

Integrated Skills in English II

Time allowed: 2 hours

This exam paper has four tasks. Complete all tasks.

Task 1 – Long reading

Read the following text about plastic bags and answer the 15 questions on page 3.

Paragraph 1

When Swedish engineer Sten Gustaf Thulin invented the lightweight plastic shopping bag in the 1960s, he probably had no idea how controversial they would become, nor for how long the controversy would last. The fact that the bags proved so useful due to their low weight and resistance to degrading biologically made them widespread by the 1980s, but also led to environmental challenges. Millions of shopping bags end up as litter every year. This has resulted in land pollution, blocking of waterways and also to areas of sea being clogged up with plastic, harming wildlife.

Paragraph 2

Different measures have been carried out. A total ban was placed on non-biodegradable plastic bags in China, to save oil, and in some African countries like Rwanda, to reduce litter. In China this is said to have saved 4.8 million tonnes of oil and in Rwanda the ban has had a visible effect. As one visitor commented: 'The country is so much cleaner than it used to be.' The United Arab Emirates also banned all single-use bags in 2013, based on pollution caused – and danger to camels, who were eating them.

Paragraph 3

Other countries have introduced a 'bag tax', with supermarkets charging customers a small amount for each plastic bag they use. For example, Ireland introduced such a charge in 2002. Jill Burns of Plastic Bag Aware said 'Ireland's bag tax has been incredibly successful, mainly because the charge is quite high, and is increased the more plastic bags are used.' Despite fears to the contrary, customers accepted the charge, but in other countries this measure has been blocked, not by customers, but by manufacturers of plastic bags.

Paragraph 4

What's the alternative to the traditional plastic bag? I thought the answer was the bio-degradable plastic bag, but it seems not to be the case. Manufacturers and the major supermarkets claim that such bags degrade completely in under three years. However, research has shown that they do not degrade as efficiently as has been claimed. I was really taken aback by this! They need light and oxygen for the material to degrade, but in landfills both are in short supply. Another criticism has been that it is environmental madness to produce something requiring a lot of oil to make, only so that it can 'self-destruct'.

Paragraph 5

I'd always considered paper and cloth bags as an ethical alternative to plastic bags. Again, my ideas have been challenged. Both paper and cloth bags require much more energy to make, and are said to pollute air and water more in manufacture. I've used a cloth bag several times for shopping, and prided myself on protecting the environment. It seems I'm wrong. A cloth bag would have to be used 130 times before its ecological impact was as low as a plastic bag in terms of energy. I guess I have no choice but to do another 90 shopping trips or more with my cloth bag! One packaging manufacturer said 'Plastic bags are more environmentally friendly than cotton bags,' but I'm not convinced. How can something that causes so much damage be acceptable?

Questions 1-5 (one mark per question)

The text on page 2 has five paragraphs (1-5). Choose the best title for each paragraph from A-F below and write the letter (A-F) on the lines below. There is one title you don't need.

- 1. Paragraph 1
- 2. Paragraph 2
- 3. Paragraph 3
- 4. Paragraph 4
- 5. Paragraph 5

- A The high energy use of producing alternative types of bags
- B How the positive features of plastic bags led to problems
- C Other forms of plastic bags may not be the solution
- D Benefits of forbidding the use of non-biodegradable plastic bags
- E Consumers must be encouraged to change their way of thinking
- F An effective measure is accepted by consumers

Questions 6-10 (one mark per question)

Choose the **five statements** from A-H below that are **TRUE** according to the information given in the text on page 2. Write the letters of the **TRUE** statements on the lines below (in any order).

- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

- A The inventor of the carrier bag realised his invention would cause disagreement.
- B One of the reasons behind a ban on plastic bags was to protect wildlife.
- C The more plastic bags shoppers in Ireland use, the more expensive they become.
- D In some countries customers don't agree with the charge being introduced.
- E The writer found it difficult to believe research on the breakdown of bio-degradable bags.
- F According to researchers, one of the elements needed to break down bio-degradable bags in landfills is missing.
- G The writer was incorrect in his belief that using a cloth bag had made him environmentally friendly.
- H The writer feels his only option is to re-use his cloth bag at least 90 more times.

Questions 11-15 (one mark per question)

Complete sentences 11-15 with a word, phrase or number from the text (maximum three words). Write the word, phrase or number on the lines below.

- 11. The lightness and durability of plastic bags meant that their use was twenty years after their invention.
- 12. Some countries responded directly to excessive oil use and rubbish caused by plastic bags with a on them.
- 13. Instead of objecting to paying for plastic bags, Irish shoppers
- 14. The researchers questioned the idea that bio-degradable bags take less than three years to
- 15. The writer did not believe the claim made by a that plastic bags are more ecological than cloth bags.