

Exam practice 1

Remembering experiences

- A** Some of the most memorable events in our lives occur when we are very young children – our first birthday parties, our first day at school, perhaps the first time we ride a bike, or swim unaided. However, when many people are asked to describe memories of the varied experiences that they had during this time, their answers are often vague. Now researchers are coming closer to understanding why we struggle to recall so much of what occurred in our early childhoods.
- B** Canadian researchers did some experiments that looked at the formation of new brain cells and how they affected our memory. Just before birth, and in the very early stages of childhood development, neurogenesis – the formation of neurons in the hippocampus region of the brain – reaches a peak. The hippocampus is an important site for the processes of learning and remembering. After the activity here peaks, there is a steady decline during the remainder of childhood. What the research showed is that, as neurons grew, memory formation decreased.
- C** It seems that, before the age of five, children have a very dynamic hippocampus that changes constantly as they learn how to do new things. A consequence of this dynamism is that memories aren't stored stably. Some memories will become vague, and many other experiences will be forgotten completely.
- D** Further research into memory has shown that even those experiences we think we remember may not be remembered very accurately. Modern scanning technology has revealed that for each of our memories to be recalled, we use a broad range of brain cells in different combinations. This may go some way to explaining why memories are not static, but constantly evolve. Every time we want to recall something, we may make minor changes. By remembering, we 're-record' the past, and that can result in false memories.
- E** There are hopes that the new research may have practical purposes, too. The more that we can recognize where memory occurs, the greater the chances are that we'll be able to target specific memories. This means that one day it may be possible to erase memories of traumatic events so people can live their lives normally. The same technique could even be used to overcome memories that cause fear. Perhaps one day we'll also be able to select the experiences we want to remember the most.

Reading

- 1 Choose the correct answers.**
- 1 Brain activity is at its highest ...
 - A before children are born.
 - B before birth and in early childhood.
 - C at the age of five.
 - 2 Researchers have discovered that memory is ...
 - A stored well by young children.
 - B unchanging.
 - C located in many areas of the brain.
 - 3 One potential use of the new research is that ...
 - A it could help people to stop being afraid of things.
 - B it could help people to improve their memories.
 - C it could help people to remember things clearly.
- 2 Write a summary of the text in English. Take the main points from the text but use your own words as much as possible. (Maximum 50 words)**
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Use of English

- 3 Find synonyms in the text for the words.**
- 1 unclear (*paragraph A*)
 - 2 decrease (*paragraph B*)
 - 3 happens (*paragraph E*)
- 4 Rewrite the sentences in the passive.**
- 1 Canadian researchers have been investigating brain development.
.....
 - 2 Young children don't store memories very stably.
.....
 - 3 Modern scanning technology has helped researchers.
.....
 - 4 One day, we will erase bad memories using technology.
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Writing

- 5 Choose one of the tasks. Write 100–150 words.**
- 1 Write about the experience that you've learnt the most from.
 - 2 Write a discussion essay with the following title:
'Experiences that we have as children have a big effect on the kind of adult we become'. You can agree or disagree with the statement.

