What role do you think old and modern buildings play in our society?*

I think they both play an important role but for different reasons. Old buildings are important for preserving our culture. Modern buildings are important for showing that we are now a modern country and that we will provide the best facilities. I don't think that our country would be as strong if we didn't have both of them to enjoy.

69. *What is the importance of learning a second language?*

Learning English is getting more and more popular in my country. I think the main importance of learning a second language is that you can use it for many career-enhancing purposes. For example, if you know English, you can work at any publishing company or language school. You can also get a job much more easily at a foreign company and you can communicate with potential clients. So, we consider English to be a very important subject for our careers.

70. *What benefits do hobbies have on a person's life?*

Well, in my opinion, hobbies are the difference between a boring and an exciting life. Specifically, our life could be less exciting if all we do when we get home is watching TV or surfing the Internet. I think a hobby is a very good way to expand our social life. And if a person is good at his or her hobby ... Well, who knows? Perhaps he or she can make his or her hobby a career, as Bill Gates did when he started making computer programmes in his spare time.

8. Listing Ways

71. *What kinds of possessions create high status in your country?*

Well, that's hard to say. There are so many. You know, everyone is different and some people regard some things as being more important than others. I would say the biggest status possession is probably a car. If you drive one of those Santanas or Audis, it's a sign that you've made it. Also, of course, a flat itself is important, too. If you live in a 3-bedroomed or even a 4-bedroomed flat that's private and up high, well, that's another sign you've made it.

72. *Can you give me some examples of negative effects of advertising?*

Well, I think ridiculous advertisements that promise one can improve his memory by taking a pill are a big scam. I mean they're really misleading and certainly these kinds of ads really need regulation. Another negative effect of advertisements is they try to



associate happiness with the objects people buy. Can buying things make them happy? The problem with this way of thinking is, well, what happens when they get tired of the object? Then, they have to buy more things.

73. *In what ways do people usually make friends in your country?*

Well, all kinds of ways. I guess the most common way is by acquaintances' introduction. Maybe in your country, you like to introduce yourself, but we are a little more reserved and always wait for an introduction. There are also some other ways, for example, classmates. I think classmates are the most common source of friends. You will find that these friends are more lasting than, say, colleagues from work.

74. *What are some ways people like to travel in your country?*

Well, even though I see a lot more people doing independent travelling, I would still say that tours are the most popular way of travelling. I guess we like to be with groups of people when we travel. Also, we are still a bit nervous to risk doing things by ourselves. Another popular way of travelling is by renting a car and driving to some place in a group. This gives travellers a bit more freedom but they have to be careful of the regulations.

75. *What factors influence the ways people dress?*

Well, that's an interesting question. It's hard to say. I know weather would be one of the factors. I mean if it's cold outside, you're obviously not going out without a coat. Besides weather, I think clothes are basically chosen by what self-image a person wants and what he or she feels is comfortable. You know, women often choose clothing that suits them and also which seems to give off their best image.

76. *What effects or benefits does learning an instrument have on people, especially children?*

Well, I'm no expert on the subject so to tell you the truth, I'm not really sure. I don't play an instrument, so I have no personal experience to draw from. I suppose if I had to guess, I'd say that learning an instrument sharpens our mind because it's not easy. I know people have to do a lot of practice. It may also make a person more creative because he or she knows a way to put notes together.

77. *What are the typical characteristics of a modern family?*

Well, I've never thought about what makes a modern family. I suppose it's a family that gives each other a large degree of personal freedom. When mentioning a modern family, I think of a father and mother both doing the work they want and both sharing the housework. Kids can also make choices about their careers and relationships. Also, a modern family should be smaller and probably a little better off.



78. *What are the main features of traditional architecture in your country?*

Well, I'm no expert on this topic. I've never really studied the architecture of my country. I guess the main features are the steep roofs and the curvy eaves, which are often decorated at the corners. Also, a lot of traditional architecture is held up by pillars. We used to use a lot more wood in our architecture but now, it's a lot more cost effective to make things with brick or concrete. In addition, windows are much smaller in traditional architecture, but many modern buildings are made completely with glass.

79. *What are the various ways computers can be useful for our learning?*

Well, it would be difficult to come up with a complete list since the number of ways might be unlimited. Well, I can think of one way where computers are helpful, my English. The other day I came across a pronunciation learning website which gave very good explanations about where I should place my tongue and teeth and where a sound should originate. Also, computers are good for allowing us to do drills and practise exercises because I find it embarrassing to do them in front of a teacher.

9. Changes

80. *How has technology changed in your country over the last few years?*

I think technology has really taken quite a big leap since the open-door policy. More and more people are realizing the importance of technology, the good things it brings and the way it increases productivity and efficiency. People are now being trained to use technology in the workplace. People are realizing that without technology, it'll be difficult to compete in the new global economy. The Internet is one example. More and more people are connected to the Internet at home or at work. It becomes part of many people's lives to get news, get in contact with people around the world and even receive entertainment on the net. The amount of information it provides is incredible.

81. *How have Vietnamese eating habits changed in the last 20 to 30 years?*

I guess that eating habits have undergone some changes. We eat a lot more variety than before. We are more prosperous now, so we can order a lot of different dishes at restaurants. I also find that many people are learning to make dishes from different places. My mother, for example, has learned to cook southern foods, even though we are from the north of Vietnam. Another change is that young people are eating a lot more fast food, not just from the West but also Vietnamese-style fast food. We just like the casual style of eating.



82. *How has the environment changed?*

I think the environment has changed a lot. The air has become worse and worse and the water has become more and more contaminated. Because of over-development, the sandstorms have gotten worse as well. However, I think some aspects have improved. More and more parks are being created and there have been a number of successful tree-planting projects.

83. *How has tourism changed in Vietnam?*

Well, tourism has become very popular in Vietnam and is now a big business. More and more people are taking an interest in travelling to Vietnam, so the revenue collected from tourism is becoming significant. This means that many cities have changed a lot to accommodate more tourists. Take Mui Ne as an example. Tourism has become one of the major industries there, so a lot of shops now sell souvenirs as well as other things.

84. *What are the differences between entertainment media, such as TV and movies, in the past and now?*

There are big differences. I mean in the past, everything we heard was directed from just a few sources and now there is a lot more diversity. Our movies now come from all over the world and directors now have a lot more freedom to choose the themes that interest them. Also, there's a lot more English in films and on TV these days. In fact, there are now even a lot of English-only programmes.

85. *How have families changed? What's the difference between families now and in the past?*

I think families have changed in some very significant ways over the last 10 or 20 years. For one thing, they are a lot smaller than they used to be with the implementation of the birth-control policy. Secondly, the roles of fathers, mothers and children have changed. The father used to be the all-powerful figure; now I think the father and mother both share responsibilities in the household. Also, a lot more mothers are now working full time and many of them are earning more than their husbands.

86. *How have buildings and construction changed in the last 20 years in your country?*

In my opinion, architecture is, of course, no longer relying so much on brick and a lot of new buildings are using different materials. Basically, buildings are getting higher and they look cleaner and shiner than before. But in my view, the construction standards are getting worse and worse. I think many developers are trying to rush projects and are cutting corners along the way. If this problem continues, more and more cases will be brought to court.



87. *What are the differences between hobbies today and hobbies in the past?*

Well, I guess hobbies in the past were simpler and usually didn't involve much more than a person's own skills at things. Since many people weren't as well off as they are now, I could say that they had to be careful about spending on their hobby. These days, I see people spend a fortune on their various hobbies, so I think that is the biggest difference.

88. *How has transport changed in the last 20 years?*

Transport hasn't changed much except that there is much more of it. I mean, look at the number of cars on the roads – it's almost quadrupled since the nineties. There is a lot more public transport and some of the buses are much cleaner and more modern than they used to be. Also, in big cities, taxis can be found almost everywhere. But in my opinion, the changes in public transport haven't kept pace with the growth of cars and that's a serious challenge for big cities.

89. *How has clothing changed in the last 20 years?*

I think clothing has changed quite a lot these years. I mean 20 years ago, the open-door policy started and many people were beginning to test out new styles of clothing. In those days, perhaps fashionable clothing like that seen in Europe was a bit adventurous. Now, it's very common. It seems everyone is wearing name-brand clothing these days. Another thing that's quite interesting is that a lot of traditional clothing that many people thought was so old-fashioned and useless a few years ago is now becoming fashionable again. It seems we are beginning to take a new interest in our traditional dressing styles and combine them with the styles of today.

10. Comparisons

90. *What's the difference between Western and Vietnamese culture?*

Well, in fact I know very little about it, but my guess is that Vietnamese culture is very much influenced by Oriental beliefs while Western culture is more based on individual liberalism. This means that we have more acceptance of authority and are more likely to accept conditions and try to find more subtle ways to change things. I think Western culture emphasizes the benefits of conflict to create change. I also think that Vietnamese culture places a lot of importance on the family and respect for the elders. Well, Western culture does too but it seems that there is more equality among family members.



91. *What's the difference between the way children and adults make friends?*

Well, I think the main difference is that children start their friendship very accidentally and they don't really have to make so many gestures in words. Adults try to use the power of their words and their conversation to secure friendship. Children, on the other hand, just start sharing things or playing together instantly. If they enjoy being together, they continue the friendship. Also, children more quickly forgive their friends for the things they do wrong to each other but adults take matters more seriously, I think.

92. *Compare the difference between middle school and university life.*

I think middle school life is quite structured, so all ones really need to worry about are grades and friends. Classmates are people they see every day and teachers help shape their behaviour. There's a lot of stress about exams and I'd say that learning is rather forced. With a university life, ones have to structure their life more on their own and they are responsible for their own behaviour. The big challenge in university is not so much on getting good grades but getting along with all roommates in the dormitory.

93. *Compare traditional food and fast food.*

I think traditional food just means that the dishes are served on separate plates and people share the same plate. Fast food means you generally go up to the counter to order it and you bring it back to your table. The food is usually something simple and informal. You can also eat with your fingers and you can be as casual as you want to be.

94. *What are the main differences between flats and traditional houses?*

I think the main differences are in the facilities. In a flat, people have all facilities in working order and don't really need to share much with other residents except maybe the playground if they have kids. With a traditional home, some facilities like telephones and water are shared. Flats are also centrally heated, while traditional homes may not be heated at all. Traditional homes are usually made of brick and often they are no more than one floor high, while flats have several floors. Traditional homes are quite neighbourly, since people share lots of things with each other, and many people complain that flats encourage people to just keep to themselves and ignore their neighbours.

95. *Compare hobbies of Vietnamese people with those of Western people.*

Well, that's an interesting question. It's a bit hard for me to say, since I've never been to a Western country, but I guess that the hobbies there probably involve more collecting things, especially collecting older things. I know a lot of Westerners like to collect stamps or antiques, while Vietnamese people are more interested in mastering certain skills like photography or the right way to make tea. Vietnamese people probably like keeping their hobbies to themselves while Westerners like joining clubs and stuff.



96. *How do young people and the older generation in Vietnam differ?*

Well, many of the older generation came from more difficult circumstances, and they had a harder life. So, they often think that we just do things without thinking about it. I often hear my father complain that around him, there are many young people who show no regard for money and don't treat the elderly with respect. The elderly are usually more cautious and slower to accept new ideas. The young generation is quick to adopt new things like the Internet and we tend to accept fads. We dress, take guided tours and even eat differently and we think that the older generation should respect our points of view more.

97. *Compare Western art and Vietnamese art.*

This is a difficult question for me. I'm not really keen on art. I suppose it's nice to look at, but I won't waste much time or money on it. I guess the difference is just that Western art usually seems to disguise some hidden meaning and focuses more on the texture of its art and the details. Vietnamese art is meant to have more rhythm and perfect strokes, and simplicity is more important than the symbolism it contains if there is any.

98. *What are the differences between objects you make by yourself and objects you buy?*

I think objects we make are, of course, cheaper. Seriously though, I think that objects we make are more meaningful because they've come out of our labour and our care. On the other hand, objects we buy are probably done more professionally and they certainly save us a lot of hard work. Personally, I prefer things I make unless I have no talent at it.

11. Advantages and Disadvantages

99. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of space research?*

I think one of the advantages is certainly that it's interesting, and it feeds our knowledge about the universe. I mean, we need to know things. Also, it can be turned into a commercial enterprise. For example, many countries now sell satellites for commercial purposes and that couldn't have been achieved without some space research. The disadvantage is, of course, money. It's expensive, and a lot of people have complained that the money could be used for better purposes. I agree with this argument to some extent but on second thought, I think we need to research things in space or we may face a disaster like an incoming asteroid that we can do nothing about one day.



100. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of watching a sports game on TV compared to watching it live in a stadium?*

I think watching a game on TV has several strengths. For example, you can hear the commentary and you can see the action repeated. You are given more knowledge about the game and things are not so noisy for you. You also have the freedom to eat what you want for free and get up and do something else. The seats are more comfortable, and you have the right to control the volume. But there is one main disadvantage that is hard to deny. You cannot capture the feeling and excitement of watching something live. Also, you cannot share your joy with other fans at the time that it's happening.

101. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a part-time job while at school overseas?*

I think the main advantage of having a part-time job is that it eases the financial burden on parents. Overseas students are able to have a little pocket money without relying on parents all the time. Another advantage is that they can generally improve their English a lot if they can work part time overseas. They work with colleagues and can communicate with them daily. The main disadvantage is that it's tiring and the time they spend working could be spent getting good grades. Also, overseas part-time work is usually not very well paid, so the added pocket money may not be worth it.

102. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of public transport?*

I think the main advantage of using public transport is that it's cheap and generally much better for the environment because there is not much gas emission, especially if buses run on clean petrol. Another advantage of public transport is that it reduces traffic jams. I think public transport is less stressful because people don't have to worry about parking and all that kind of things. The big disadvantage of public transport is the wait. It's much more convenient to just jump in our car or sit on our motorbike and start off. Also, with public transport, we have to follow a route and we have no flexibility. Sometimes, it can be very uncomfortable, especially during rush hours.

103. *What are the advantages of getting news from newspapers?*

Well, I like knowing what's going on, so newspapers are a good way for me to know what's happening. I won't say I completely believe everything that I read in the newspaper, but I do find them very interesting and entertaining. I'm sort of an information seeker, so I just like to know current things. Before a newspaper is printed, the editor has checked through the articles and the sources where the news was derived from; it's often more reliable.



104. *What are the good things and bad things about fast food?*

I rarely eat fast food, so I'll just make a few guesses then. Let me see. Well, perhaps the good thing about it is that there might not be as much oil since a lot of the food is baked and boiled. I think another good thing is that hamburgers are quite delicious sometimes. There are also bad things. For example, some food is tasteless, at least the food I've tried. Also, I think hamburgers are quite bad for health as the fat content is very high. That's about all I can talk about fast food.

105. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving projects in school instead of exams?*

You know, probably every teacher has weighed the advantages and disadvantages of giving projects to students. I think the main advantage is that they encourage students to do their own thinking and in the process they take pride in what they create. They also gain more practical knowledge. The problems are mainly related to time. It takes a lot of time, not only for a student to do such a project but also for the teacher to grade it. Also, how do you grade something like that accurately? It's hard to grade objectively.

106. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of a traditional family?*

Well, my family is quite traditional, so I can tell you a bit about this. It's difficult to say what the advantages of a traditional family are. I guess the main thing is that things are probably more stable and everyone knows their role. In my family, for example, we don't really question my father's authority. It's also cheaper for us because we do everything together as a family. The disadvantage is that we have less freedom to do the things we really want. I mean, it seems that my parents are always questioning my decisions.

107. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of reading books for entertainment compared with watching TV or films?*

Well, I think the main advantage of reading books is that they do a lot for our imagination. It is more challenging and we have to work harder to gain knowledge. TV is less challenging and doesn't make us think as much. But the main disadvantage is that books just take too much time to get through. TV is more convenient and time efficient and that's why so many people like it.

108. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a small city?*

Well, I guess the main advantage of living in a small city is that we feel closer to the people around us and get a good social life. We have more opportunities to enjoy nature and the air is much fresher. The disadvantages are the lack of job opportunities and the facilities are generally not as good. Life in a small city may have fresher air but it's hard to send our kids to a good school.



Chapter 4

Useful Vocabulary and Expressions for the IELTS Speaking Test



I. Useful Vocabulary

1. Home Town

1. **architecture:** There's some nice, German-style architecture in my home town.
2. **city centre:** I live just within the city centre.
3. **coast/coastal city:** My home town is a coastal city.
4. **countryside:** The surrounding countryside is very beautiful.
5. **crowded:** One drawback of my home town is that it's quite crowded.
6. **fresh air:** I really miss the fresh air there.
7. **grassland:** Nearby my home town you can visit many grasslands.
8. **high-rise building:** There are a lot of new high-rise buildings in my home town.
9. **historical site:** There are a lot of famous historical sites in my home town.
10. **hospitable:** The people in my home town are always very hospitable.
11. **industrial:** My home town is an industrial city with lots of pollution.
12. **lively:** My home town becomes very lively in the evening.
13. **located:** My house is located alongside a small river.
14. **main industry:** The main industries in my home town are steel and manufacturing.
15. **make a living:** It is a little difficult to make a living in my home town.
16. **market:** The markets are all very colourful.
17. **medium-sized:** My home town is a medium-sized city.
18. **modern:** There are a lot of modern buildings in my home town.
19. **open-minded:** Usually the people in my home town are very open-minded.
20. **opportunity:** There are not many good job opportunities in my home town.
21. **pace of life:** The pace of life is fast in big cities.
22. **population:** The population of my home town is rather small.
23. **prosperous:** My home town has been getting more prosperous recently.
24. **shore:** We do have a very nice sea shore with many coconut trees.
25. **traditional:** Rural people are still very traditional compared with urban people.
26. **valley:** My home town is situated in a big valley.



2. Weather

1. breeze: I just love the cool sea breeze.
2. clear sky: Unlike this city, my home town has a clear sky every day.
3. climate: The climate of Da Lat is quite pleasant, I think.
4. degree: It never goes below 10 degrees for more than three days.
5. drought: In some areas in the world, there is always the danger of a serious drought.
6. dry: Hanoi's weather can be very dry in winter.
7. flooding: If there is a lot of rain, some regions in this city may experience flooding.
8. fluctuate: The day and night temperatures fluctuate a lot in summer and winter.
9. fog: Heavy fog can cause accidents on the road.
10. humid: Hanoi is quite humid in winter.
11. mild: The weather in my home town is quite mild.
12. minus: The temperatures can go as low as minus 5 degrees.
13. misty: This afternoon was quite misty due to the heavy rain in the morning.
14. season: The four seasons are not very distinct in north Vietnam.
15. snow: There is sometimes snow in Sapa, Lao Cai province.
16. storm: Heavy storms frequently hit provinces in Central Vietnam.
17. sunny: Summer is sunny most of the time.
18. temperature: The temperature can reach up to 40 degrees in summer.
19. wind: The wind is so strong that it picks up all the dust from the road.
20. winter: Winter has been getting much colder in the last couple of years.

3. Studies

1. analytical thinking: Schools should emphasize analytical thinking.
2. assignment: I spend my weekends doing the assignment.
3. bachelor's/master's degree: First, I'll get my bachelor's degree, and then I will study for a master's degree.
4. cafeteria: I often eat in a cafeteria.
5. class monitor: I was a class monitor for three years in my primary school.
6. classmate: My classmates are all very friendly.
7. competitive: Education is getting more and more competitive.
8. creativity: Creativity is important in a student's development.
9. critical thinking: We need to sharpen students' critical thinking skills.
10. develop: I hope my child will develop an interest in playing the piano.
11. discipline: Strict discipline is important for our teachers.
12. dormitory: We have eight people in the dormitory.



13. **drill**: Our education system tends to teach by doing a lot of drills and practice.
14. **emphasize**: Education should emphasize personal development.
15. **encourage**: Children should be encouraged to be independent.
16. **entrance**: I passed my entrance examinations last year and now I am a freshman at the National University.
17. **exam based**: The Vietnamese school system is exam based.
18. **examination**: Students have to sit for several examinations in a school year.
19. **extracurricular**: I often spend my time doing extracurricular activities, such as playing ping-pong, and I am a member of the English club at school.
20. **facility**: Many schools lack facilities because of lack of money.
21. **first-year**: My first-year university life is quite fun and I'm enjoying it.
22. **focus**: This scholarship focuses more on leadership instead of grades.
23. **foundation**: Education provides a good foundation for job seeking.
24. **grade**: Good grades contribute to a student's success in obtaining a scholarship.
25. **graduate from**: I graduated from a famous university.
26. **headmaster**: The headmaster of my school is relatively young compared to others.
27. **homework**: I do a lot of homework in the evening.
28. **independent work**: Many teachers prefer students that are able to carry out independent work.
29. **interaction**: There isn't enough interaction in language classrooms in this high school.
30. **key school**: Many parents hope their kids will get into key schools.
31. **lecture**: Biology lectures are always boring.
32. **major in**: I major in economics.
33. **memorize**: I used to memorize vocabulary but I realize that is not a good way to learn.
34. **obedience**: Obedience is still used to judge whether a student is good or not.
35. **obey**: We were taught to obey teachers.
36. **post-graduate study**: I am thinking of doing my post-graduate studies in England and then come back to my country to work.
37. **private school**: A private school's tuition is more expensive than a public school's.
38. **problem-solving**: We should try to encourage more active problem-solving.
39. **professor**: My professor encouraged me to go on studying.
40. **project**: Sometimes students can learn more from projects.
41. **roommate**: I have 5 roommates in my dormitory.
42. **scholarship**: I hope to get a scholarship to go abroad.
43. **semester**: Last semester was the most difficult.
44. **special need**: Some students require special needs in school.
45. **stressful**: Large amounts of homework can be quite stressful for some kids.
46. **subject**: How many subjects are you studying this semester?



47. **teaching style:** My English teacher's teaching style is very relaxed.
48. **textbook:** Most of the textbooks are printed locally.
49. **training:** We need to give students special training in certain areas.
50. **under stress:** Sometimes I feel under stress from all the pressure.
51. **well-rounded:** Schools should aim to produce well-rounded graduates.

4. Work

1. **ambitious:** There is nothing wrong with being ambitious when it comes to a career.
2. **announce:** The union announced that a strike was going on.
3. **assist:** I hope one day I can assist in the family business.
4. **balance between:** People should try to balance between work and family life.
5. **be preoccupied with:** People are too preoccupied with work.
6. **benefit:** There are fewer benefits for employees in the public sector.
7. **boss:** My boss is very generous.
8. **career:** People are concentrating on their careers.
9. **challenging:** The most challenging part of the job is the research.
10. **colleague:** Colleagues may not cooperate as much as they used to.
11. **condition:** My company provides very comfortable working conditions.
12. **contribute to:** We cannot deny the fact that workers from other provinces have indeed contributed to the city workforce.
13. **coordinate:** It is important to coordinate the activities of different departments.
14. **day off:** My day off is always on Monday.
15. **day-to-day:** My day-to-day work is very routine.
16. **deadline:** My supervisor always gives me a tight deadline.
17. **duty:** My duties involve supervising the production.
18. **employ:** Most of the people we employed have a degree.
19. **foreign-owned:** Most foreign-owned companies require people with a good command of English.
20. **handle:** I believe I can handle jobs under high pressure.
21. **headhunter:** We see more and more headhunter firms operating in my country.
22. **hire:** I was first hired as an assistant manager.
23. **in charge of:** I'm in charge of hiring new staff for the company.
24. **individual success:** I am not sure how a person can judge individual success.
25. **intense competition:** Intense competition has forced companies to put more pressure on their workers to perform more quickly.
26. **job hopping:** Nowadays, job hopping is popular in big cities.
27. **job title:** My job title is managing director.



28. **joint venture:** My company is a joint venture with a German company.
29. **laid off:** I'm sure it wouldn't feel good to be laid off from work.
30. **overtime:** Many employees are made to work overtime without pay.
31. **position:** This position needs to be filled soon.
32. **promote:** I was promoted to chief engineer after six months.
33. **promotion:** Promotions are being made based on merit rather than experience.
34. **quit:** Very few people quit because the company takes good care of its employees.
35. **represent:** I represent my company at overseas conferences.
36. **resign:** I resigned from my last job after four months because it wasn't going anywhere.
37. **responsibility:** My responsibility is to ensure sales targets are achieved.
38. **rewarding:** I could say that my job is very rewarding.
39. **routine:** My work is quite routine and not very challenging.
40. **salary:** The salaries have gone up for many people in the last two years.
41. **state-owned:** My company is a state-owned company.
42. **under pressure:** I am always under pressure to meet deadlines.
43. **under stress:** Many people are under stress to complete their work on time.

5. Traffic and Transport

1. **bridge:** Many new bridges have been built in the past few years.
2. **construction:** Most of the construction is carried out in summer.
3. **convenient:** Getting around town is getting more convenient with more bus lines in service.
4. **cyclist:** Cyclists are still very common in rural areas.
5. **exhaust:** The exhaust of many cars in the city creates a lot of pollution.
6. **exit:** There should be another exit since this one is always jammed.
7. **flyover:** More flyovers should be built to reduce traffic jams.
8. **highway:** We need highways to improve the infrastructure of our country.
9. **intersection:** Accidents always happen at the intersections because people are careless.
10. **lorry/truck:** Many trucks come into the city at night because they are not allowed to get in during the day.
11. **obey traffic rules:** If more people had obeyed traffic rules, there would have been fewer accidents.
12. **overhead crossing:** Overhead crossings can help to reduce the number of accidents.
13. **parking lot:** Most business areas have parking lots.
14. **pedestrian walkway:** Most cities have pedestrian walkways.
15. **restriction:** It would be nice to have more restrictions on where cars can park.
16. **rush hour:** The traffic is very congested in rush hours.
17. **slippery:** Roads are very slippery in rainy seasons.



18. **traffic accident:** Most traffic jams are caused by traffic accidents.
19. **traffic jam:** To avoid traffic jams, I suggest you leave after peak hour.
20. **traffic light:** We need traffic lights at the intersections to regulate the traffic.
21. **well-maintained:** In this city, most of the buses are well-maintained and can be quite comfortable to travel in.
22. **wide/narrow:** The old roads in my home town are very narrow, but the new ones are wide enough for three lanes of traffic.

6. Hobbies and Spare Time

1. **a fan of:** I am a fan of My Tam, a famous Vietnamese singer.
2. **calligraphy:** It takes lots of patience to learn to master calligraphy.
3. **collecting:** One of my hobbies is collecting stamps.
4. **crazy about:** I am quite crazy about watching old films.
5. **enjoy chatting:** Many young people enjoy chatting on the Internet.
6. **get some exercise:** I enjoy just getting some exercise whenever I can.
7. **get together with:** I enjoy getting together with old classmates once in a while.
8. **go out with:** I often go out with my friends and have a good time with them.
9. **have a good time:** I often have a good time just chatting with my friends.
10. **hike:** I like hiking in the wilderness whenever I can.
11. **It takes a lot of practice ...:** It takes a lot of practice to be good at playing a musical instrument.
12. **It takes persistence ...:** It takes persistence to do a good job in sculpting.
13. **keep fit:** You have to exercise daily to keep fit.
14. **keep in touch:** I wish I had more time to keep in touch with my old friends.
15. **opera:** If I have time, I like to watch western opera.
16. **play cards:** I play cards with my friends in the evening.
17. **require a lot of skill:** Such an activity requires a lot of skill.
18. **sleep in:** I usually sleep in on Sunday mornings.
19. **spend time with:** At weekends, I always spend time with my family.
20. **surf the Internet:** I often surf the Internet.
21. **take a trip:** I enjoy taking a trip to the countryside.
22. **take classes in:** At weekends I take classes in English.
23. **take pictures:** I like going to beautiful places to take pictures. Photography is my hobby.
24. **take up:** I have decided to take up a speaking course to improve my oral English.
25. **teahouse:** That town has some nice teahouses that are more than a hundred years old.
26. **window shopping:** Most of the time I just do window shopping.



7. Future

1. **adapt to:** I must try to adapt to the new environment.
2. **ambition:** My ambition is to become a doctor.
3. **apply:** I hope I can apply my medical knowledge to help the poor.
4. **balance my time:** If I want to achieve my goal, I would need to balance my time between work and study.
5. **career:** Everybody wants a stable and good career.
6. **concentrate on:** I think I should concentrate on pronunciation rather than grammar.
7. **concern:** I have many concerns about living overseas.
8. **contribute:** I hope I can contribute to my country's development.
9. **culture shock:** It is very common for many overseas students to experience culture shock.
10. **custom:** I'll have to get used to the different customs in Canada.
11. **get accustomed to:** I need some time to get accustomed to my new environment.
12. **get established:** It is very important to get your career established before you get married.
13. **get used to:** My father couldn't get used to the weather when he was in London.
14. **goal/aim:** My goal is to get a doctorate degree.
15. **homestay:** I prefer a homestay situation to staying in a dormitory.
16. **homesick:** I'll probably get homesick from time to time.
17. **independent:** I want to be independent when I grow up.
18. **lonely:** There is no doubt I will feel lonely sometimes.
19. **manage my time:** There should not be any problem to manage my time if I plan it properly.
20. **mindset:** To be able to adapt to the changing environment, we need to have an open mindset.
21. **prove myself:** I hope I can prove myself in more difficult assignments.
22. **settle in:** It will take some time before I can settle in the new environment.
23. **try out:** I'd like to try out many different things overseas.
24. **upgrade:** I need to upgrade my computer knowledge.

8. Family

1. **argue:** Sometimes we argue but I think it is a waste of time.
2. **be brought up:** I was brought up in a very loving home.
3. **birth control:** Birth control is important to curb population growth.
4. **broken family:** Broken families can always affect the children.
5. **close-knit:** My family is a very close-knit one.
6. **collect a pension:** In the West, it is common for the elderly to collect a pension.
7. **cousin:** I have a cousin that is one day older than me.



8. **discipline:** My mother was very strict with her discipline.
9. **divorce:** Divorce used to be a taboo but not any more.
10. **elder:** The elders always have lots of experience to pass down.
11. **extended family:** An extended family has its advantages and disadvantages.
12. **family size:** Family size is small in most countries nowadays.
13. **fight:** Although we sometimes fight, we do love each other a lot.
14. **filial duty:** Filial duty is important in Asian societies.
15. **financially independent:** Sometimes, young people want to be financially independent before they're ready to get married.
16. **get along:** I do get along with people quite easily.
17. **get together:** New Year is an important time for families to get together.
18. **grow up:** I grew up in a small town.
19. **keep in touch:** I keep in touch with my family by e-mail.
20. **life expectancy:** Life expectancy has lengthened in some areas because of improved healthcare.
21. **live apart:** Many people would love to live apart and be independent.
22. **look after:** It is the job of children to look after their parents when they get old.
23. **make ends meet:** In rural places, children started working at a young age to make ends meet in the family.
24. **model:** Parents always try to be good models for their children.
25. **move out:** We moved out from the area last year.
26. **nag:** People always say old people nag a lot but I have never noticed that.
27. **nuclear family:** Nowadays there are many nuclear families.
28. **one-child policy:** China has adopted the one-child policy to control the population.
29. **only child:** I am the only child in my family.
30. **opposite:** My best friend lives in the opposite block.
31. **pass away:** My grandfather passed away three years ago.
32. **raise a child:** It's a bit easier to raise a child than it used to be.
33. **resemble:** I resemble my father the most.
34. **retired:** Both my parents are retired.
35. **scold:** My mother sometimes scolds me for being too noisy.
36. **single-parent family:** I don't think single-parent families provide any less quality care than families with both parents.
37. **spoil:** Some kids are spoiled because all the attention was given to them.
38. **strict:** My father is quite strict.
39. **support:** My father is the one that supports the whole family.
40. **the generation gap:** In the modern time, the generation gap is getting wider and wider.



9. Shopping

1. **store:** There are more and more computer stores in town.
2. **retail goods:** There are wider selections in all kinds of retail goods nowadays.
3. **gift shop:** You shouldn't miss gift shops at tourist sites.
4. **necessities:** This store sells all kinds of necessities.
5. **department store:** There are three department stores in my home town.
6. **cheat:** The shopkeeper is quite honest and he will not cheat you.
7. **imported goods:** The shops in my home town have a lot of imported goods.
8. **luxury item:** Nowadays more shops are selling luxury items.
9. **price:** Prices are very high here.
10. **good deal:** You can find some good deals if you look hard.
11. **quality:** The quality of goods in my home town is quite high.
12. **window shopping:** I enjoy going window shopping.
13. **pirated goods:** There are many pirated goods, especially DVDs.
14. **modern:** Many young people like to wear modern clothing.
15. **service:** The stores here emphasize their excellent after-sales service because of competition.
16. **parking:** Parking is always a problem especially in the city centre.
17. **sales staff:** The sales staff have been through training to provide good service.
18. **on sale:** You can find many goods on sale in my home town.
19. **bargain:** You must bargain hard because the asking price is very high.
20. **fashion:** People are more fashion conscious nowadays.
21. **in style:** There are lots of things you can buy which are in style these days.
22. **cost of living:** The cost of living is relatively low in this province.

10. Language Studies

1. **accurate:** I find it difficult to be accurate in pronunciation when we speak.
2. **brave:** One key strategy in learning foreign languages is to be extroverted.
3. **confident:** When you speak, it is important to be confident.
4. **familiar:** There are many words I am still not familiar with.
5. **fluent:** My best friend can speak fluent Spanish.
6. **grammar:** English grammar can be complex sometimes.
7. **hesitate:** I often hesitate when I speak.
8. **idiom:** There are many idioms in English.
9. **learn by heart:** The teacher learned all the students' names by heart.
10. **memorize:** I spend a lot of time memorizing words.
11. **native speaker:** As a language learner, I always try to speak like a native speaker.



12. **persist:** I think it's important just to persist with a language.
13. **phrase:** There are still many phrases which I can't understand.
14. **practise:** If you practise speaking often, you will be fluent.
15. **pronunciation:** I would say pronunciation is more important than mimicking the accent.
16. **recite:** Sometimes I recite a paragraph.
17. **rhythm:** Developing rhythm in your speech isn't easy.
18. **smoothly:** I hope one day I can speak English smoothly.
19. **strike up:** Yesterday I struck up an interesting conversation with an African woman.
20. **stutter:** It is common to stutter when you first speak a foreign language.
21. **tone:** The Vietnamese language has six tones.
22. **tongue tied:** I get a bit tongue tied when I speak.
23. **translate:** I can get my classmate to translate the essay into Japanese.
24. **vocabulary:** He has a large stock of vocabulary but he can't speak a full sentence correctly.
25. **word block:** I often get word blocks when I try to say something.

11. Sports

1. **compete:** If I cannot make it this time, I can always compete again next year.
2. **exciting:** I find sports exciting.
3. **field:** The field is often too wet to play football.
4. **graceful:** I like to watch female figure skating because it is so graceful.
5. **keep active:** It is important to keep active in life.
6. **keep fit:** I go swimming just to keep fit.
7. **keep in shape:** I hope I can always keep in shape if I control my diet.
8. **live broadcast:** Live broadcast is just as good as being there.
9. **live game:** Watching a live game can be very exciting.
10. **match:** This football match won't be exciting since both teams are not that great.
11. **out of shape:** I'm a bit out of shape now, so I have to practise.
12. **participate:** Every student has to participate in extracurricular activities.
13. **play for fun:** I'm not a serious player. I just play for fun.
14. **practise:** To be competitive, we must practise every day.
15. **release stress:** Exercise can help us release stress.
16. **score:** I think the yellow team will score more than the red one.
17. **skill:** Developing skills requires practice.
18. **stadium:** This stadium can accommodate 50,000 people.
19. **strength:** I don't have the strength to pick up the weights.
20. **team:** Our team won the first gold in ten years.



12. Food

1. **baked**: I like baked potatoes.
2. **bitter**: Some herbs are very bitter.
3. **boiled**: Westerners like to eat boiled potatoes.
4. **chopsticks**: I learned how to use chopsticks when I was four years old.
5. **delicious**: I like my mother's cooking because it is always so delicious.
6. **dumpling**: People in this area like to eat dumplings.
7. **fresh**: The fish is fresh.
8. **helping**: The helpings are large in that restaurant.
9. **herb**: More and more people are talking about herbs as an alternative to western medicine.
10. **high in fat**: McDonald's foods are high in fat.
11. **hot pot**: In the winter time, people like to eat hot pot.
12. **hygienic**: I prefer home-cooked meals because they are more hygienic than those of the restaurant.
13. **lamb**: Most of the lambs come from Inner Mongolia.
14. **mixed**: I like to eat mixed vegetables.
15. **nutritious**: It is important to eat nutritious food.
16. **oily**: This kind of food can be quite oily.
17. **salty**: I can't take salty food at all.
18. **smell**: I like dishes that have a nice smell.
19. **snack**: I'm not used to having snacks between meals.
20. **spicy**: The food is so spicy that it numbs my tongue.
21. **steam**: Since the fish is so fresh, we'd better steam it.
22. **stir-fried**: Stir-fried dishes are common in these restaurants.
23. **sweet**: This food is quite sweet.
24. **unique taste**: I love Indian food because it has a unique taste.
25. **variety**: I prefer to have a variety of dishes when I go to a restaurant.

13. Clothing

1. **baggy**: I like to wear baggy pants.
2. **brand-name**: Many people are wearing brand-name clothing.
3. **casual wear**: Sometimes people think casual wear makes a person look cool.
4. **colourful**: Colourful clothing seems popular these days.
5. **conscious**: I am not that conscious of my appearance but many people are these days.
6. **conservative**: Very seldom, I wear sleeveless shirts because I am conservative.
7. **designer clothes**: Designer clothes are very expensive.



8. **dull**: People used to wear very dull clothing in the '60s and '70s.
9. **fashionable**: More and more people are buying fashionable clothes.
10. **in style**: I'm not the best person to ask what is in style this summer.
11. **jeans**: Many people are wearing jeans nowadays.
12. **keep up with**: It is hard to keep up with the changes.
13. **loose-fitting**: Loose-fitting clothes are more comfortable.
14. **spend a fortune**: Older people complain that young people nowadays spend a fortune on clothes.
15. **tight-fitting**: Young girls like to wear tight-fitting skirts that older people don't like.
16. **trendy**: Many trendy clothes are appearing in stores now.
17. **up-to-date**: Fashion magazines can provide up-to-date designs.

14. Music

1. **band**: These people formed a band and played in the pub.
2. **classical**: I enjoy classical music the most.
3. **concert**: I have never been to a concert.
4. **dance to the beat**: When the music starts, my daughter will dance to the beat.
5. **folk**: I always enjoy watching folk dance by ethnic people.
6. **heavy metal**: Heavy metal music is quite popular.
7. **hum along**: I am not good at singing but I like to hum along when I listen to a song.
8. **instrument**: Children should learn a musical instrument at school.
9. **jazz**: This pub plays only jazz music.
10. **love song**: There are too many love songs nowadays.
11. **lyrics**: I like to study the lyrics of songs. They are usually very meaningful.
12. **meaningful**: The lyrics of this song are very meaningful.
13. **melody**: I like singing along to the melody.
14. **piano**: I used to attend piano lessons.
15. **pop**: I like pop music because it makes me feel free and easy.
16. **relax**: When I am free, I like to listen to music to help me relax.
17. **rock**: I prefer rock to other kinds of music.
18. **sad song**: Sad songs make me feel moody.
19. **stimulate**: I like this kind of music because it stimulates me.
20. **voice**: I like listening to the voices of these singers.
21. **well-known**: I mainly listen to well-known songs.



15. Places

1. **altitude:** Many tourists feel dizzy when climbing to the peak because of its high altitude.
2. **flight:** There are many flights from the airport.
3. **glacier:** My dream is to visit the north pole and see the glaciers.
4. **grassland:** Inner Mongolia is famous for its vast grasslands.
5. **Great Wall:** Chinese people say that you are not a real man until you climb the Great Wall.
6. **impression:** The sunrise at the beach made a deep impression on me.
7. **on tour:** I prefer to go on tour because everything is arranged.
8. **pagoda:** You will see a nice pagoda on top of the highest hill there.
9. **plant life:** The park has a rich variety of plant life.
10. **reach the summit:** For climbers, the biggest satisfaction is to reach the summit.
11. **Reunification Palace:** If you visit Ho Chi Minh City, you should visit the Reunification Palace.
12. **rich culture:** Vietnam has a very old and rich culture.
13. **shore:** I love to go to the shore and feel the sea breeze.
14. **shrine:** There are many shrines, a couple of which are famous.
15. **souvenir:** Many tourists like to buy souvenirs while on tour.
16. **spectacular view:** You can get a spectacular view on the top of a mountain.
17. **statue:** There are many important statues in the square.
18. **steep canyon:** The steep canyons will take your breath away.
19. **steep cliff:** Along the gorges, there are many steep cliffs on both sides.
20. **sunbathing:** Sunbathing can be quite fun provided you don't burn your skin.
21. **sunrise:** Have you ever tried to get up early and see the sunrise?
22. **sunset:** Standing on the top of the mountain and watching the sunset is very captivating.
23. **temple:** There are many temples in this ancient town.
24. **tourist:** More and more tourists are coming to Vietnam every year.
25. **twisted rock:** Those twisted rocks inside the mountain are beautiful.
26. **valley:** The place is in a very deep valley, which seems so mysterious.
27. **waterfall:** If you hike into the park, you will see a very pretty waterfall.
28. **wave:** The waves can be quite strong during the monsoon season.
29. **wildlife:** You can observe a lot of different wildlife in that region.



16. People

1. **admire**: Michael Jordan is the person I admire the most.
2. **behaviour**: Some people consider his behaviour a bit odd, but I like him very much.
3. **depend on**: I feel I can always depend on her.
4. **diligent**: Few of my classmates are as diligent as her when they study.
5. **easygoing**: My friend is a very easygoing person.
6. **extroverted**: My best friend is sometimes too extroverted.
7. **hang around**: We like to hang around together at Internet cafés.
8. **high cheekbones**: My sister has high cheekbones.
9. **in common**: My friend and I always have a lot in common.
10. **introverted**: I am much more introverted than my brother.
11. **lose contact/touch**: I have lost contact/touch with my old classmates.
12. **loyal**: My sister is very loyal to me.
13. **mutual respect**: We seem to have mutual respect for each other.
14. **reliable**: I feel my best friend is very reliable and will not break promises.
15. **rely on**: We can always rely on each other for help.
16. **same interest**: My father and I share the same interest in sports.
17. **secret**: I share my secrets with my best friend.
18. **sense of humour**: My best friend has a good sense of humour.
19. **stand by me**: My parents will always stand by me.
20. **trustworthy**: Many people say I am trustworthy.

17. Experiences

1. **be scared to death**: I was scared to death giving that speech in front of everyone.
2. **celebrate**: More people celebrate Christmas in my country nowadays.
3. **couldn't believe my eyes**: I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw such a beautiful site.
4. **deep impression**: If you visit the exhibition, you will get a deep impression of it too.
5. **effect on me**: The effect this trip had on me was something I can hardly describe.
6. **encourage**: It was my piano teacher who encouraged me to take part in the competition.
7. **enjoy myself**: I enjoyed myself very much when I was in Malaysia.
8. **finally**: Finally, she arrived and we met for the first time.
9. **impress**: I was impressed by the artist's work.
10. **in a daze**: After I heard the news, I was in a daze.
11. **jump for joy**: My parents jumped for joy when I was admitted into university.
12. **learning experience**: I treat this trip as a learning experience and will try to do things differently next time.



13. **never forget the time:** I'll never forget the time when I represented the school in a music competition which was held by the city.
14. **once I ...:** Once I was picnicking on the beach, it suddenly started raining.
15. **overjoyed:** I was overjoyed when I passed the entrance exam into university.
16. **put all my effort into:** I put all my effort into learning English.
17. **realize:** The bus had already moved when I realized I was on the wrong bus.
18. **recall:** Whenever I recall that trip, I get a warm feeling.
19. **shock:** Everyone was shocked by the news.
20. **stay in my mind:** The little girl that died of cancer will always stay in my mind.
21. **think it over:** After I thought it over, I felt so stupid lending him money.
22. **took ... seriously:** I took my first job very seriously and always worked overtime.
23. **unforgettable:** The most unforgettable moment was when I broke my leg in school.
24. **with all my might:** I tried with all my might to complete the project on time.

18. Buildings and Home

1. **architecture:** I prefer traditional architecture.
2. **brick:** Brick houses are very common here.
3. **concrete:** The walls are made of concrete.
4. **corridor:** The longest painted corridor is in that old castle.
5. **design:** The design was done by a European.
6. **dining room:** The dining room can accommodate 1,000 people.
7. **empty/vacant:** The apartment has been vacant for 3 months.
8. **entrance:** I can't find the entrance to the park.
9. **furniture:** All the furniture here is from Spain.
10. **high-quality material:** It is made of high-quality materials, so it looks very classy and solid.
11. **kitchen:** I like a kitchen that is bright and clean.
12. **living room:** The living room is at least 20 square metres.
13. **old-fashioned:** Even though it is designed that way, it is not necessarily old-fashioned.
14. **roof:** The roof of the house is red.
15. **skyscraper:** There are many skyscrapers in New York.
16. **tile:** Tiles come in different colours to choose from.
17. **traditional style:** The new pagoda was built in traditional style.



19. Gifts and Meaningful Objects

1. **aluminum:** It is made of a light type of aluminum.
2. **antique:** I guess you could call it an antique, even though I don't know the age of it.
3. **be used to:** It is used to store words and definitions.
4. **breakable:** This bottle is breakable, so handle it with care.
5. **decorate:** It is decorated with many different pictures.
6. **function:** It has many functions and features.
7. **hollow:** It is actually hollow inside so that you can keep coins.
8. **metal:** It is a metal object with many designs on it.
9. **plastic:** The edge of it is made of very hard plastic.
10. **plug:** You can just plug it in and cook what you want.
11. **precious:** The crown was set with precious jewels.
12. **priceless:** My dad gave me this watch, and I considered it to be priceless.
13. **rare:** This is a rare piece of artwork.
14. **rectangular:** It has a rectangular shape which is quite interesting.
15. **replace:** The sentimental value of this gift cannot be replaced.
16. **reward:** I was given it as a reward for getting good grades in school.
17. **round:** The top of this object is round.
18. **shiny:** The surface is very shiny and smooth.
19. **texture:** The texture is quite rough.
20. **well-made:** I can see that is a well-made piece of work.
21. **wooden:** It is a wooden object with a plastic cover.

20. Favourite Animal

1. **adorable:** Pandas are adorable animals.
2. **avoid:** This animal tends to avoid humans, so they are hard to see.
3. **bamboo:** Bamboo can be used to make different objects.
4. **be found in:** Polar bears are to be found only in the North Pole.
5. **claw:** The tiger has sharp claws.
6. **conservation area:** Many of them live in conservation areas, which protect them from hunters.
7. **crawl:** The crocodile crawls on land.
8. **cunning:** I think the wolf is a cunning animal.
9. **cute:** The koala is a very cute animal in Australia.
10. **elegant:** The rooster looks very elegant with the crown on its head.
11. **endangered:** The white tiger is an endangered species.



12. **extinct**: This kind of species has become extinct.
13. **fierce**: The lion is a fierce animal.
14. **graceful**: Most people agree that this animal is very graceful when it moves.
15. **habitat**: Wildlife is in danger of losing its natural habitat.
16. **hunting**: These animals have been disappearing due to human hunting.
17. **instinct**: Sharks have a very good instinct of where the food is.
18. **paw**: They have sharp claws on their paws.
19. **population**: The population of the panda has decreased drastically over the last 20 years.
20. **protected area**: These animals mostly live in protected areas.
21. **shy**: The panda is also a shy animal.
22. **spot**: The leopard has spots on its body.
23. **stripe**: Zebras have stripes on their bodies.
24. **tail**: I love the long tail of a tiger, and the way it moves.

21. Festival and Holiday

1. **carnival**: There are different carnivals held during summer in my home town.
2. **celebrate**: New Year is celebrated all over the country.
3. **customary**: It is customary for people to exchange gifts on Christmas Day.
4. **decorate**: It is customary for people to decorate their houses during festival seasons.
5. **family reunion**: Most people look forward to a family reunion during festival seasons.
6. **feast**: My mother always prepares a big feast on this day.
7. **fireworks display**: We end the event with a huge fireworks display.
8. **honour**: He was honoured for his bravery.
9. **Labour Day**: Labour Day falls on May the first.
10. **legend**: The dance was based on several Hindu legends.
11. **Mid-Autumn Festival**: Mid-Autumn Festival is a time when people can get together briefly, have a nice feast together and perhaps watch the moon.
12. **parade**: Military parades are often seen in big national events.
13. **pay respect to**: Kids should always pay respect to their elders.
14. **red packet**: The younger children receive red packets from the elders during the Lunar New Year.
15. **re-establish links**: It's a good time for us to re-establish our links with each other.
16. **reminisce**: Sometimes we just sit around and reminisce about the old times.
17. **round-table dinner**: Round-table dinners are common during this festival.
18. **set off fireworks**: Fireworks are usually set off in important events.
19. **significance**: The significance of such an event is mainly symbolic.
20. **superstition**: We do it out of superstition but we really don't take it seriously.



Additional Vocabulary

Customs

1. bid farewell to the old year
2. dragon dance
3. exhibition of lanterns
4. firecrackers
5. fireworks
6. get rid of the ill fortune
7. gift money
8. lantern
9. lion dance
10. New Year paintings
11. offer sacrifices to one's ancestors
12. paper-cuttings
13. pay New Year's call; give New Year's greetings; New Year's visit
14. poetic couplets
15. propose a toast
16. riddles written on lanterns
17. special purchases for the Tet holiday; do the Tet holiday shopping
18. spring cleaning
19. Tet holiday couplets
20. staying up
21. taboo
22. traditional opera
23. variety show

Food

1. assorted candies
2. candied lotus root
3. candied lotus seed
4. candied winter melon
5. candy tray
6. cumquat
7. peanut candy
8. red melon seed



22. The Environment

1. **air/water/soil quality:** The air quality is getting worse and worse in some big cities.
2. **carbon dioxide:** Excessive carbon dioxide can cause weather change.
3. **chemical:** There are a lot of chemicals being dumped in the water.
4. **coal:** Our country relies too much on coal.
5. **contaminate:** The river is contaminated by the nearby factories.
6. **dumping:** Waste dumping at improper areas can cause pollution.
7. **endangered:** The panda is an endangered species.
8. **exhaust fume:** Exhaust fumes can cause respiratory problems.
9. **extinction:** Some animals are close to extinction.
10. **garbage:** Many streets were littered with garbage.
11. **give fines to:** The government should give fines to those who break the rules.
12. **greenhouse effect:** I think everyone is worried about the greenhouse effect.
13. **litter:** We shouldn't litter and we must keep our city clean.
14. **logging:** Illegal logging is a big problem in this town.
15. **over- (e.g. over-logging, over-fishing):** The fish population has decreased dramatically because of over-fishing.
16. **plant trees:** Many students learn how to plant trees in school.
17. **poach:** Bear poaching is still going on in the northeastern part of this country.
18. **pollution:** Pollution is a big problem for many cities in the world.
19. **recycle:** We should do more to recycle bottles and papers.
20. **regulation:** The government is passing new regulations to deal with the problem.
21. **resources:** We need to protect our resources better.
22. **restriction:** Strict restrictions should be imposed to protect the environment.
23. **reuse:** As they become wealthier, many people no longer reuse things.
24. **soil erosion:** Soil erosion is a big problem in Inner Mongolia.
25. **waste:** We need to adopt better waste treatment of the water.

23. Technology

1. **accurate:** People expect computer programmes to be accurate and reliable.
2. **advanced:** Technology is getting more and more advanced.
3. **automatically:** Many new facilities work automatically.
4. **automation:** Full automation is what many factories are hoping to achieve at the end of the year.
5. **brand-new:** We need brand-new technology for our industries to prosper.
6. **connect:** The Internet connects people around the world.



7. **electronic**: Electronic goods such as hand phones are getting smaller.
8. **globalization**: Globalization will help to improve living standards.
9. **hardware**: We can produce good computer hardware.
10. **high-tech industry**: There are many high-tech industries in this industrial zone.
11. **information age**: We are living in the information age.
12. **latest development**: It's important for a company to be on top of the latest developments or it will fall behind its competitors.
13. **modernization**: Modernization opens up many opportunities for people.
14. **outdated**: Many computers are outdated.
15. **restructure**: Many companies have to restructure.
16. **retraining**: Many laid-off workers go for retraining to improve their skills.
17. **revolution**: Computers have gone through quite a revolution in the last twenty years.
18. **stay on top**: People have to stay on top of all the latest developments.
19. **technical**: If there are any technical problems, it's difficult to get them fixed.
20. **top-notch**: Many companies like top-notch people to work for them.
21. **transfer**: Many banks will do money transfers from one account to another.
22. **upgrade**: These days, it's necessary to constantly upgrade our skills.
23. **wireless**: We can expect much of our technology to be wireless in the future.

24. Societal Changes

1. **acknowledge**: Most people acknowledge that this is a serious problem.
2. **article**: I have read an article about a bank robbery in today's newspaper.
3. **at a ... rate**: Things are changing at an alarming rate.
4. **awareness**: Consumer awareness is growing.
5. **bias**: A good newspaper will try to be free of any bias.
6. **can't take**: I can't take the blame because I wasn't there when it happened.
7. **censorship**: Censorship is sometimes necessary for a number of reasons.
8. **century**: I hope the world will be at peace in this century.
9. **come together to solve**: I hope people will come together to solve the problem.
10. **corruption**: Corruption is rampant in some countries.
11. **day by day**: Our lives are getting better day by day.
12. **dependent**: People are more dependent on computers than ever before.
13. **discriminate on/against**: I would say some foreign workers are discriminated against in big cities.
14. **equality/inequality**: There still exists some inequality although it's a bit better now.
15. **experiment**: Countless experiments were done to make sure this medicine works.
16. **expose**: Many cases of this have been exposed.



17. **feel the strain:** I can feel the strain with the increased competition.
18. **gap:** The gap between the rich and the poor is enormous.
19. **global village:** We truly live in a global village.
20. **growing demand:** There is a growing demand for new solutions.
21. **ignore:** Society cannot ignore the disadvantaged people.
22. **impact:** There are many ways that this problem has impacted society.
23. **impersonal:** Unlike letters, I find e-mail more impersonal.
24. **innovation:** Innovation is important for any company that wants to survive.
25. **keep pace with:** We have to keep pace with the changes.
26. **keep up with:** It is hard to keep up with the changing technology.
27. **libel:** Sometimes restrictions are necessary to protect people from libel.
28. **look into:** If you look into the problem, you might find it is more complicated than you think.
29. **neglect:** The poor are the ones that are often neglected in the society.
30. **opening up:** Vietnam is opening up to foreign investment.
31. **over dependence:** I think we should not create any over dependence on one source.
32. **pass legislation:** We need to pass legislation that stems the problem.
33. **pressure:** The pressure can sometimes be too great to handle.
34. **print:** The magazine print is getting more and more attractive.
35. **publish:** This magazine is published once a month.
36. **rapid development:** This company has seen some rapid development in the last three years.
37. **reliable / credible / accurate source:** It's important for a good reporter to have reliable sources or the story may turn out to be false.
38. **repressed / suppressed:** Some women feel they are still suppressed in society.
39. **rise in ...:** There's been a sharp rise in crime.
40. **rising / on the rise:** Crime has been on the rise for the last couple years.
41. **root / underlying cause (of the problem):** The root cause of the problem is the low pay they receive at work.
42. **self-sufficient:** The main challenge is to make them more self-sufficient.
43. **special effect:** American films are good at special effects.
44. **steadily:** The revenue has changed steadily over the years.
45. **stem from:** Such abuse stems from a lack of awareness.
46. **substantial:** You can see substantial changes made over the years.
47. **surface:** Although it seems to work on the surface, the reality is different.
48. **take over:** Tall buildings are taking over those low flats.
49. **transform:** They have transformed the old train station into a spacious park.
50. **verify:** It is not difficult to verify whether it is true or false.
51. **violence:** There is too much violence on TV.



52. **voice concern:** Many people are voicing their concerns about this issue.
53. **way of thinking:** People now are more receptive to new ideas, and the way of thinking has changed.

25. Media

1. **broadcast:** These days, television can be broadcasted around the world.
2. **check sources:** A reporter must check his/her sources very carefully.
3. **download:** You can download games from the Internet.
4. **gossip:** Gossip news keeps readers entertained.
5. **irresponsible:** Some reporters are irresponsible when it comes to reporting.
6. **journalist:** It is not easy for journalists to do reports in war zones.
7. **objective:** A reporter has to be objective for his/her reporting.
8. **professionally:** It is important to act professionally as a journalist.
9. **report:** Sometimes we have to be sharp if the report is not true.
10. **sensationalism:** The entertainment news often likes to engage in sensationalism.
11. **standard:** I would say our newspaper adheres to high industry standards.
12. **tabloid:** Some people like to read tabloid news.

26. Lifestyle

1. **cool:** Young people like to look cool and think it is attractive.
2. **disposable income:** In the cities, you can see that disposable income has increased.
3. **fashion-conscious:** Many people are getting more fashion-conscious.
4. **image:** Image is only a disguise to what a real person is.
5. **keep fit:** One needs to keep fit to be healthy.
6. **more open towards ...:** Many people are more open towards inter-racial marriages.
7. **pace of life:** I prefer the relaxed pace of life in the country.
8. **rebel:** Teenagers like to rebel rather than conform to the norm.
9. **recreation:** Recreation areas are inadequate in many cities in this developing country.
10. **social life:** I try to keep my social life minimal during the weekend.
11. **standard of living:** Many people are enjoying a higher standard of living.
12. **status:** High status does not mean happiness is achieved.
13. **take life easy:** Personally, I feel life is not long, so we should take life easy.
14. **take up:** I hope to take up diving courses when I visit Thailand.
15. **trend:** The trend towards healthy eating is to eat organic foods.
16. **way of life:** The way of life is very different in different provinces.



II. Useful Expressions

1. Describing Objects, Clothing, Buildings and Housing

1. It's round with a long handle and lots of different functions.
2. It's made of silk.
3. It has many features.
4. It can be used to make phone calls or you can use it for playing games.
5. It has a lot of patterns.
6. It is red with a steep roof.
7. The whole building is covered with designs.
8. It's a three-room apartment, and it's about 80 square metres.

2. Recalling Events

1. I can still remember the time when I passed my entrance examination into university.
2. I'll never forget the time when I first went to primary school.
3. It all started when I landed at the airport.
4. Once, when I was a college student, I went on a trip which I will never forget.

3. Describing Moods

1. I felt so happy that I could jump for joy.
2. I was in a great mood.
3. I felt like I was in heaven.
4. I was scared to death.
5. I was overcome with joy.
6. It impressed me deeply.
7. I felt so depressed.
8. I felt like a millionaire.
9. I was worried to death.
10. I was filled with joy.



4. Giving Instructions

1. The first thing you should do/need to do is to plug it in.
2. To start with, you should/need to turn on the power.
3. First, you need to take off the lid.
4. The first step is to get the ingredients prepared.
5. After that, you need to find the right switch.
6. Next, you should select the function you want to use.
7. After that, you should press the button.
8. Then, bring it close to your ear.
9. Finally, switch it off by pressing the red button.
10. The last thing you need to do is to turn off the stove.
11. Don't forget to check to see if the batteries are inside.
12. Make sure you recharge it at night.
13. Make sure you won't forget to turn it off when you are finished.

5. Hesitating

1. Well, ...
2. Actually, ...
3. In fact, ...
4. You see, ...
5. You know, ...
6. How shall I put it, ...
7. Let me think for a second, ...
8. Give me a few seconds, ...

6. Commenting on an Issue

1. That's difficult to answer, but (maybe) ...
2. I'm sorry, I don't know much about ... but perhaps ...
3. Maybe I can answer your question by telling you about a personal experience I had.
4. That's an interesting question. Let me see. Well, I suppose that ...
5. Yes, that's a big issue.



7. Talking about Changes

1. More and more people in my country are learning English.
2. The environmental problem is getting more serious.
3. Cities in Vietnam have been going through some big changes.
4. These days, computers have become very popular.
5. Prices of computers are falling rapidly.
6. There has been a rapid increase of farmers moving to big cities.
7. The number of engineers has risen rapidly over the last few years.
8. The world population has increased rapidly over the last few years.

8. Talking about Roles or the Importance of an Issue

1. Yes, computers play a big role in our lives.
2. Yes, I think it's an important issue for us these days.
3. You're right; sports are playing an increasingly big role in our lives.
4. Entertainment has always been important to our lives.
5. Friendship is something we all take seriously.
6. In Vietnam, we consider the family to be key to our society.

9. Giving an Anecdote Related to an Issue

1. I can remember seeing the Olympics and thinking how wonderful it must be for people from Sydney.
2. Yes, I personally have experienced some of these changes growing up here in Ho Chi Minh City.
3. In fact, I had a personal experience with this issue of crime last year.

10. Making Generalizations

1. In the vast majority of cases, the accidents are caused by neglect.
2. In most cases, divorce is something that both parties realize is necessary.
3. Generally (speaking), our people love sports.
4. By and large, Vietnamese people are very respectful of the elderly.
5. On the whole, Vietnamese students receive a good education in the basics.



11. Speculating about Reasons for a Trend

1. Probably the main reason that technology has increased is that we are now more open to outside ideas.
2. The best reason I can think of for the increase in crime is our changing social conditions.
3. I would guess that fast food restaurants are becoming more important because of their convenience.
4. I'm not sure, but from my own observation, I would say that most people are buying cars because they're symbols of prosperity.

12. Speculating about Reasons for a Situation

1. Although I'm no expert, I'd guess that children learn instruments more easily, because they are not so dependent on human language and therefore more susceptible to alternative ways of expression.
2. It's hard to say, but if I were to guess, I'd say that many people are doing their MBAs because they think it is much easier to get a job with this degree.
3. If I had to guess, I would say that children make friends more easily than adults because they are more carefree.
4. I'm not that familiar with art but I'd say that some art is more popular because it connects better with its audience.

13. Speculating about the Importance or Effect of Something

1. I'd probably have to say that the real importance of sports is that they allow us to release our energy.
2. I'm not sure, but I think the biggest role that a teacher plays in education is that he/she guides students to success.
3. I had to say that the biggest impact of machinery is on human beings. I'd guess it has made us more demanding in producing things.



14. Speculating about Important Factors that Cause or Contribute to Something

1. I imagine that the most important factor to a long-lasting friendship is trust.
2. There are many ways, but I suppose that the most important way a foreign language affects us is that it opens up a whole new world to us.
3. I'd say the biggest way that music contributes to our world is that it helps make us feel calmer.

15. Speculating about an Issue in the Future

1. It probably won't change much in a short period of time.
2. Perhaps not in the short term but it will get better in the long run.
3. I'd say it will probably get better because more people are concerned.

16. Giving Opinions

1. I think it's a matter of a person's choice whether they want to learn it.
2. I think it's hard to judge now but we'll be able to tell later.
3. I'd like to point out that pollution is not a new problem.
4. To my thinking, the Internet is a waste of time.
5. In my opinion, we should stick together as a group.
6. From my point of view, I think you should look for other ways out.
7. Personally, I think the time could be better spent doing other things.
8. Frankly, I think it's a waste of time.
9. I reckon we should consider other options.
10. If you ask me, that's not a good solution.
11. I'd say that we should think about a range of solutions.

17. Expressing Arguments Immediately by Giving a Counterargument

1. Well, I know many people like it but I think it's wrong.
2. Yes, these days it is quite popular to go on these chat lines, but I think it's not very good.
3. A lot of people think the environment is getting better but frankly, I think it's getting worse.



18. Giving Reasons for Arguments

1. Well, I think there are three reasons: First, it is part of our culture. Second, it is good for our economy. Finally, it gives us time to recharge and rest for the next working year.
2. Well, the main reasons I think this would be dangerous are ...
3. The best reason I think the examination system should change is because it prevents too many people from pursuing their dreams.
4. I can come up with about three reasons for the change in people's diets.

19. Supporting Arguments by Giving Examples

1. Take the problem of traffic jams at the intersection as an example.
2. The ping-pong champion is a good example.
3. Well, just to illustrate my point, 30 years ago we had few cars.
4. One example of this is the carnival at the National Park.
5. I think I can give you one particular example of a policy that has really helped to protect the environment.

20. Supporting Arguments by Giving Hypothetical Logic

1. If we allow our traditional customs to disappear, this will have a very bad effect on our culture.
2. If everyone were to eat fast food, we would have a lot of health problems to deal with.
3. If animals were to disappear, we would indeed be showing our irresponsibility to the animal kingdom.

21. Supporting Opinions by Offering Solutions

1. I think what should be done is to give students more opportunities to demonstrate their creativity.
2. If I had the power to change things, I would start by relocating factories to places outside the city.
3. What ought to be done is a complete ban on such practices.
4. I think this problem could be solved by creating more job opportunities.
5. To solve this problem, I think we should try and set up more facilities for elderly people to meet each other and socialize.



22. Stating Differences

1. The main difference between the way young people think of clothing and the way old people think of clothes is in the styles.
2. The biggest difference between construction about 20 years ago and today is that 20 years ago, much construction was done manually.
3. There are some key differences between Western and Vietnamese food.
4. One large way that big cities differ from small cities is the air.
5. Yes, there are quite a few differences between the way children and adults make friends. A good example is the way they just start using each other's toys happily without needing permission.
6. The difference between Western movies and Vietnamese movies is that Western movies tend to be more action-based while Vietnamese movies focus on the relationships between people.

23. Making Comparisons

1. Big cities have more opportunities than small cities.
2. University life is more interesting than middle school life.
3. Key schools are more difficult to apply to than regular schools.
4. There is more oil in Chinese food than in Western food.
5. Families in the past were more dependent on each other, but now they are more independent.
6. An apartment is not as big as a house but in many ways, it is more convenient. For one thing, residents can use the facilities in the apartment block, like the gym, swimming pool and playground.
7. There were fewer cars on the roads 20 years ago, compared to now.

24. Stating Pros and Cons

1. There are two sides to this issue. On the one hand, we need tourism to develop our economy. On the other hand, we shouldn't let it destroy our natural beauty.
2. This issue is complex. On the one hand, people say it's healthy to play sports but on the other hand, playing them too competitively may lead to some harmful things.



25. Talking about Advantages and Disadvantages

1. There are many advantages and disadvantages of watching sports versus playing them.
2. The main advantage of getting news on the Internet is that it is fast and we can choose what news we want to learn. The disadvantage is it may not be as reliable.
3. The strengths of a traditional family are in its close family support, but the weakness is that the husband and wife often feel trapped in the relationship.
4. The positive side of technology is its contribution to our convenience, but the darker side of it is that it may make us lazier.
5. While many point out that uniforms save students from buying clothes, I think it also teaches students conformity.

26. Useful Communicative Expressions

1. When you do not understand the examiner's questions
 1. Could you please rephrase that question/topic?
 2. I'm not exactly sure what you mean ...
2. When you do not have ideas for a certain question
 1. I'm not exactly sure how to answer that question, but (perhaps) ...
 2. That's a rather difficult question, but (maybe) ...
 3. I'm sorry, but I don't know much about ...
 4. That's an interesting question, but ...
 5. Let me see. Well, I suppose that ...
 6. However, it might be possible that ...
 7. Maybe I can answer your question by telling you about a personal experience I had.
3. When you want to present your ideas in a logical way
 1. Well, I think there are three reasons: First, ... Second, ... Finally, ...
 2. In my opinion, there are three ways of looking at it: First of all, ... Next, ... Then, ...
4. When you would like to involve the examiner
 1. Have I given you enough information?
 2. Would you like me to tell you more about ...?
 3. Is that all you'd like to know?
 4. Is there anything else you wish to know?



5. When you signal to end your answer or talk

1. I'm afraid that's about as much as I know.
2. I think that's all.
3. I can't think of anything else right now.

6. When you talk about your plans

1. Well, as you know, at the moment I'm studying at ...
2. Well, as I told you before, at the moment I'm working at ...
3. I'm preparing right now to go to ..., so my short-term plan is to ...
4. I've already found out a lot about my intended course, for instance, ...
5. If I'm successful, I'll probably ..., so in the long term, I hope to ...
6. If I'm not successful, that is, if something goes wrong, I think I'll probably ...
7. I'm certain I'll (do something).
8. I'm going to (do something).
9. I'm intending to (do something).
10. I'm thinking of (doing something).
11. I'm hopeful to (do something).
12. I'm certain I'll be (doing something).
13. I'm going to work.
14. I intend to be (doing something).
15. I think I'll be (doing something).
16. I hope to be (doing something).
17. I'll probably (be able to) (do something).
18. I possibly won't (be able to) (do something).
19. I probably won't (be able to) (do something).
20. I most probably won't (be able to) (do something).
21. I might even ...
22. Of course, I could always ... if ...
23. It's always possible that ...
24. Perhaps I'll even ...
25. I've thought about (doing something).
26. I've got a good chance of (doing something).
27. I've got a 50-50 chance of (doing something).
28. I've got a reasonable chance of (doing something).
29. I've got little chance of (doing something).
30. I've got no chance of (doing something).



Appendix 1

Six Sample Speaking Tests

Test 1

Part 1

Home town

Where are you from?

Where do you live now?

Which part of the city do you like best?

Is there any part of the city you don't like?

Are you going to stay there for a long time?

Films

Do you like films?

What kind of films do you like?

How often do you watch films?

Do you like to watch alone or with your friends?

Do you prefer to watch films in the cinema or at home?

Birthdays

How important are birthdays in your country?

What do children get on birthdays in your country?

What is the most important birthday celebrated in your country?

Part 2

Describe the kind of book you would like to write (e.g. textbook, history book, storybook).

You should say

what kind of book you would like to write

what you would write in your book

and what kind of people would read your book in your opinion.



Follow-up

When would you plan to write it? Do you like writing?

Part 3

Writer

What is the most important quality of a writer?

Why do people choose to write for a living?

What kind of difficulties would a writer come up with?

Library

What do you think of libraries in your society?

How can libraries encourage people to read or learn more?

What do you think of the amount of money the government spends on libraries?

Test 2

Part 1

Work and study

Do you work or do you study?

Do you like your job?

Would you change jobs?

Memories

Do you keep photos? Why?

How do you feel when other people talk about their past experiences?

What do you learn from other people's experiences?

Public transport

What kind of public transport do people around you use?

Do you use public transport often?

What can the government do to improve public transport?

When is public transport most crammed?



Part 2

Describe the happiest person you've ever known.

You should say

who the person is

why the person is happy

how the person shows happiness

and how you feel about this person.

Part 3

Happiness

What can be done to help other people to be happy?

What are the sources of happiness?

Government and happiness

Is there anything the government can do to increase people's happiness?

Do you think that the standard of living affects people's happiness?

Test 3

Part 1

Home town

Where are you from?

Where do you live now?

Which part of the city do you like best?

Is there any part of the city that you don't like?

Are you going to stay there for a long time?

Restaurants

How often do you go to restaurants?

Do you like to eat out?

On what occasions do you eat out?

What kind of restaurants do you like best?



Seasons

Talk about the seasons in your home town.

Which season do you like most? Why?

What do people do during this season?

Part 2

Describe the clothes you wear on special occasions.

You should say

what type of clothes you would choose for such occasions

what you will look like when you wear them

how you feel when you wear them

and explain why you wear them.

Part 3

Are there any traditional costumes or national costumes in your country?

Why do people like to wear traditional clothes?

What is the meaning of fashion?

What is the difference between the clothes people wear now and those in the past?

Do you think clothing now is more important than before? Why?

What's the main difference between men's fashion and women's fashion?

What can you tell from the way people dress themselves?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of people wearing uniforms?

What will make a person change his/her clothing?

Test 4

Part 1

Do you work or do you study?

How do you like your job?/How do you like your studies?

Are you interested in other jobs?

Is your university a good place to study in?

Do you have any plans for the future?



- Have you ever been to the seaside?
- Why do some people take their holidays at the seaside?
- Do you want to live near the sea?
- Do you like writing?
- What do you like to write in your free time?
- What is the biggest problem with English writing for you?

Part 2

Describe a project you finished with others.

You should say

- with whom you finished the project
- when you finished it
- how you did it
- and whether it brings any benefits.

Part 3

- Is cooperation important?
- How to cultivate students to cooperate?
- What do you think about teamwork?
- What may be the problems of working in a group?
- What are the benefits of teamwork?

Test 5

Part 1

Accommodation

- What kind of place do you live in?
- Describe your neighbourhood.

Photos

- Do you keep photos? Why?
- Do Vietnamese people like to take photographs?



How do you feel when other people talk about their past experiences?
What can you learn from other people's experiences?

Music

What kind of music do you like? Why?
When do you listen to music?
Can you play any musical instrument?
Should children learn to play musical instruments?

Part 2

Describe a film you like.

You should say

what the name of the film is
when and where you saw it
whether it is a happy story or a sad one

and explain why you like it.

Part 3

What kind of films do you like best?
What kind of films is most popular in your country?
What is the main difference between modern films and those in the past?
Do you prefer to see a film at home or in the cinema?
What is the difference between young people's taste in films and that of adults?
What do you think of western films?
What do you think of using the same actor/actress for different films?
Who is the most famous film star in your country?
What do you think of violence in films? Why is there so much of it?
Is there censorship in Vietnam? Why?
What is the most important quality of a successful film?



Test 6

Part 1

Work and study

Do you work or are you a student?

What is your major?

How do you like your studies?

Home town

Where are you from?

Where do you live now?

Which part of the city do you like best?

Is there any part of the city that you don't like?

Are you going to stay there for a long time?

Films

Do you like films?

What kind of films do you like?

How often do you watch films?

Do you like to watch alone or with your friends?

Do you prefer to watch films in the cinema or at home?

Part 2

Describe your favourite (wild) animal.

You should say

what it is

how you know it

what it is like

and explain why you like it.



Part 3

Wildlife conservation

Can you think of some reasons why some species become endangered?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a pet?

What are some other purposes for which animals are used?

Do you find using animals for medical research acceptable?

Safari parks and zoos

What do you think are the benefits of keeping animals in a zoo?

Is any improvement needed?



Appendix 2

An Authentic Speaking Test

This is an authentic speaking test which has been recorded. During the test, this candidate made some errors or mistakes (in italics) whose corrections are provided in parentheses.

I: Interviewer C: Candidate

(Stage 1)

I: Good afternoon. My name is Clive. May I have your full name, please?

C: My name is Zhouqi.

I: What shall I call you?

C: You can call me Sandy.

I: And can you tell me where you are from?

C: I'm from Wuhan in Hubei province, China.

I: Can I see your identification, please?

C: OK. Here you are.

I: That's fine. Now, in this first part, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself. Let's talk about your home town. What kind of place is it?

C: I was born and *grow* (grew) up in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province. It is *a industrial big* (a big industrial) city in the middle of China. The city is actually divided into three towns by two big rivers. Have you ever *gone to* (been) there before?

I: No. I haven't. What is the most interesting part of your home town?

C: I think it's the climate. It's very hot and humid in summer. The temperature sometimes reaches 40 degrees and *it is often rains* (it often rains).

I: Are you a student or do you have a job?

C: I'm a college student. I study in Wuhan University.

I: And what's your major? What do you study?

C: My major is Accounting.

I: Why did you choose to study this as your major?

C: Well, the reason is very simple. I think it's easy *to me* (for me) to find a job after my graduation because every business needs accountants.

I: Now let's move on to what you do in your spare time. Do you like reading?



C: Yes, I like reading very much. I used to *reading* (read) a lot, but I'm *too* (so) busy now with my study that I have *fewer* (less) time to read.

I: And what kind of books do you like to read?

C: I like to read novels, all kinds of novels, especially those written by famous writers.

I: And do you have a favourite writer?

C: Yes, my favourite writer is Mark Twain. His works are full of humour and deep thoughts.

I: When do you like to read?

C: I like to read in the evening because it's very quiet then. I can concentrate *to* (on) the books I read.

I: And how about your holidays? How do you usually spend them?

C: I like to travel very much. I usually go to a different place every year.

I: Is there anywhere in particular that you would like to visit?

C: I like to go to places with beautiful scenery but not too many people. So I don't usually travel *in* (on) national holidays to avoid the *crowded* (crowds of people).

I: Let's talk a little bit about travelling and transport. What is the most common way that you like to move around?

C: I beg your pardon?

I: Well, how do you prefer to travel for long trips?

C: Oh, I prefer to travel by train. It's cheaper than travelling by air and you can also enjoy *to look* (looking) at the scenery.

I: Do you see any changes in transportation over the past 20 years in China?

C: Yes, there are more and more people buying their own cars. The traffic is much *more heavier* (heavier) than before.

(Stage 2)

I: Now we move to Stage 2. In the next part of the interview, I'm going to give you a topic and I'd like you to talk about it for one or two minutes. Before you start talking, you've got one minute to think about what you are going to say. And you can make some notes if you wish. Do you understand? OK. Here is your topic and here is some paper and a pencil for making notes. I'd like you to describe a film you have seen and which you enjoyed very much.

(The candidate begins to read the card and write notes while the interviewer looks at his watch.)



Topic Card

Describe a film you enjoyed a lot.

You should say

- what the film is
- when and where you saw it
- what the story was about (briefly)

and explain why you like it.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read the topic carefully. You will be asked to talk about it for 1 to 2 minutes.

You have one minute to think about what you are going to say. You can make some notes to help you if you wish.

Candidate's Notes on Paper

Schindler's List

2 yrs ago

DVD

home

War 2

Jewish workers

poison gas

director Mr. Spielberg

Jaws, Saving Private Ryan, Jurassic Park

like: truth in history



(One minute later)

- I: All right, remember you have 1–2 minutes for this and don't worry if I stop you. I'll tell you when your time is up. Can you start speaking now, please?
- C: The film that gave me a deep impression is called "Schindler's List". I saw it two years ago on DVD with a group of my friends. At that time the film was not *showed* (shown) in the cinema so we just saw the English DVD at home. I saw the film because my friend *recommended me* (recommended it to me) and *borrowed* (lent) me the DVD.

The story happened in the Second World War. It was about a German factory owner *tried* (who tried) to save Jews from *dead* (being killed). The factory owner *is* (was) called Schindler. He tried to put as many Jewish workers as possible on his list of employee names so that they could be saved. He didn't really need so many people to work in his factory, but he decided to try his best to save the poor Jewish people. The film also showed how the German soldiers killed Jewish people with uh ... poison gas. It was really terrible. After the war, many Jewish survivors came to Schindler's tomb in memory of him. Without his help, they wouldn't have been alive.

The reason I like this film is because it tells us the truth in history, *in spite of* (although) it was horrible. I remember the famous director Mr. Spielberg directed this film, and it *wins* (won) an Oscar award. I like Spielberg's films because he is good at showing the truth with details, and he knows how to touch the ... the ... viewers. I also like some other Spielberg's films such as "Jaws", "Saving Private Ryan" and "Jurassic Park". Another reason why I like this film is that we Chinese people *has* (have) suffered the similar experience in the past.

- I: Did your friends like this film as well?
- C: Some of them *like* (liked) it. Others *don't* (didn't) feel good after seeing the film because it *is* (was) full of uh, how to say, *violent* (violence).

(Stage 3)

- I: OK, so far you've told me about a film you've seen and enjoyed very much. Now I'd like to discuss one or two more general topics with you. What are some differences between films nowadays and those in the past?
- C: I think the *most* (biggest) difference is the development in *technology* ([tek'nɒlədʒi]). With modern science and *technology* ([tek'nɒlədʒi]), especially computer skills, we can produce more *excited* (exciting) films. I think it does cost much more money to make a film today than in the past.



I: And what kind of films is more popular in China?

C: I think Hollywood films are more popular in China now. Nowadays people are very busy with their work or study. They go to the cinema just to *relaxing* (relax). Hollywood films can make people excited and relaxed.

I: And what is your favourite type of film?

C: Well, I like to see the big-show films too, especially when I'm tired. But I *more like uh ... tragedy films* (like tragedy films better). I think they can really make you think about and remember something. But many Hollywood films just make you feel happy for a short time and you usually forget them soon.

I: And how different is teenagers' taste in films from that of adults?

C: I think most teenagers like to see uh ... uh ... comedy films. They also like to see films because they can see their favourite film stars. Adults usually do not run after film stars. They just like to see a film because they like it for itself.

I: What's the difference between Chinese film stars and international stars? Which are more popular in China?

C: There are not so many Chinese film stars *are* (who are) world-famous. They are not so good at acting skills *than* (as) international stars. And they don't make so much money, *too* (either).

I: And what do you think of the violence in films? Why do you think there is so much violence in films?

C: *I think it's not good* (I don't think it's good) for young people, because young people cannot distinguish between good and bad and will be influenced by the bad behaviour in the films. The reason why there is so much violence, I think, is that the producers of the films want to make more money. They know the violent scenes in the films can attract more people to see the films.

I: And what kind of qualities do you think one should have to be a good actor or actress?

C: Well, a good actor should be intelligent and be good at performing naturally. And may be more emotional than others. He should understand the director's intention quickly. And a good actress should be beautiful usually.

I: Thank you very much. That's the end of the interview. Goodbye.

C: Thanks very much. Goodbye.



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