

B2 First for Schools Reading and Use of English Part 6

Aims of the lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to familiarise students with Part 6 of the Reading and Use of English paper ▪ to develop techniques for tackling this type of task
Time needed	50 minutes
Materials required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student's worksheet 1 (one copy per student) ▪ Student's worksheet 2 (one copy per student)

Procedure

1. Board and discuss the following themes with students for 3–4 minutes. The final questions are slightly more frivolous, choose them if you have a group that enjoys talking.
 - *Do you like watching wildlife documentaries?*
 - *Do you ever go to zoos or wildlife parks? Do you like them? Why/Why not?*
 - *What are your favourite animals, and why do you like them?*
 - *Which animal would you like to be?*
 - *Can you make any good animal noises?*
 - *Which do you prefer: cats or dogs?*
2. Tell students they are going to look at the first part of a Part 6 task from the B2 First for Schools Reading and Use of English Paper, which is about animals called meerkats (see photo on the **Student's worksheet 1**).
3. Write the following two questions on the board:
 - a) *Who are the "TV stars"?*
 - b) *Where do they live?*
4. Give out **Student's worksheet 1** and ask them to read the whole text quickly to answer the two questions. They should ignore the three exercises and read the text only at this stage. Allow 3–4 minutes for this, then feed back with the whole class. a) *the meerkats (see picture); b) In the Kalahari Desert*
5. Now refer students to **Exercise 1**. In pairs, they should decide which of the three sentences goes in each of the two gaps. Check the answers with the whole class. Now ask the pairs to work together again to underline words in the text and the missing sentences which helped them to place the sentences correctly. (see **Answer key**) Tell students that making connections by underlining words that connect is the best way to do part 6; the answer must be appropriate in terms of the sense of the text, but it must also be grammatically correct. The distractor answer often makes good sense, but the pronouns, for example, don't match up.

6. Now ask them to look at **Exercise 2**. In their pairs again, they should decide which two sentences might be removed to make gaps, and why. The aim of this exercise is to help students to think about how the task is constructed and several answers may be possible. After 4–5 minutes, feed back with the whole class (see **Answer key**). Note that there is no correct answer here, and students who chose alternatives to the key should underline parts of the text and gapped sentences which show how their alternatives would work (see underlining in **Answer key**).
7. Students now look at **Exercise 3** individually, and complete the remaining 2 gaps. When they have finished, they can check their answers with their partner before checking with the whole class (see **Answer key**).
8. Now give out **Student's Worksheet 2** and ask the students to discuss their answers in small groups or in new pairs. Discuss the answers with the whole class (see **Answer key**), and answer any other questions about Part 6 that students may have.

Additional information

- Part 6 consists of one long gapped text from which six paragraphs of similar length have been removed and placed in jumbled order after the text. There is one extra paragraph which does not fit any of the gaps. In this activity the task has been broken down into three parts to help the students develop strategies to tackle this type of question.
- Train your students to read through the text with the gaps in it so that they gain an overall idea of the structure of the text and the development of the writer's ideas, before starting to do the task.
- When your students are selecting a sentence to fill a gap, make sure that they look carefully at the information before and after the gap. Candidates sometimes make the wrong choices by selecting options which seem to fit the text before the gap, and neglecting to check that the text after the gap follows on logically.
- Give your students plenty of practice in recognising a wide range of linguistic devices which mark the logical and cohesive development of a text, for example words and phrases indicating time periods, cause and effect, exemplification, contrasting arguments, repetition, concordance of tenses, pronouns, etc. This will help them to make the correct choice between two possible sentences which seem rather similar at first sight.
- As in Part 5, it is important to discourage your students from relying on 'word spotting', that is assuming that if the same word, name, date, etc. appears in the surrounding text and one of the options, that is automatically the right sentence to fill the gap. Train them to check all the other linguistic clues carefully before making their final decision.

Answer key

Student's worksheet 1

Exercise 1

1 C 2 B

Meerkats are animals which are about 30cm tall and live in groups of 20 to 30. The ones we were looking for were filmed during a period of four years and starred in a TV documentary series. We wanted to see them for real.

So it's 5.30am and we are in the middle of nowhere, waiting for the sun to burn off the remains of yesterday's storm clouds. Nearby a large black bird lets rip his deafening, regular wake-up call.

1... And while our eyes are off the ball, a meerkat makes his appearance.

He pops his head out of the burrow where he has spent the night. 2... Apparently satisfied, he stands upright. He is followed by a female and then some other adults.

A At first we feel silly, and more than a little self-conscious, but it seems to work since the animals stay calm as we approach them.

B We realise he has seen us and is checking us out before emerging fully.

'he' means the 'meerkat' who has made his appearance at the end of the previous paragraph.

C This makes us both jump and distracts our attention from why we are here.

'This' refers to the wake-up call. It is very important students understand that in this part of the exam understanding of reference words is the most important. 'While our eyes are off the ball' means while we aren't paying attention, so links with 'distracts our attention'.

Exercise 2

Sentences in ***bold italics*** are those gapped in the exam task. Underlined words show the links between the text and the removed sentences.

We arrived in scorching heat yesterday afternoon with great expectations. 3. ***But a series of seemingly endless, ear-splitting Kalahari thunderstorms had resulted in a no-show of our subjects.*** Now, however, we are finally metres away from some of the world's most charismatic wild creatures and certainly among its most famous. Here are the homes of 14 meerkat groups who are the real-life, wildlife stars of an award-winning TV series.

To our excitement, the adult meerkats are swiftly followed out of the burrow by four five-week-old pups. It's the summer breeding season so you would expect to see young. 4. ***We had timed our visit with this possibility in mind but we still couldn't believe our luck.*** Unbelievably comical and cute, the youngsters are each a perfect smaller version of their parents.

Exercise 3

5 F 6 D

If necessary run through the connections the students should have made:

5. Singing the song makes them feel silly; the meerkats stay calm with each one scanning... as they would do every other morning.
6. The animals have got used to having humans around and their behaviour remains unchanged around the researchers... They (i.e. the researchers) are therefore able to spend hours in the field each day...

Student's worksheet 2**1 Should you quickly skim read through the main body of the text first?**

Yes.

Reading through the base text first gives candidates a sense of what it is about, how the ideas are developed, how many key characters there are, etc. Getting this initial feel for the text will help candidates be more aware of the text as a whole.

2 What reading approach should you take for this task?

A Intensive reading for detail, reading the text carefully around each gap.

This task requires intensive reading for detail. Candidates will have to read the text both before and after each gap carefully before arriving at an answer.

3 Once you've completed all the gaps, should you read through the whole text again?

Yes.

This is an important way of checking that the text flows coherently as a whole. This final checking process may help to alert candidates to answers which don't sit well in the text.

4 Do you think this part of the test will take longer to complete than others?

Yes.

In the light of comments 1–3, the answer to this is probably yes.

5 Should you do the questions in order?

No.

This is the one part of the reading exam where one mistake can have a knock on effect. Therefore students should always start with the question which they think is easiest. As a follow on to this question you could go back to the text and decide which is easiest. For example, 6 is quite straightforward in terms of the linking of pronouns.

Student's worksheet 1

Exercise 1

Read the first three paragraphs and decide which sentences (A, B or C) fit in the first two gaps.

The TV Stars from the desert

The meerkats of the Kalahari desert in South Africa are famous and Ann and Steve Toon went to find them.



Meerkats are animals which are about 30cm tall and live in groups of 20 to 30. The ones we were looking for were filmed during a period of four years and starred in a TV documentary series. We wanted to see them for real.

So it's 5.30am and we are in the middle of nowhere, waiting for the sun to burn off the remains of yesterday's storm clouds. Nearby a large black bird lets rip his deafening, regular wake-up call. **1...** And while our eyes are off the ball, a meerkat makes his appearance.

He pops his head out of the burrow where he has spent the night. **2...** Apparently satisfied, he stands upright. He is followed by a female and then some other adults.

- A At first we feel silly, and more than a little self-conscious, but it seems to work since the animals stay calm as we approach them.
- B We realise he has seen us and is checking us out before emerging fully.
- C This makes us both jump and distracts our attention from why we are here.

Exercise 2

Look at the next two paragraphs and choose one sentence in each which you would remove to make gaps 3 and 4.

We arrived in scorching heat yesterday afternoon with great expectations. But a series of seemingly endless, ear-splitting Kalahari thunderstorms had resulted in a no-show of our subjects. Now, however, we are finally metres away from some of the world's most charismatic wild creatures and certainly among its most famous. Here are the homes of 14 meerkat groups who are the real-life, wildlife stars of an award-winning TV series.

To our excitement, the adult meerkats are swiftly followed out of the burrow by four five-week-old pups. It's the summer breeding season so you would expect to see young. We had timed our visit with this possibility in mind but we still couldn't believe our luck. Unbelievably comical and cute, the youngsters are each a perfect smaller version of their parents.

Exercise 3

Now complete the text by filling in the last 2 gaps, 5 and 6.

'Hum, huh, hum,' we both softly and repeatedly sing as we move closer to the pups with wide angle lenses. This is the special call we've been taught to use by the volunteer field assistant who tracked down the group for us. It reassures them that our presence is not a threat. **5....** Each one carries on scanning their surroundings, and getting in each other's way, as they would do every other morning.

The animals that live here have been studied over many years as part of a major, long-running, research study known as the Kalahari Meerkat Project. Without it, it would not have been possible to make the TV programmes which had brought us here. Meerkats are ideal candidates for researchers to study because they are active by day and live in quite open terrain in the Kalahari.

The animals have got used to having humans around and their behaviour remains unchanged around the researchers. **6...** This lack of attention to humans extends beyond the researchers to people like us and the TV crew. Sadly our time with these charming creatures is at an end, but tomorrow, and the day after that, the project will go on just as before. They will continue to be weighed, watched and worried over. And on TV, the world's most famous meerkats will simply go about their uniquely fascinating lives as if nothing whatsoever out of the ordinary was going on around them.

- A They are therefore able to spend hours in the field each day collecting important information without affecting the animals' routine.
- B This is because they are most active early in the morning and in the late afternoon.
- C At first we feel silly, and more than a little self-conscious, but it seems to work since the animals stay calm as we approach them.

Student's worksheet 2

With another student, discuss the best answer for each of the following questions.

- 1 Should you quickly skim read through the main body of the text first?
Yes / No

- 2 What reading approach should you take for this task?
A Intensive reading for detail - reading the text carefully around each gap.
B Scanning - looking for specific words or phrases to help me fill the gaps.

- 3 Once you've completed all the gaps, should you read through the whole text again?
Yes / No

- 4 Do you think this part of the test will take longer to complete than others?
Yes / No

- 5 Should you do the questions in order?
Yes/ No