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**FUNCTIONAL SKILLS**

English Level 2



**Area: Reading**

Criterion: Compare information, ideas and opinions in different texts, including how they are conveyed

**Comparing information, ideas and opinions**

This workbook focuses on the first part of this criterion: comparing information, ideas and opinions. A separate video and workbook cover part 2 of this criterion (how information, ideas and opinions are conveyed).

When we compare 2 or more things, we are identifying what is similar and what is different between them. Below is an example comparison question.

Compare Text B and Text C.

Identify **two** similarities or differences about therapy assistance dogs. (2 marks)

Comparing information becomes easier when you break the question into smaller sections. Here are some tips to help you:

* read the question carefully. You should focus on where the topic (for example, therapy assistance dogs) is discussed in each text.
* look at the first text and identify the main points about the topic.
* look at the second text and identify the main points about the topic.
* compare the information – do the writers of the texts agree with each other or do they have opposite views?

Let’s look at an example answer based on the 2 example texts below.

**Example Text A**

Therapy assistance dogs provide invaluable support to individuals suffering from mental health conditions. These dogs reduce anxiety and help alleviate symptoms of depression. Their presence can create a calming effect.

**Example Text B**

While therapy assistance dogs can offer emotional support, they are not a cure-all. Their effectiveness varies from person to person, and not everyone responds positively to animal-assisted therapy.

Example answer

Text A says that ‘Their presence can create a calming effect’. However, Text B says that ‘not everyone responds positively to animal-assisted therapy’. (1 mark)

Text A also states that therapy assistance dogs ‘can provide invaluable support’. Similarly, Text B says they ‘can offer emotional support’. (1 mark)

This answer compares the 2 texts and offers a difference, as well as a similarity, in the information, ideas and opinions that both writers have shared.

**Conjunctions**

Conjunctions are words that join sentences or ideas together. They can clearly and quickly show whether a comparison is a similarity or a difference.

By using conjunctions in your answer, you are showing that you have made a comparison between Text A and Text B and understand the similarities or differences.

Conjunctions used to show a similarity:

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Conjunctions used to show a difference:

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For example, in the example response, the conjunction ‘however’ has been used. This immediately shows that the comparison is a difference, rather than a similarity.

Text A offers benefits of therapy assistance dogs, such as ‘Their presence can create a calming effect’. **However**, Text B concentrates on the disadvantages of therapy assistance dogs, such as ‘not everyone responds positively to animal-assisted therapy’.

**Using the information provided above, answer the following questions.**

**Question 1**

Use the following conjunctions to complete the sentences below.

State whether each answer is a similarity or a difference.

**However**

Likewise

Similarly

Whereas

But

An example has been provided for you:

1. John likes strawberry ice cream. **However**, Mary likes chocolate ice cream.

This is a **difference**.

1. Catie thinks that exercise is important. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Mark says you should do at least 30 minutes of exercise a day.

This is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. Tim states that you need a balanced diet, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Julie does not eat fruit or vegetables.

This is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. Megan says that running can damage your knees, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Lee says that running is good for your joints.

This is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. Steve thinks that smoking is bad for you. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Dee says that smoking can take 10 years off your life expectancy.

This is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Comparing similarities and differences**

Read both texts very carefully before you start answering comparison questions.

To help you answer the question, identify and highlight specific words and phrases in the text that are relevant to the topic. This will help you make a comparison.

However, be careful not to highlight too much as this can make it difficult to pick out shorter quotes for comparison.

Let’s look at an example question.

Compare Text C and Text D.

Identify **two** similarities or differences about healthy living. (2 marks)

To answer this question effectively, we first need to consider what both Text C and Text D say about healthy living.

Text C uses the phrase ‘Health issues such as heart disease’.

Text D also refers to the heart when it says ‘Your heart is the most important muscle in your body. You need to keep it healthy!’.

As you can see, these 2 statements relate to the heart and healthy living. Therefore, they can be compared.

Read both texts carefully, then move on to question 2.

**Text C**

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**Text D**

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**Question 2**

Find a statement in Text D that is **similar** to the statement highlighted in Text C.

The first has been completed for you.

1. Text C: Adults should eat a minimum of five different fruits and vegetables a day

Text D: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Text C: People should also aim to complete around 30 minutes of exercise every day

Text D: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Answering exam questions**

Let’s look at how we can use the quotes we have identified to answer the exam question.

Compare Text C and Text D.

Identify **two** similarities or differences about healthy living. (2 marks)

The exam question is asking for **two** similarities or differences. This means that we will need to compare both texts twice to get the full 2 marks for this question.

Remember, it is good practice to use a conjunction to show whether your comparison is a similarity or difference.

Let’s take a look at an example answer.

Text C uses the phrase ‘Health issues such as heart disease’.

Text D also refers to the heart when it says ‘Your heart is the most important muscle in your body. You need to keep it healthy!’.

To create a good answer, we need to include an appropriate conjunction. Both examples refer to the heart being important for health. Therefore, these quotes are showing a similarity.

Conjunctions that show similarities include:

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Next, we must refer to the quotes from each text in our answer.

For example, Text C states that having a healthy lifestyle and heart will help people avoid ‘health issues such as heart disease’. Similarly, Text D also suggests that it is important to look after your heart as it says ‘Your heart is the most important muscle in your body. You need to keep it healthy!’.

This example provides **one** similarity between the texts. This would be awarded 1 mark. To achieve the second mark, another comparison would need to be given.

**Using the information provided above, answer the following questions.**

**Question 3a**

Write the following statements as an answer to the exam question.

Text C: Adults should eat a minimum of five different fruits and vegetables a day.

Text D: Ditch the junk and eat fruit and vegetables instead

|  |
| --- |
| Comparison 1: |

**Question 3b**

Write the following statements as an answer to the exam question.

Text C: People should also aim to complete around 30 minutes of exercise every day

Text D: Keep active by taking part in sports and exercise

|  |
| --- |
| Comparison 2: |

**Top tips**

Here are some top tips to follow when answering an exam comparison question.

* Say whether the information you are providing is from Text A, Text B or Text C
* Ensure you mention both texts in each comparison
* Use small quotes in your comparison, rather than large paragraphs
* Use conjunctions to make the comparisons clear
* Make sure you include 2 separate comparisons

**A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedText E**

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**Using the information provided above, answer the following questions.**

**Exam practice 1**

Compare Text C and Text D.

Identify **two** similarities or differences about hidden plastics.

(2 marks)

|  |
| --- |
| Comparison 1:  Comparison 2: |

**Answers**

**Conjunctions**

**Question 1**

1. John likes strawberry ice cream. **However**, Mary likes chocolate ice cream.

This is a **difference**.

1. Catie thinks that exercise is important. Similarly/Likewise, Mark says you should do at least 30 minutes of exercise a day.

This is a similarity.

1. Tim states that you need a balanced diet, whereas/but Julie does not eat fruit or vegetables.

This is a difference.

1. Megan says that running can damage your knees, but/whereas Lee says that running is good for your joints.

This is a difference.

1. Steve thinks that smoking is bad for you. Likewise/Similarly, Dee says that smoking can take 10 years off your life expectancy.

This is a similarity.

**Comparing similarities and differences**

**Question 2**

Find a statement in Text D that is **similar** to the statement highlighted in Text C.

The first has been completed for you.

1. Text C: Adults should eat a minimum of five different fruits and vegetables a day

Text D: Ditch the junk and eat fruit and vegetables instead.

1. Text C: People should also aim to complete around 30 minutes of exercise every day

Text D: Keep active by taking part in sports and exercise.

**Question 3a**

Text C says that to keep fit and healthy ‘People should also aim to complete around 30 minutes of exercise every day’. Similarly, Text D suggests that to improve heart health people should ‘Keep active by taking part in sports and exercise.’

**Question 3b**

Text C states that ‘adults should eat a minimum of five fruits and vegetables a day’ to make sure they have a healthy lifestyle. Likewise, Text D advises that people can have a healthy lifestyle if they ‘ditch the junk and eat fruit and vegetables instead’.

**Exam practice**

**Exam practice 1**

Please note that there may be other answers that correctly compare the 2 texts.

* Text E says that ‘20-30% of each tea bag is polypropylene’. Similarly, Text F says tea bags ‘contain a significant amount of plastic’.
* Text E states that ‘many people put their used tea bags in the compost, but only part of them are biodegradable’. Likewise, in Text F, Mabel was shocked to learn she had been ‘putting plastic into the environment for years’.
* Text E asks how many ‘chewing gum users realise they are often chewing plastic’. Similarly, Text F says that Harold’s grandson recently learnt in Science that ‘chewing gum is often made from plastic’.
* Text E states that ‘UK councils spend millions each year removing gum from our streets’. Likewise, Text F says that ‘the amount of gum discarded in the street is disgraceful’ and that ‘it is a menace to get rid of’.

**Your functional skills exam**

Your functional skills exams will consist of 2 papers.  
These papers will take place over the following time periods:

* Reading – 60 minutes
* Writing – 60 minutes

Further information on the format that your test will take can be obtained from your training provider.

**Hints and tips**

* Find out what format your exam will be in. It may be paper-based   
  or on-screen.
* Plan what you are going to revise in advance. Don’t leave it until the last minute.
* Do as many past papers as you can so you are prepared for the day. If possible, try to complete the past papers following the same format as the actual exam.
* Find a quiet place to study and revise. It helps to sit at a table or a desk, don’t revise in bed.
* Don’t stay up all night revising the night before your exam. It’s important to have a good rest so you feel refreshed and ready to go.
* Read the question 3 times. The first time to ensure you understand what is being asked, the second time to get an understanding of what you need to do, and a third time to figure out exactly what maths techniques you should be applying.
* If you are struggling with a question, skip it and come back to it later. Try not to sit getting worked up about a difficult question, it will only waste exam time. Move on and come back to it after you have answered the other questions.
* Take note of the number of marks available. This will give you an indication of how much working out you must show. For example, 1 mark will need an answer only and more marks will need you to show your working out.
* When you’ve finished the exam, go back and check your answers. If you still have time remaining, use it to check your answers and when you have checked your answers check them again.