

IELTS Reading Part 1: Reading Passage 1

Not-So Secret Messages

A

Subtlety is the new codeword in advertising since the industry has found that younger generations are no longer responsive to the stream of commercial images they are exposed to on a daily basis. Having grown up on a steady diet of MTV, glossy magazines and the web, they have essentially become immune to 'in-your-face' adverts of yesterday. As a result, many advertisers are turning to more subtle forms of advertising, such as product placements.

B

A product placement could be a company logo or product. The most common places for product placements are in television and films, but lately there have also been some inroads to video games. At times, these placements are intentional, and the company will often pay a hefty sum to producers for their inclusion. For example, near the judges on *American Idol* Coca-Cola cups surreptitiously appeared. At other times, the product placement is much less deliberate and there is simply a mention, but always with the desired outcome of viewer consciousness of the product.

C

In both cases, the advertisers hope that whether the viewers see the product in the background or hear it mentioned in the context of the programme, the placement will leave a positive impact on them. The goal is not so much to push people to run out and buy the product straight away, but to instill that positive feeling that will eventually translate into a purchase of their product. Some companies have had such success with product placement that they have started to 'cross-pollinate' their business areas. For example, a conglomerate company like Sony has taken advantage of its varied media empire and has been using one of its products, the Sony Playstation, to help promote other Sony products like music or films.

D

In the past, television and film producers were reluctant to have products marketed through them unless the product was a corporate sponsor. As such, most products were often 'greeked', which meant that their names or logos were changed to avoid trademark infringements. For example, a Nokia phone might be labelled Nokio. Today, 'greeking' goes even further since products can be digitally blurred or removed. This manipulation has led to some unusual court cases such as the lawsuit between the Times Square billboards' owners and the *Spider-Man* film producers who digitally replaced adverts filmed in Times Square to include the name of one of the film's sponsors.

E

Although product placements have been around for decades, the recent surge of them in TV programmes seems to be invariably linked to the ascendance of reality television and the threat of new recording technologies like TiVo. TiVo allows viewers to record TV programmes without TV commercials. Consequently, many networks are seeing a decline in advertising revenues and are turning to TV scriptwriters to write in segments about a company or product. What this translates to is either the direct use of a product or reference to a specific company by the characters in a programme, such as in the NBC series, *Friends*, where one of the main characters, Rachel, works for the company, Calvin Klein.

IELTS Reading Part 1: Reading Passage 1 (continued)**F**

In the case of reality TV shows, producers have found it much easier to use product placements effectively. The competitive nature of reality shows like *Survivor* provides ample opportunity for direct product placement since contestants actually win gifts from various companies. Meanwhile, other reality shows function more as glorified infomercials. For example, *The Cut* gave audiences 13 weeks of Tommy Hilfiger's fashion and brand. These more documentary-style reality TV shows offer viewers some emotional attachment to the brand, but the underlying message is still to buy the products.

G

With the successful rise and solid presence of product placement in television and films, it was simply a question of time before marketers would reach the literary world. Literary critics have resoundingly voiced their dismay at not just the mere appearance but the blatant focus on brand names like Bulgari in what has become the product placement novel. The Italian luxury jewellery maker reportedly commissioned UK author Fay Weldon to write a promotional novel called *The Bulgari Connection*, which was to include 12 mentions of the company. While the book was only supposed to be for just 750 of the company's most important customers, it wasn't long before it was snapped up by publisher HarperCollins for general distribution.

H

It should come as no surprise that there has been some growing opposition to product placements, principally because the industry is currently not regulated by the government. Hollywood's Writers Guild and Screen Actors Guild have been especially outspoken on this point. Both groups claim that the government has an obligation to establish standards for this \$1 billion industry or certain ethics will be compromised with blatant advertising. Furthermore, they are not being paid to sell these products. For example, in an episode of *Desperate Housewives*, the writers of the show had a character take a job as spokesperson for Buick's LaCrosse sports car, and she devoted a significant part of her on-screen time to discussing the merits of the car.

I

Many parent groups are equally outspoken about the subtle and not-so-subtle attempts to sell to their children via product placements. One recent piece of legislation sponsored by Commercial Alert was presented to the Federal Trade Commission in which they called for a Parents' Bill of Rights. The bill, if it had become law, would have required media outlets to fully disclose any and all product placement agreements made for a TV show, film or video game. But it was voted down on the grounds that only claims about a product, not the images of a product, could be deceptive. Commercial Alert responded on their website with a study showing that teenagers are indeed negatively affected by product placement; an example was teenagers who had viewed lots of smoking in films being three times more likely to start smoking themselves.

IELTS Reading Part 1: Reading Passage 1 (continued)**Questions 1–5**

The passage has nine paragraphs labelled **A-I**.

Which paragraph contains the following information?

Write the correct letter **A-I** for numbers 1-5.

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | the spread of product placements into new media areas | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | television programmes that are based entirely on promoting a product | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | the development of cross-promotions between media groups | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | the disagreement between writers and producers of films | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | the changes made in a TV programme to hide the product of a non-sponsor | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Questions 6–11

Complete the sentences below with words taken from the passage.

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

- 6 Teenagers can react negatively to _____ adverts.
- 7 Sony's large media empire allows it to _____ between its business areas.
- 8 Digital images were the cause of a lawsuit brought by owners of the _____.
- 9 Critics argue that Hilfiger's reality TV programme was nothing more than _____.
- 10 Bulgari's product placement was originally intended only for _____.
- 11 Hollywood's actors and writers complain that they are not paid for helping _____.

IELTS Reading Part 1: Reading Passage 1 (continued)**Questions 12–14**

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1?

TRUE *if the statement agrees with the information*
FALSE *if the statement contradicts the information*
NOT GIVEN *if there is no information on this*

- 12 Public TV stations in the US have banned the use of product placements. _____
- 13 New technology and TV programmes have increased product placements. _____
- 14 The product placement industry is heavily regulated by government. _____

IELTS Reading Part 2: Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 15-27**, which are based on Reading Passage 2.

PHILANTHROPY

Unless you are an avid reader of the financial or business news, you were probably unaware of the name of Warren Edward Buffett. That was until 2006. That was when the world's second richest man made the announcement that he was planning to donate 85 per cent of his current \$44-billion fortune to the \$30-billion charity run by the world's richest man, Bill Gates. Besides the fact that this was the largest single act of charitable giving in all of history, Buffett's donation represents a significant sea change in attitude to philanthropic deeds. In the past, it was much more common for men of substantial means to leave a portion of their estate to a charitable foundation upon their death. The late 1800s and early 1900s saw the birth of numerous new foundations dedicated to various causes: the Ford Foundation, the Lilly Endowment Corporation, J. Paul Getty Trust, the Wellcome Trust and others. However, the super-wealthy's relationship with money has changed significantly since Henry T. Ford ran his company. Many have come to embrace two core values within American culture: success based on hard work and giving to the betterment of humanity.

Regarding the former, the nouveau riche are making a definite break with the past. It's more than likely that they are aware of the notorious tales of ugly infighting that have erupted in families when an extremely wealthy patriarch dies. Bill Gates has made it clear that his children will only inherit \$10 million each out of his vast billion dollar fortune. Buffett shares his sentiments. While his children will not inherit much of his money, they will be comfortably looked after and will continue to oversee charities in their names.

The second major difference is the personal attention that many of the current philanthropic giants take in the actual targeting of the funds. Rather than use their money to build new art galleries or opera houses, many of the famous US philanthropists have a deep belief that their wealth needs to be used to help shape society for the better.

IELTS Reading Part 2: Reading Passage 2 (continued)

- A** Even with the loss of \$7 billion in the ill-fated AOL takeover of TimeWarner, billionaire Ted Turner continued his pledge of \$1 billion to support United Nations causes.
- B** Hungarian-born money speculator George Soros created the Open Society Institute, which the PBS network suggests has given over \$4 billion. The OSI supported many dissident movements during the Cold War in different Eastern Bloc countries.
- C** Bill Gates made the announcement in 2005 that he would be stepping aside from his role in Microsoft to dedicate his time to the Gates Foundation. This foundation donates money to a variety of causes, including medical research into diseases that ravage the developing world – from malaria to tuberculosis. It also supports organisations that are trying to alleviate international poverty and promote childhood education, both internationally and within the United States.
- D** Gordon and Betty Moore are committed to giving over \$7 billion to the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, which is dedicated to international biodiversity conservation. They have been involved in causes that range from preserving the North Pacific wild salmon ecosystems to protecting the rainforests of the Andes and Amazon.
- E** Another foundation created by a married couple is the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, which has given \$1.2 billion to helping children who are suffering in urban poverty.
- F** James and Virginia Stowers created the \$1.5-billion Stowers Institute for Medical Research. The institute focuses all of its energies into researching DNA. Their hope is to find cures for many genetic and microbial afflictions.

The self-reflective attitude of these philanthropists has also sparked a debate in the general public. The baby-boomer generation (those born after World War Two) is one of the wealthiest on record. And it is estimated by Paul G. Schervish of Boston College that anywhere from \$41 to \$136 trillion will be transferred between parents and their offspring in the next fifty years. A growing portion of them believe that a significant part of this amount should be given to charity. Schervish believes that about \$6 trillion may eventually reach the outstretched hands of charities.

But while Gates and Buffett make headlines for the size of their contributions, even their contributions pale in comparison to the giving by a less obvious group. Who might this be? It is, in fact, lower and middle income families. According to Indiana University's Center on Philanthropy, people who earn less than \$100,000 gave 59 per cent of all donations. It seems that while we can look to the wealthy for inspiration, the true giving begins surprisingly with those who have less to spare.

IELTS Reading Part 2: Reading Passage 2 (continued)**Questions 15–18**

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 2?

TRUE *if the statement agrees with the information*
FALSE *if the statement contradicts the information*
NOT GIVEN *if there is no information on this*

- 15 Bill Gates convinced Warren Buffett to donate to his charity. _____
- 16 Philanthropists used to give all their money to charity trusts on their death. _____
- 17 Bill Gates believes too much money would hurt his children. _____
- 18 Warren Buffett plans to give more money to his children than Gates. _____

Questions 19–23

Look at the six famous US philanthropists **A-F** in Reading Passage 2 and the statements below (Questions 19-23).

Match each philanthropist with the statement that has a shared meaning.

This philanthropist

- 19 is helping find possible cures for diseases in Africa.
- 20 maintained his philanthropic commitment despite personal loss.
- 21 has helped research into human health with a strong focus on genetics.
- 22 has strong political beliefs that have led him to support democratic movements.
- 23 is committed to developing opportunities for underprivileged city children.

IELTS Reading Part 2: Reading Passage 2 (continued)**Questions 24–27**

Choose the correct letter **A**, **B**, **C** or **D**.

24 Warren Buffett has

- A** given his money to more than one charity.
- B** not given his children any money.
- C** tripled the capital value of the Gates Foundation.
- D** been a widely recognised figure in the US.

25 Bill Gates believes strongly that his wealth should be

- A** used to create more wealth.
- B** spent more on other people's children.
- C** given away entirely.
- D** spent on his own children.

26 Baby boomers might

- A** be the largest group of philanthropists.
- B** give less to charity than the Gates Foundation.
- C** be against the idea of family proposed by Gates.
- D** give over \$35 trillion to their families.

27 The author suggests that Bill Gates and Warren Buffett

- A** have not made enough of an effort.
- B** have given only a small part of all donations.
- C** should support more philanthropy among billionaires.
- D** should give more money in the US.

IELTS Reading Part 3: Reading Passage 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 28-40**, which are based on Reading Passage 3.

Questions 28–32

Reading Passage 3 has six sections, **A-F**.

Choose the correct heading **i-x** for sections **A-E** from the list of headings below.

List of Headings

- i** Violent groups in vogue
- ii** Breaking through the mainstream
- iii** The 70's fashion revival
- iv** Bling-bling backlash
- v** B-boys and flygirls
- vi** Uncertain origins
- vii** Cropped, braided or undercover
- viii** Designer labels all the rage
- ix** The four cornerstones of the culture
- x** The hip hop market opens up

- 28** Section **A**
- 29** Section **B**
- 30** Section **C**
- 31** Section **D**
- 32** Section **E**

IELTS Reading Part 3: Reading Passage 3

HIP HOP FASHION

Section A

Hip hop culture can trace its origins back to street parties in New York City in the 1970s. While DJs were changing the soul, funk or R&B records, MCs started to fill in the pauses to keep the crowds excited. Eventually, the talk became more stylised with MCs speaking over the music and rap music was born. The birth of rap music happened to coincide with the popularity of break-dancing, a stylised gymnastic dance form, and the development of graffiti into a street art form. Together, all four became the core elements of hip hop culture. As hip hop evolved and spread across the US and the rest of the world, the different genres within the culture prompted many different periods of fashion.

Section B

As rap music moved into the 1980s, there was one group who established the dominant hip hop fashion. Run DMC created the classic rap look. The group's most notable fashion contribution was their Adidas sportswear. Wearing sportswear as regular clothing became a trend and brought into the hip hop fashion scene many more manufacturers from Russell Athletic to Nike. Run DMC were often seen wearing Adidas tracksuits and sneakers (without laces). The group even wrote a song entitled 'My Adidas' in 1986, leading the company to create a pair of shoes in their honour. This was the first time fashion was connected commercially to hip hop. Soon after, the brother of Run DMC's Joseph 'Run' Simmons and co-founder of Def Jam records, Russell Simmons, created the first commercial hip hop clothing line – Phat Farm. Another major hip hop label, FUBU, appeared the same year. Its name is an acronym of 'for us, by us' which suggested its political stance of employing mostly African-Americans. Both labels continue to have tremendous success to this day.

Section C

Jewellery also became an important component in the image of these early rappers and those of later years. There are several theories to its origins. In ghetto culture, which rap music is closely tied to, wearing expensive jewellery is a way of showing your status. Rather than invest their money in banks or real estate, drug dealers and criminals often wear their wealth to avoid tax and other legal issues. Others suggest that the wearing of gold has a cultural connection to the African continent where gold is both widely extracted and used in many traditional art forms. Furthermore, many artists of 1980s, such as Queen Latifah, Boogie Down Productions and Public Enemy, promoted other traditional African ties by wearing red, green and black clothing.

Section D

Many rappers through the 1980s made other jewellery popular, including necklaces and multi-finger rings, as worn by LL Cool J, who had a gold and diamond-encrusted 'Cool J' across his knuckles. This is part of the wider trend of bling-bling, or showing off wealth with diamond or platinum jewellery, expensive champagne (Krystal), designer fur coats and even customised vehicles. This lavish behaviour has been widely criticised by the mainstream media for promoting the wrong values. It is also being criticised within the industry by several prominent artists. Chuck D of Public Enemy narrated a recent documentary about the diamonds coming from war-torn regions in Africa, and Missy Elliot publicly expressed her concern about young black men feeling the pressure to spend irresponsibly.

IELTS Reading Part 3: Reading Passage 3 (continued)**Section E**

By the late 1980s and through the early 1990s, gangsta rap began to develop bringing very distinctive styles that originated from street gangs. The Chicano gangsters (of Mexican descent) in Los Angeles contributed loose trousers that are thought to come from Latin dance fashion. These oversized trousers are often worn without a belt, which tends to show the wearer's underwear – a prison reference since inmates have their belts taken away when they go in.

Colour is also important in gangster clothing. In Los Angeles and elsewhere, colours signified connections to particular gangs: red was associated with the Bloods and blue with the Crips. These connections were sometimes obvious in rap groups, such as the prominent NWA who tended to wear all black despite criticism that the group was associated with the Compton Crips. NWA often wore the paraphernalia of the Los Angeles Raiders football team. Today, most rappers are seen wearing the jerseys of different professional basketball, baseball or football teams.

Gangsta rap is often criticised for, among other things, being responsible for the negative image of women in hip hop culture. Women are often envisaged as another possession to own in the bling-bling lifestyle. Women in hip hop videos and even some female rap artists are often seen wearing very revealing clothing. However, this is not always the case. Many women from Lauryn Hill to Missy Elliot have chosen more conservative clothing.

Section F

Hairstyles and hats are a notable component of hip hop fashion as well. Early on, many artists chose to wear hats, such as the soft Kangol bucket hats worn by LL Cool J and the black fedora hats worn by Run DMC. Gangsta rappers often wore black knit ski caps (a possible reference to the balaclavas worn in robberies) like Eazy-E or bandanas (a common item among street gangs) like Tupac Shakur. Today, the flat-rimmed trucker's cap (a mesh-back baseball cap) as worn by 50 Cent and Pharrel Williams tend to predominate. The other popular hip hop headwear is the doorag. Similar to the bandana, the polyester doorag was an early method of keeping moisture in the hair.

Hairstyles too could identify a rapper with a particular genre. The popular 'high top fade', a hairstyle that was high and flat on top, was worn by pop rappers the Fresh Prince and Kid of Kid N Play. Several gangsta rappers like Ice Cube and Eazy-E chose the jheri curl, which left their hair in long, hanging curls. Today, there are several popular hairstyles. Most commonly seen are cornrows, a type of braiding that runs close to the head from front to back. They have been worn by many diverse rappers from Snoop Dogg to Andre 3000. These two rappers have also worn their hair in afros, a style from the 1970s.

IELTS Reading Part 3: Reading Passage 3 (continued)**Questions 33–40**

Complete each sentence with correct ending **A-L** from the box below.

- 33 MCs began rapping because
- 34 The first commercial hip hop relationship developed
- 35 FUBU was so named
- 36 Gold necklaces became popular
- 37 Bling-bling has been criticised
- 38 Many youth avoid wearing certain colours
- 39 The media have criticised gangsta rap
- 40 Eazy-E was recognisable as a gangsta rapper

- A** because they wanted the attention of the audience.
- B** because hip hop has long had an association with street culture.
- C** because it can be made from products that involve human suffering.
- D** because they needed to fill the time between records.
- E** because he was often seen wearing a black ski hat.
- F** because Run DMC created a song praising their favourite brand.
- G** because they portray the opposite sex in a negative light.
- H** because rap artists wore them.
- I** because Run's brother started his own clothing company.
- J** because they are symbols of violent gangs.
- K** because he wore his hair in cornrows.
- L** because it reflected their desire to support African-Americans.