

Chapter 9

Banked gap-filling

This testing technique is known as “banked gap-filling”, because you have to choose the appropriate word from a bank of alternatives. In a banked gap-filling task, similarly to the open gap-filling tasks we explained in the previous chapter, you are asked to read a text from which some words are missing. However, while in an open gap task you are not given any words to choose from, in this type of test, the words that were taken out from the text are printed after the text, and you ‘only’ need to decide which word in the list of words after the text is suitable for which gap in the text.

It may be helpful for you to note that the possible answers are listed in alphabetical order. You should also remember that this list of choices always includes at least one, but more typically, two extra words that will not be suitable for any of the gaps, and which you will not need to use in your answers.

Since you may only use each word once, it is a good idea to put a line through a word in the bank, once you have decided where it fits in the text, so that you do not use it again. This will also make it easier to search through the remaining words in the bank for other items. Also, at the end, you can check to see whether one or two words have not been crossed out since, depending on what the instructions say, there will always be one or two words you do not need.

The tasks in this chapter were designed to test your ability to use vocabulary rather more than grammatical structure, which, however, does not mean that none of them contain any items requiring grammar words.

As with other gap-filling tasks which are based on texts, in order to do this type of test successfully, it is a good idea to read through the whole text before even attempting to fill in any gaps in the text. You can then go back to the beginning and try to select the correct option to fit in the first space. Remember that you need not only to pay attention to the meaning, but you also need to be aware of the part of speech that appears to be missing from the text, and then identify an appropriate part of speech from the bank. The example (0) in the Sample Task (“*Far from shore*”) (with which you are advised to start practising this task type) is a good instance of this: an adjective is required to fill the gap between a possessive noun (“*ocean’s*”) and the head noun (“*layer*”), and the meaning of the adjective must relate to the meaning of the text: the sunlight layer must be higher than the other two, darker, layers, and so “*top*” is the best choice.

As with open gap-filling, it is essential to read the text **after** the gap as well as before it, to be sure that the word you choose fits completely into the context. A very common mistake is to find a word that fits the text before the gap but not **after** the gap. Always look beyond the gap.

Now you should attempt to do the Sample Task for this task type (“Far from shore”).

Sample Task

You are going to read a text about the ocean. Some words are missing from it. Choose the most appropriate word from the list (A-P) for each gap (1-13) in the text. There are two extra words that you do not need to use. Write your answers in the boxes after the text. There is one example at the beginning (0).

Far from Shore

Scientists divide the open ocean far from land into three layers according to how much sunlight the water gets: the sunlight zone, the twilight zone, and the midnight zone.

Sunlight Zone

The sunlight zone is the ocean's (0) _____ layer. It goes down about 300 feet, and the temperature is a pleasant 70°F. Even (1) _____ it is the smallest zone, it has about 90 (2) _____ of ocean life. Sunlight brightens the water near the surface (3) _____ plankton float. Bigger creatures also live in the sunny water. Some swimming animals cruise (4) _____ below the surface. Some dive deep. Others break the water's surface (5) _____ reach the air above.

Twilight Zone

The twilight zone (6) _____ from the bottom of the sunlight zone down about 3,000 feet. The water (7) _____ darker and colder – about 50°F. The fish that live here can't see very well, and there isn't enough light for plant plankton or seaweed to stay (8) _____. Most food comes from dead plankton and animals that drift down from the surface waters.

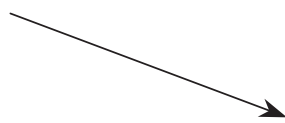
Midnight Zone

The midnight zone goes from the bottom of the twilight zone to the floor of the ocean. This zone is dark and (9) _____. The temperature is really cold – about 43°F. The weight of the water from above presses very hard on the small, (10) _____ blind animals that live here. Many deep-ocean fish have parts that glow from chemicals in (11) _____ bodies. Their lights confuse enemies, lure prey, and (12) _____ mates.

At some places on the ocean floor, water (13) _____ hot as 750°F shoots out of openings, or vents. Minerals collect around the vents to form underwater chimneys. The hot water rising from the chimneys looks like black smoke.

- A** alive **G** nearly **M** to
B attract **H** percent **N** top
C as **I** still **O** where
D extends **J** swim **P** which
E gets **K** their
F just **L** though

Write your answers here:



0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<i>N</i>													

Score: 13 points

Answer Key to Sample Task: *Far from shore*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	L	H	O	F	M	D	E	A	I	G	K	B	C

Item 1: A conjunction is needed in the gap to connect the meaning of the two clauses of the sentence. The word “*even*” in the sentence is the first part of a two-word conjunction which could do this, but the second part of this conjunction is missing. The word “*though*” given among the choices is suitable.

Item 2: The author is contrasting a small area with a large quantity of ocean life. “*percent*” would complete the meaning.

Item 3: Since the two words after the gap are a noun (“*plankton*”) and a verb (“*float*”), what is needed here is a subordinating conjunction of location: “*where*” is ideal.

Item 4: Since, at first sight, the sentence containing this item seems complete both in terms of meaning and syntax, there are not many types of words one can think of when trying to fill the gap. However, the short sentence right after the gap, “*Some [animals] dive deep [in the water.]*”, suggests that other animals must cruise “*very near*” the surface (not simply “*below the surface*”). So the missing word must be an intensifier/qualifier of some sort. The word “*just*” fits the meaning.

Item 5: The words surrounding the gap suggest that the meaning of the sentence requires an infinitive of purpose. The missing word can only be the infinitive particle “*to*”.

Item 6: There is a main verb missing in this sentence, and the meaning has to do with a range, hence “*extends*”.

Item 7: A verb is needed, and the adjectives after the gap are comparatives, so something that indicates a change of state would make sense, hence “*gets*” or “*becomes*” – but “*becomes*” is not in the bank.

Item 8: The meaning of the sentence is that the plankton and seaweed will die because of the lack of light, hence stay “*alive*” is appropriate.

Item 9: What is needed here is another adjective that indicates what deep water will be like. “*still*” is the only suitable choice given in the bank.

Item 10: Again, what is missing is either an adjective or an adverb qualifying the adjective “*blind*”. As there are no other adjectives left in the bank, the adverb “*nearly*” is the best choice.

Item 11: Either an adjective or a determiner is needed, but the possessive adjective “*their*”, referring back to the “*fish*”, is the best.

Item 12: The three clauses of the gapped sentence are parallel: a verb followed by a noun, so the missing word must be a verb. What one often does with “*mates*” is to “*attract*” them.

Item 13: If you read beyond the gap you will see that there is a comparison (“*hot as 750 F*”), so the first part of the comparison is what is missing: “*as*”.

Now go on and do the practice tests in the rest of this chapter.