

Example marked candidate responses

Integrated Skills in English – ISE III

Reading & Writing exam

Task 3 – Reading into writing

Task 4 – Extended writing

Task 3 – Reading into writing

Use the information from the four texts you read in Task 2 to write an article (200-230 words) for a website about what humans can learn from ants.

You should plan your article **before** you start writing. Think about what you want to say and make some notes to help you in this box:

Planning notes

(No marks are given for these planning notes)

Now write your article of 200-230 words on the lines below. Try to use your own words as far as possible – don't just copy sentences from the reading texts.

For the purpose of this document, the relevant texts are reprinted below.

Text A

'What You Can Learn From 10,000 Ants' by Peter Miller

This book directs the attention of modern-day humans to the behaviour of ants. Miller argues that they are the real experts in solving our own complicated problems relating to technology, business and society.

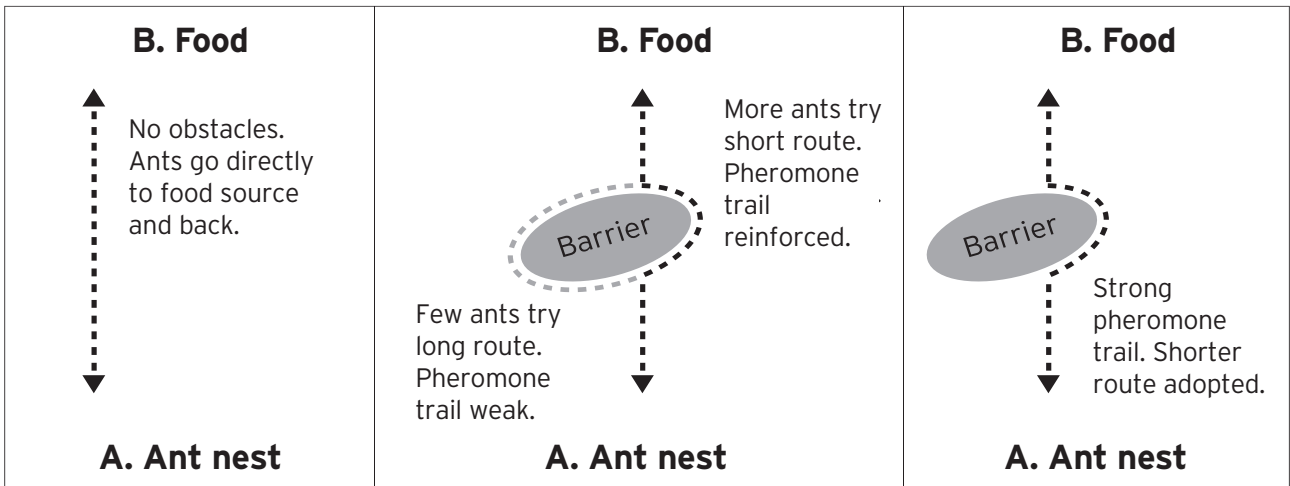
Miller's account shows how ant behaviour has inspired computer programs for assigning seats on an aeroplane and designing factory processes. Miller points out that ants and organisations like airlines and factories are built around individuals working together as a group. As he says, ants have successfully worked on solving their main challenge for

over 1.3 million years: finding enough food for the group. Miller cites the example of a large gas company with a complex delivery system. Ants can find the fastest way from A to B quicker than a human by laying a trail of chemical scents called pheromones. So the company designed a computer model using the self-organisation and route-finding abilities of an ant colony to work out a route for delivering its goods. It also used the model to focus its production process, saving 20 million dollars. Food for thought! Miller's book is entertaining, but comes with a serious message. Definitely worth a read!

Text B

Deborah Gordon presents her study of ant behaviour in her book, 'Ants at Work'. She observed the importance of division of labour: each group of ants focused on one particular task. The first group of workers to emerge from the nest are 'patrollers', who inspect the immediate area. The first foragers, or food collectors, identify the food source and once this is done, all the foragers go to work. However, unlike human organisations, there are no managers. The queen ant's purpose is breeding, but she has no authority. An ant colony acts collectively to solve problems such as how to find food, share resources and respond to attack. In human organisation systems, a person allocates jobs to other people; but how do ants know how many foragers are needed and whether conditions are suitable to go out? The key to this puzzle is the patrollers. If enough patrollers return to the nest at a fast enough rate, the foragers feel safe and go out in search of food. If there is a threat, an ant may even block the entry to the nest. The ant colony is a decentralised system able to respond quickly to local information because of good communication.

Text C



Text D

	<p>Lin: Someone emailed me a presentation called 'The Lion and the Ant'. Basically, an Ant was working efficiently for a company without supervision, but the Lion boss decided that hiring a manager would increase her productivity even more. The manager spent all his time watching the Ant and writing reports. With all the inspections and report writing, more staff were needed to process the paperwork and production fell. When an Owl was hired as a consultant, his verdict was 'The department's overstaffed'!</p>
	<p>Sam: Yes, I know it – the poor Ant was fired for lack of motivation. Guess the problem was too many managers!</p>
	<p>Lin: There are lessons here, aren't there? A group leader shouldn't be an inspector. He should ensure his team have the means to perform effectively and should train, support and reward them.</p>
	<p>Sam: Yeah, interesting. Apparently when forager ants first collect food, they're accompanied by an experienced forager. The leader, out in front, slows down or speeds up depending on how fast the trainees are moving. This makes the leader four times slower reaching the food, but the training's worth it.</p>
	<p>Lin: Yes, really interactive teaching and long-term planning – good training will benefit the whole colony.</p>
	<p>Sam: Not surprising they're such survivors! We've still got lots to learn from them.</p>

Note: For the purpose of this document, candidates' planning notes are left out as they are not part of the assessment.

Sample response – Candidate A

According to recent studies, ants have demonstrated a great expertise in getting to grips with common issues that humans frequently face. They probably would not have survived for so many years if they hadn't implemented some form of division of labour. The queen, the "patrollers" and the foragers work together as a team to fix any problems that can arise.

Ants are different from humans in that it is not possible to see the role of the boss as it happens in human organisations. In all likelihood, many companies should be developing systems that bear a close resemblance to those of how ants organise themselves. In fact, many factories have already processes and models based on ants' behaviour.

Studying ants can also help humans to improve productivity. Strange though it may seem, increasing staff in organisations does not always increase production, and it could even make companies go bust. The story about a lion that hired a boss to control an ant when it was working, could be a good example of this. That supervisor jotted down so many data that there was a dire need for additional staff and the productivity went down.

The best example to emphasize the good working practices of ants is the process they follow to look for food when they find an obstacle in their way. Some of them follow the long route but the majority of them find the most efficient path, due to pheromones that have been left.

To sum up, humans need to learn from some of the ants' efficient processes outlined above, since there must be something special about them which has allowed these ants to be on earth for millions of years.

Word count: 283

Breakdown of score:

Reading for Writing – 4

Task Fulfilment – 4

Organisation and Structure – 4

Language Control – 4

Rationale:

Reading for Writing – The candidate demonstrates a full and accurate understanding of all of the source materials and clearly refers to all four texts. He has an excellent ability to identify common themes and links across the texts. He has selected and adapted the material well to suit the purpose for writing. Some excellent paraphrasing is also in evidence.

Task Fulfilment – There is an excellent achievement of the communicative aim, with clarity and precision. There is also an excellent awareness of the reader-writer relationship, style and register. All requirements of the task (eg genre and topic) are completely met.

Organisation and Structure – The organisation of the text is effective and the writing is easily read. Paragraphs are logical and have topic sentences. There is a clear, logical development of all ideas and arguments, which includes supporting detail. The format is appropriate throughout the text. The signposting is very effective.

Language Control – There is both a wide range of grammatical and lexical items related to the task, expressed with a high degree of accuracy and complexity. Any errors that do occur are non-impeding, and there is excellent spelling and punctuation throughout.

Overall outcome: Distinction

Sample response – Candidate B

Undoubtedly, ants provide a very clear example of exceptional organizational skills. Not only can they maximise the time spent collecting their own food as mentioned in the texts, but also they are excellent at teamwork which is of paramount importance to be productive.

The main difference with humans is that there is not a structured management to monitor each individual's performance. However, it has been proved that although there is not a leader, each ant is aware of their role and they are committed to achieve their best. Teamwork is promoted and works perfectly well. For example, when ants look for food, they leave a pheromone trail for other ants and together they find food more quickly. Another example is ants do not have top heavy management so they work better as a team.

With regard to the main question of what can we learn from them we definitely need to be intelligent enough to realise that they have the best organizational skills. These could be easily adapted to meet humans' needs for higher levels of production in factories.

On the other hand we must be cautious on the grounds that humans may not be as obedient as ants if there is not a leader to guide them. Furthermore, teamwork must be taught to humans because we are used to be individualistic.

Therefore it is beneficial to examine how ant colonies work, by studying this, we can find solutions to many of our problems.

Word count: 244

Breakdown of score:

Reading for Writing – 3

Task Fulfilment – 3

Organisation and Structure – 3

Language Control – 3

Rationale:

Reading for Writing – The candidate shows full and accurate understanding of most source materials, referring to the four texts, although Text D is not explored properly. There is an appropriate selection of relevant content with a very good ability to identify common themes. The texts are adapted well to the purpose of the writing and there are a number of very good examples of paraphrasing skills, which connect ideas well, and there is no evident lifting from the input texts.

Task Fulfilment – There is a good achievement of the communicative aim of the task using clear and precise language. The candidate shows a good awareness of the reader-writer relationship with an appropriate register and style throughout. Most requirements of the task, eg genre, topic are met.

Organisation and Structure – The text has been well organised and there is a clear and logical organisation of ideas underpinning the salient issues with expanding and supporting details. There is a degree of repetition of ideas with regard to teamwork and management structure. However, this does not detract from the overall message to any great extent. The format is appropriate, and there is good signposting making the text easy to read.

Language Control – The candidate shows an appropriate range of grammatical items for the level, and demonstrates a good range of lexical items relating to the task. She uses complex sentences well to convey her ideas clearly, and any errors made are non-impeding. Spelling and punctuation are good despite occasional slips in more complex sentences.

Overall outcome: Merit

Sample response – Candidate C

Ants are fascinating creatures from which we can learn a great deal of how to organize our companies and community.

First, ants communicate efficiently, which is something we usually miss. They manage to work effectively towards their goals with no manager, they act collectively, they help each other. This has resulted in these little creatures being the best at finding the quickest route. How? They leave a trail of pheromone that is reinforced on the shortest path, so that the other can follow. They are a perfect example of collaborative work that humans so often lack. This method has inspired computer programmes used by companies to find the shortest path, and to focus their production process. They managed to save 20 million dollars!

Then, it is worth noting how the ants divide themselves in order to fulfil a main aim: collecting enough food. The patrollers are the ones who go out first, they inspect the area and make sure it is safe. If a proper amount of patrollers returns, the foragers go out. Their role is to find the food and bring it back to the nest. The only function of the queen, is to breed. So the ants regulate their own work.

The main difference I can see, is the fact that ants work for their community's well-being, which means their own benefit. I am not sure workers have quite the same motivation in our society. That should give us something to think about.

Word count: 245

Breakdown of score:

Reading for Writing – 3

Task Fulfilment – 2

Organisation and Structure – 2

Language Control – 2

Rationale:

Reading for Writing – The candidate demonstrates a full and accurate understanding of most of the source materials and clearly refers to all four texts. She has a good ability to identify common themes. She generally selects and adapts the material well to suit the purpose for writing. Some excellent paraphrasing is also in evidence.

Task Fulfilment – There is an acceptable achievement of the communicative aim, but there is a little too much focus on what ants do rather than what humans can learn from ants. There is an acceptable awareness of style and register, but it can be a little too informal in places (eg little creatures, fascinating creatures). All requirements of the task (eg genre and topic) are acceptably met.

Organisation and Structure – The organisation and signposting of the text are acceptable, but not always clear (eg first is not followed by second). The development of ideas is, at times, somewhat disjointed, but overall acceptably clear and logical. The format is appropriate throughout most of the text but there are some inappropriate cohesive devices (eg I can see, I am not sure, Then).

Language Control – Although some ISE III functions are realised (eg justifying an argument), sentences are not particularly complex, and there is an overuse of commas which is not always helpful. The text sometimes requires a second reading before it can be fully understood. Spelling errors are non-impeding.

Overall outcome: Pass

Sample response – Candidate D

Ants are one of the most principled species in the world, humans can definitely learn from ants in every possible way.

Ants are very organised in whatever work they do whether it be building their home or collecting food for their fellows. Each task is done in a systematic manner. When ants collect their food, a lot of procedures are followed. There is division of labour among the ants. The 'Patrollers' patrol the surrounding areas and return to the base to let the second group of workers, known as the 'Foragers' to pick up food. This shows their trust and the responsibility amongst each other. They can take their own decisions and they also don't have any manager whose orders they need to follow. The humans should learn how to be organised and be responsible enough to take your own decisions. When in problem instead of depending upon the co-workers or managers they themselves can try and solve problems.

In order to communicate with your co-workers you need to possess good communication skills. The ants are united when they look out for food for their fellow mates, humans should also follow the same in as to curb out irrational happenings. Humans can also learn good training skills, long term planning interactive teaching methods and hard work.

Ants should be looked up to when in problem.

Word count: 225

Breakdown of score:

Reading for Writing – 2

Task Fulfilment – 2

Organisation and Structure – 2

Language Control – 2

Rationale:

Reading for Writing – The candidate demonstrates a full and accurate understanding of more than half of the source materials but does not refer to Text C and only fleetingly refers to Text D. He has a good ability to identify common themes, and generally selects and adapts the material well to suit the purpose for writing. Some excellent paraphrasing is also in evidence.

Task Fulfilment – There is an acceptable achievement of the communicative aim. There is an acceptable awareness of style and register, but it is frequently inappropriate (eg little fellows, their trust, their fellow mates). All requirements of the task (eg genre and topic), however, are acceptably met.

Organisation and Structure – The organisation of the text is acceptable, but there is little signposting. The development of ideas is generally acceptably logical and clear. However, the paragraphing could clearly be improved, and the text ends abruptly. The format is generally appropriate throughout most of the text.

Language Control – The grammatical and lexical range for this level is acceptable. Errors occasionally impede understanding, which means the text sometimes requires a second reading before it can be fully understood (eg paragraph 3). Sentences are not particularly complex, with an over-reliance on short sentences (eg paragraph 2). Punctuation is acceptable, but commas are sometimes used when full stops should be used. Any spelling errors, however, are non-impeding.

Overall outcome: Pass

Sample response – Candidate E

Maybe what you know about ants is that they have to much strength and that they can carry food that weighs ten times their weight. However, have you ever heard about their work system?

We can learn too much about ants. For example, they always work for the community and not for themselves, therefore they care about each other, but humans are only interested in being better than others and if we can, try to control and rule others. Moreover, ants do not have a leader who gives orders, they react in colectivity and each one has their role in the community. However humans need to have a leader if not we break into caos. It would be great if humans could live in peace and armony without the need of leaders.

Also we should learn about their work system and their plannification. Ants are very well organised and they work all together for the benefit of all, maybe we can compare ants system with communism or socialism, but in humans it is impossible because always there are leaders or parts of society who feel superior and have more advantages. Then the way of getting their objective, ants are very intelligent because they always find the route with less difficulties and with less danger. In contrast humans sometimes do not care about danger and disandvantages and only focus in not losing time and not wasting money.

To conclude, we should learn from ants and use their systems of organisation and work plannification. Rarely it will change, because nowadays rich people control the work and it is very difficult this changes.

Word count: 270

Breakdown of score:

Reading for Writing – 1

Task Fulfilment – 1

Organisation and Structure – 2

Language Control – 1

Rationale:

Reading for Writing – There is an inadequate selection of relevant content from the source texts, partly due to the candidate giving inaccurate details and bringing in a number of his own irrelevant ideas (eg ants carrying food ten times their weight, and the references to socialism and communism), that were not stated in the texts. There is a poor adaptation of the content of the source material to properly address the purpose of writing.

Task Fulfilment – Although there is some attempt at fulfilling the task, there is a poor achievement of the communicative aim as the candidate does not sufficiently address the question of what humans can learn from ants, but twists the question to give it a political slant.

Organisation and Structure – The organisation of the four paragraphs is acceptable and there is some acceptable signposting to help the reader negotiate their way through the text. The development of ideas, although not always relevant, is for the most part acceptably clear and logical. The format is generally appropriate.

Language Control – The candidate shows an inadequate range of the grammatical and lexical items of the level. Sentences show little complexity and there are a number of language errors below the level. Despite a number of spelling and punctuation errors they are non-impeding.

Overall outcome: Fail

Task 4 – Extended writing

Write an essay (200-230 words) giving your opinions on the following topic:

'People who grew up before the information technology revolution say that young people have lost the ability to concentrate on one thing for more than a few minutes. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?'

You should plan your essay before you start writing. Think about what you want to say and make some notes to help you in this box:

Planning notes

(No marks are given for these planning notes)

Now write your essay of 200-230 words on the lines below.

For the purpose of this document, candidates' planning notes were left out as they are not part of the assessment.

Sample response – Candidate A

It is often said that technology is the reason for young people losing the ability to concentrate on one thing for only a few minutes. In this essay will I attempt to see if this really is true.

It is true that the incredible advance in technology over the last 20 years has helped give young people a vast amount of new distractions. Teenagers are constantly looking at their phones checking for text messages or messages that have been posted on various social media outlets. They also feel they must post everything on these sites throughout the day. This rise of social media is maybe the main reason why young people cannot concentrate well.

However, is it really fair to say that young people are the only ones who can no longer concentrate? It appears to me that all people have lost the ability to focus. Adults, as well as teenagers, don't have the same amount of concentration as they did in the past, because they are also constantly looking at their computers and phones for incoming emails, and messages, and continuously browse through web pages for news seldom reading the whole article. Rather than concentrating on one thing, these days nearly everyone is trying to multi-task to be more efficient.

In a nutshell, while I do agree that young people have lost some ability to concentrate, so have most people.

Word count: 231

Breakdown of score:

Task Fulfilment – 4

Organisation and Structure – 4

Language Control – 4

Rationale:

Task Fulfilment – There is an excellent achievement of the communicative aim, with clarity and precision. There is also an excellent awareness of the reader-writer relationship, style and register. All requirements of the task (eg genre and topic) are completely met.

Organisation and Structure – The organisation of the text is effective and the writing is easily read. The paragraphs follow a logical order and there is a clear development of the writer's arguments, which include supporting detail. The format is also appropriate throughout the text.

Language Control – There is both a wide range of grammatical and lexical items with a high degree of accuracy. There are a few items of lexis which are not quite the right word, eg 'outlets', 'continuously' and 'amount of concentration' but these are non-impeding. Despite the slip with 'messages' there is excellent spelling and punctuation throughout.

Overall outcome: Distinction

Sample response – Candidate B

It goes without saying that the last 20 years have seen a dizzying technological breakthrough that could be thought of as somewhat out of control. It can't be denied that nowadays most people can't live without a mobile phone. The advantages are clear: never again do people need to stay at home waiting for an important call.

We could single out many downsides too and here is where we have to highlight one that worries a lot of people: young people's ability to concentrate. In my view, humans have adapted to all changes in history and we know that there were many cases when we might have thought that it was not evolution, but time proved that it was part of that evolution. Of course, it doesn't follow that we shouldn't be concerned with this problem.

However, there is another thing to consider – evidence. I would like to analyse studies so as to make decisions and act. I want all opinions to be borned out of research and I'm not sure whether this disability to concentrate on one thing more than a few minutes has been tested. I hold out against accepting information that has not been verified. There is no hard evidence to suggest that teenagers have lost the ability to concentrate compared to previous generations. In fact, we can see that teenagers are getting more certificates nowadays than older people achieved. In my opinion, this means young people can concentrate on one thing at a time, for example exams, as required by high schools.

In conclusion, I don't believe that young people have necessarily lost the ability to concentrate. We need more evidence to confirm this point of view.

Word count: 281

Breakdown of score:

Task Fulfilment – 3

Organisation and Structure – 3

Language Control – 3

Rationale:

Task Fulfilment – There is a good achievement of the communicative aim of the task using clear and precise language. However, the candidate's focus is not always as clearly directed as it could be (ie in the first two paragraphs the focus is on people in general rather than young people). The candidate shows a good awareness of the reader-writer relationship with an appropriate register and style throughout. Most requirements of the task, eg genre, topic are met.

Organisation and Structure – The writing is well organised into paragraphs and there is a clear and logical development of ideas culminating in an effective conclusion. There is some repetition of ideas but this does not detract from the argument. Signposting is good and what is written is easy to follow. The format is appropriate, and there is good signposting making the text easy to read.

Language Control – The candidate shows a good range of grammatical items for the grade, sometimes with quite complex structures. He also demonstrates a good range of lexical items relating to the task. Ideas are conveyed clearly, and the few errors made are non-impeding.

Overall outcome: Merit

Sample response – Candidate C

People who didn't have technological devices before feel that since their introduction the young generation has lost the ability to concentrate on one particular task. I do not agree with them.

In my opinion, as young people didn't have so much of technology in the past, they used to spend their time playing games or doing the household work. Now the young generation have a lot of technological devices. They can get books online, they can play games online, research school work and make friends online. This can lead to lose concentration on one task, for example, when students sit down to study some of them end up getting distracted within ten minutes of starting, which can lead to lower achievement at school.

However, I think that young people can be concentrate on one thing for a long time. For example, in games. When one friend plays it online and recommends it to others, the others are bound to go home and play that game. But if a young person wants to be good at a game, he must practise for a long time and this requires a lot of concentration for long periods of time. If he doesn't concentrate, he will not become good at these popular computer games.

To conclude I think young people can concentrate on one thing for a long time when they are motivated to do so.

Word count: 232

Breakdown of score:

Task Fulfilment – 2

Organisation and Structure – 3

Language Control – 2

Rationale:

Task Fulfilment – There is an acceptable achievement of the communicative aim with a fair degree of clarity. The candidate's focus on answering the question is similarly acceptable. There is an appropriate use of style and register for this discursive essay. Most requirements of the task are adequately met.

Organisation and Structure – The organisation of the writing is good, and the reader can easily follow the different viewpoints expressed in the essay as a result of clear signposting. The arguments and counter-arguments are presented logically and clearly through the use of topic sentences and supporting sentences.

Language Control – The grammatical and lexical range for this level is acceptable with the candidate choosing to use rather simple structures at times although higher level language is evident particularly in the lexical area. Errors are minimal and do not impede understanding. Despite the fact that the language is not always very complex, there is good spelling and punctuation.

Overall outcome: Pass

Sample response – Candidate D

This essay is about people that lose the ability to concentrate and the believe that it is caused after the technology revolution.

It is said by adults and old people that this new generation of young people lose the ability to concentrate because of new technologies. New technologies have created a big amount of apps, informations and recourses that made our life easy, that means, for example, that we, now, don't have reason to memorise as many information as 50 years ago. This is also a linked to concentration. Maybe our world now is faster than the old world where new technologies was not as exential. But is true people lose concentration?

However, nowadays we could see that people study a lot or need concentrations for his or hers job use it even more than older people... so concentration still exist.

New technology, as many people suggest, is not the reason for losing concentration. It is only something that could help us to develop all humans abilities; it is humans responsibility to learn to use technology in the correct or wrong way, losing or getting concentration in the process. We cannot blame technology for the problem.

In conclusion I think technology is not the reason of lose concentration.

Word count: 208

Breakdown of score:

Task Fulfilment – 1

Organisation and Structure – 1

Language Control – 1

Rationale:

Task Fulfilment – Although there is some attempt at fulfilling the task, there is poor achievement of the communicative aim as the candidate does not focus sufficiently on to what extent *young* people have lost the ability to concentrate. The writing is often difficult to follow and not convincing for the reader.

Organisation and Structure – Although the writing has some structure, most of the arguments and ideas lack coherence. There is no logical progress and the reader is left without a clear idea of what the candidate wants to say. There is some signposting but it is often misused and the reader is frequently confused.

Language Control – The candidate shows an inadequate range of the grammatical and lexical items of the level. Sentences show little complexity and there is also limited control over language below the level. Poor punctuation sometimes impedes the reader's understanding.

Overall outcome: Fail