

The Listening phase - GESE Advanced stage

The purpose of the Listening phase is for candidates to demonstrate high level listening skills such as prediction, deduction and inference. The candidate needs to show recognition of the context, participants and register.

There are two types of listening tasks which require different responses from the candidate:

- ▶ **Type 1** – require the candidate to provide a suitable ending
- ▶ **Type 2** – require the candidate to identify participants, contexts or settings.

- Candidates are presented with three listening tasks – two of Type 1 and one of Type 2.
- Candidates are expected to respond with very short, precise responses and should not give lengthy replies.
- The listening tasks are not related to any of the given subject areas for the Conversation phase. This is to provide an unknown element which candidates at this stage are expected to be able to handle.
- Candidates are not required to read or write anything in this phase, and the taking of notes is unnecessary given the nature of the task.
- Please note **the listening tasks will not be repeated** by the examiner even if they are requested to do so.

Below are some **SAMPLE** listening tasks for the Advanced stage. Please note these are **samples** and will **NOT** be used in an actual examination.

At each Grade, the examiner will introduce this phase by saying:

'I'm going to read you three short passages and after I've finished each one, I'd like you to either suggest a suitable ending or answer a question. I'll then move onto the next passage. Are you ready?'

The examiner will introduce the Type 1 tasks by saying:

'These two passages are incomplete. When I stop, I'd like you to tell me in just a few words how you think the passage finishes.'

The examiner will introduce the Type 2 task by saying:

'After I've read this passage, I'll ask you about such things as the context and the people involved.'

Grade 10 - Sample listening tasks - Type 1

1. The boss of an advertising agency, Mr Mason, was a tyrant. He was always in a terrible mood, shouting orders, complaining. He never said anything polite to his secretary, never greeted anyone when he arrived in the morning. Then one Monday morning, it was just as if he was a completely different person. He walked into the office and...

Expected response: ...did/said something nice/polite.

2. Maria couldn't understand why her laptop computer wasn't working. At first she thought she might have forgotten to switch it off the night before. Then she wondered if her little brother might have been playing with it. But then she happened to look down at the electric socket and realised that...

Expected response: ...it wasn't plugged in.

3. My best friend Jane's star sign is a Gemini, the twins, and unlike me, she believes in astrology. Astrologers claim that Geminis are like butterflies, always trying different things and never settling down. When she told me the other day that she's thinking of changing her job again, for the third time this year, I began to think maybe the astrologers...

Expected response: ...were right.

4. John collects the money and buys the ticket for his lottery syndicate at work. The people in the syndicate each pay £1 per week but so far they've only won small prizes. Last week John was so busy that he forgot to buy the lottery ticket. You can imagine how terrible he felt when he saw the numbers and realised...

Expected response: ...they would have won a big prize.

5. Mary had been searching for years for a painting like the one she remembered hanging in her grandparents' hallway but had almost given up of ever finding one. Then one day, of all the amazing coincidences, when she was on holiday in Spain, she was walking past a small shop, when....

Expected response: ...she saw the painting she'd been looking for.

6. Bill and I had an agreement. He promised me that he'd stop smoking by the end of the month and I swore that I would give up sweets and chocolate. The silly thing was that next time we met I discovered that Bill hadn't touched a cigarette for several weeks, but instead had been eating...

Expected response: ...(lots of) sweets and/or chocolate.

7. What a fool! I thought I'd prepared everything for the long car journey. I'd got my map marked out and knew how long it would take to get there. I'd checked the oil, water and tyre pressures. Even so, twenty kilometres from home, the car came to a sudden stop. How stupid of me to have forgotten to ...

Expected response: ...fill up with petrol/gas/fuel.

8. It's surely the most important resource on earth, although it's only when we've got too much or too little we realise this. Floods cause misery, but lack of it creates drought and famine. They even say future wars will be fought over it. I suppose we're lucky really. We just turn on the tap and out comes the...

Expected response: ...water.

9. I only just got to the station on time. I ran onto the platform and jumped on the train that was just about to leave. I was finally on my way. It wasn't until I looked out of the window and the countryside seemed totally unfamiliar that I realised, to my horror, that I'd got on...

Expected response: ...the wrong train.

10. The Smith family had been looking forward to their annual summer break for months. The holiday brochure they'd studied had a picture of the big, new hotel where they were going to stay, facing the beach and with its own swimming pool. But when they arrived, they were horrified to find ...

Expected response: ...it was nothing like the brochure/there were none of the advertised facilities.

11. When John had rung the office where he was going for an important job interview to ask for directions, they'd told him that the offices were only a few minutes' walk from his hotel. But now time was passing, he was still trying to find the building and he had a horrible feeling that he...

Expected response: ...was going to be late/miss the interview.

12. He comes into the coffee shop where I work every morning on his way to the office. He's a creature of habit. He always carries an umbrella, whether it's raining or not, and he always orders the same thing – a double espresso. So, I was really surprised this morning when he walked in without the umbrella and ordered a...

Expected response: ...tea/orange juice or any drink OTHER than a double espresso.

13. I was going away for the weekend and my neighbour had kindly agreed to feed my cat. I left a note for him on the kitchen table about what to do and then left to catch my train. It was only when I arrived at the station that I realised my neighbour wouldn't be able to get into the flat, as I'd forgotten to...

Expected response: ...give my neighbour/him the keys.

14. I suggested that my friend come to the beach with me and he agreed, but didn't look very happy. Anyway, we put our towels down on the sand and sunbathed for a while, but it got so hot that I said, 'Come on, let's go into the sea.' Jim looked embarrassed and confessed that he'd never learnt...

Expected response: ...(how) to swim.

15. Climate change is affecting the way north Europeans plan holidays. As the weather gets hotter and hotter, they may decide that they don't need to go to sunny resorts in the Mediterranean, California or the Far East any more. Several people have said recently that in future they would be perfectly happy to spend their holidays ...

Expected response: ...at home, in cold countries, in the north of Europe

Grade 10 - Sample listening tasks - Type 2

1. I take the tickets as the people arrive and show them to their seats. Even though the rows have letters and the seats are numbered, you'd be amazed how confused people get. Most people arrive in good time for the performance, but there are always one or two latecomers. Then you have to make sure they're as quiet as possible as the actors find the smallest noise disturbing.

Question: Where does the speaker work?
Expected answer: In a theatre.

2. The left one is fine but the right really hurts. Can I try another pair in the same size please? Oh, this is the last pair, what a shame. They're beautifully made, aren't they? Is it Spanish leather? Not too pointed, flat heels, just how I like them. But I am a teacher and I stand up all day so comfort is the first priority. I'm afraid I'll have to leave them.

Question: What is the speaker talking about?
Expected answer: Shoes.

3. November is a slow month in our office because most people have made their holiday plans well in advance and not many go for cheap last minute offers. Many people don't begin to make plans for the coming year until January, so it will be hectic again then. So in November, because there's less pressure than usual, our boss asks us to sort out the brochures for the coming summer.

Question: Where does the speaker work?
Expected answer: In a travel agent's.

4. It was the best final I've ever watched and the weather was glorious. Both girls were on top form and every seat in the stadium was full. The crowd cheered every time an ace was served or a rally ended in a dramatic volley or smash. At match point, there was a moment of silence before the champion flung her arms into the air and everyone rose to applaud.

Question: What type of event was this?
Expected answer: A (championship) tennis match.

5. I was absorbed in my book in the departure lounge when I realised that the announcement might be of relevance to me. It was hard to hear at first what they were saying but eventually I managed to make it out. Yes, that was my gate and yet another delay to take off was announced. Now I would miss the connection and arrive after midnight.

Question: Where is the speaker?
Expected answer: In an airport.

6. The man in the shop was very helpful. He let Jimmy ride them all round the block one by one. The first one was a lovely bright red, with a bell and a bag for carrying things. The second one was bigger, with wide handlebars. And the last one was black and silver, with an adjustable saddle. Jimmy liked it best, so that's what we settled on.

Question: What is the speaker buying?
Expected answer: A bicycle.

7. We'd arrived at 5 o'clock in the morning and there were already about 60 people waiting. We were truly amazed. We hadn't expected that but soon after we got there about another 20 arrived and by the time the office opened at 9.30, there were about 250 people altogether. We were so glad we had made the effort. At least we were guaranteed the best seats.

Question: What were these people doing?

Expected answer: They were queuing for tickets for an entertainments event.

8. No, I'm sorry but it just isn't good enough. The first course was cold; the second wasn't what we'd ordered and now, every time we try to choose something, you say there's nothing left. Now, I don't usually complain or ask to see the manager but the boy who served us was really rude so now I'd like to know what you're going to do about it.

Question: Where is the speaker?

Expected answer: In a restaurant.

9. It seemed as if the week would never end. We couldn't understand why we had so many in such a short time. We had to do at least two every day and each one was three hours long. So every night we were revising until midnight and the next morning there we were, tired and nervous, sitting in rows again and opening yet another paper.

Question: What was the speaker doing?

Expected answer: Doing/taking/sitting (written) examinations.

10. Would you like to have a look around? This room's large and bright with a great view of the park. There's central heating throughout and the place is in very good condition. It comes fully furnished and the rent is quite reasonable. Plus you have the choice of a six or twelve-month lease. When are you planning to move in?

Question: Who is the speaker?

Expected answer: An estate agent/a landlord or landlady/a lettings agent.

11. We have several books on archaeology, although I'm not sure if there are any about the particular area in which you're interested. You'll find some on the shelves in the reference section, but you can't take those out. There is also a small archaeology section over there, next to Geology, and you can borrow those ones for up to ten days. Don't return them late though or there's a fine.

Question: Where is the speaker?

Expected answer: (In) a library.

12. Please sit down Mrs. Wilkinson. Right, now, your John has worked hard this year by and large. He's participated well in class and his homework marks have been satisfactory throughout. So far he hasn't participated very much in extra-curricular activities, but I am sure he can improve on that.

Question: Who's talking?

Expected answer: A teacher.

13. I don't know what I'd do without her really. She keeps me company and cheers me up when I'm feeling low. All I need to do is sit down with her on my lap and stroke her soft fur - then she starts purring and all my worries disappear. She hardly ever scratches or bites but she does bring in a mouse she's caught sometimes!

Question: What is the speaker talking about?

Expected answer: A cat.

14. You say it's for a twenty-first birthday? So how much are you looking to spend? We've got plenty in all price ranges. Of course, we've got gold, but I think silver's nicer on a younger person. Would you prefer something plain or with a gemstone? Diamonds and emeralds are expensive and rubies a bit old-fashioned. What about this delicate little sapphire necklace with matching earrings?

Question: Where does the speaker work?

Expected answer: In a jeweller's/jewellery shop.

15. People were terrified. The river banks had broken and torrents of water were gushing through the streets and flowing into people's houses. The only way to get around was by boat or canoe and people were beginning to run short of basic supplies such as food and clean water. Eventually, the emergency services were called in to evacuate residents in the worst-hit areas.

Question: What is the speaker describing?

Expected answer: A flood/flooding/an inundation.

Grade 11 – Sample listening tasks - Type 1

1. Fire-fighters said that the family were lucky to be alive after a serious fire in their home last night. When the fire crews arrived, they rescued four people including an elderly woman and a baby. Only the fact that the bedroom doors were shut prevented the fire racing through the house with tragic consequences for everyone. The fire was confined to one back bedroom, which was extensively damaged. If the bedroom doors hadn't been shut, then the four people...

Expected response: ...would have died/would have been hurt/injured.

2. It's funny how people differ in their ideas about how to do things and one example is the ideas people have about how to study successfully. Some of my friends can only concentrate if they have pop music blasting out of the loud speakers, while I need total silence when I'm doing my homework. My best friend has to get up and walk around and then has to eat something every half or so, whereas I...

Expected response: ...am completely the opposite/have to sit still and not eat anything.

3. I made the stupidest mistake the other day when I was cooking a meal for the family. I had two bottles on the table beside me - one with brown sauce for the meat dish and the other with chocolate icing to go on top of the birthday cake I was making for my niece. The time was getting on and people kept interrupting me, so I was feeling a bit hot and bothered. In my haste, by accident I ...

Expected response: ...put the icing into the meat dish OR put the sauce on the cake.

4. With only a few minutes to spare before his flight, a man went to the foreign exchange desk for some currency. The woman was very pleasant but chatting to her colleague about some party they'd both been to. When she gave him the money, she just handed it over to him and he didn't look at it. It was only when he got to his destination and tried to pay the taxi driver that he found he had a big problem because...

Expected response: ...he'd been given the wrong currency.

5. Well, my friend tries not to be judgemental but she really doesn't approve of her daughter and partner's life-style. Three kids, a big mortgage and no marriage certificate. To her that spells no lasting commitment and potential disaster if one of them ever decides to walk out. My friend says she can't help worrying - suppose she was left on her own with three little ones to bring up and he refused to ...

Expected response: ...help her raise the children and/or contribute financially.

6. I've just received a letter from a friend who's seeking sponsorship for a 5-day walk. She belongs to an organisation called Friends of Nedoma which is a small African town and the members are in regular contact with the townspeople. The money raised by the sponsored walk will be used for educational purposes. The people of Nedoma hope to build a new classroom or at least buy some new textbooks. Whether they get a classroom or just textbooks depends on...

Expected response: ...how much money is raised.

7. I just had to get away, so I caught the first plane to Australia, leaving behind my family, job and friends. At first, I felt revitalised by the change but as time passed, I missed my old life more and more. My new job was really boring and I found it increasingly hard to break into social circles. One night, as I munched a solitary snack in front of the TV, I thought to myself that I wish ...

Expected response: ...I had never left home/had never come to Australia/I was back home.

8. When she was little, Sophie had the most extraordinary eating habits. For a whole year, she refused to eat anything but pizza, followed by a banana. Her mother got so fed up with trying to tempt her to vary her diet that in the end she just gave up and served the same meal everyday. Then one day, while her mother was cooking her dinner, Sophie suddenly asked for...

Expected response: ...any meal OTHER than pizza and banana.

9. I'd never been to a fortune-teller before and I can't say I had much faith in this one. She was in a broken-down old caravan and her crystal ball wasn't exactly sparkling! But there was something about the tone of her voice and she told me one or two things about myself that only I could have known, so I started to pay more attention to her predictions. Amazingly, despite my scepticism, nearly everything that she told me would happen...

Expected response: ...came true/has come true/(has) happened/did happen (or equivalent).

10. Pete had always wanted to be one. Even as a child he loved reading medical books and watching hospital dramas on TV. We weren't at all surprised when he got a place to study medicine at university and imagined he would have a glittering career ahead of him. However, the first time he was in theatre, at the sight of all the blood, he began to feel very dizzy and passed out. Pete subsequently decided...

Expected response: ...not to become a doctor or surgeon/this was not the career for him (or equivalent).

Grade 11 – Sample listening tasks - Type 2

1. Well, you know, I've had it since I was a child so I'm used to it now. It's strange because I don't have any problems with the animals themselves, I just can't wear anything made from it. Blankets can set me off too. What happens is a terrible itchy rash breaks out all over. Of course, nowadays, synthetics are much more popular but sometimes there might be a mix and so I still have to check labels before I buy anything.

Question: What is the speaker's problem?

Expected answer: Allergic to wool (or another suitable natural clothing fabric).

2. I couldn't believe it when I woke up on Friday morning with a painful dry throat. There was less than 48 hours to go. Could I possibly cure it by then? I inhaled hot steam laden with herbs. I sucked soothing sweets. Above all, I resisted the temptation to talk to anyone, let alone practising a few tunes and I kept warm. It would be such a disappointment for me to have to cancel and such a nuisance for them to have to find someone to take my place.

Question: Who is the speaker?

Expected answer: A singer.

3. We've been doing it for years now. I know some people let the machine choose automatically but we don't. We always use the same combination of special dates – our birthdays, our anniversary and the day we met. Week after week, we got nothing at all but it was still fun to check. Then once in a while we got three or four right and that was a nice little cash bonus for a special treat but although we've always dreamed of this, we never really believed that it would happen.

Question: What has just happened?

Expected answer: The speaker has just won a jackpot on the lottery.

4. My father had inherited it from one of his distant relatives but had never liked it enough to put it up anywhere. It was pretty big, probably about one metre long and half a metre wide. The varnish had discoloured and cracked, making it hard to read the signature. There was a great chunk missing from the top of the frame and the gilt was peeling off. Personally I wasn't too keen on the composition of the central figures but I could appreciate the quality of the work.

Question: What is the speaker talking about?

Expected answer: A painting.

5. My work involves both telephone and face-to-face contact. I make all the appointments as well as keeping records up to date. Some people are organised and book regular check-ups in advance but others wait until they are in pain. People can get very nervous when they come in and it's part of my job to help calm them down before they go in. We also try to make the waiting area as relaxing as possible – comfortable sofas, a wide variety of magazines and soft music.

Question: What is the speaker's job?

Expected answer: A dental/medical receptionist.

6. I have to get up really early as we have deliveries first thing every morning. When everything's been unloaded I go round to make sure all the shelves are stacked. I check the sell-by dates on the goods and remove any out-of-date items. Then I make sure the till has enough change in it and a good supply of carrier bags. Finally, I turn the sign round to 'open' and I'm ready for another day.

Question: What is the speaker's job?

Expected answer: Shopkeeper/Shop manager.

7. We stood for hours on the corner of the street, right at the front so that we'd get a really good view. And it was worth the long wait, I can tell you. There was a huge turn-out, with lots of wonderful multi-coloured floats and fabulous costumes. On one of them there was a group of young children, singing and dancing and clearly having fun. Everybody was happy and relaxed in the sunshine and we just wished it could go on forever.

Question: What event is being described?

Expected answer: A carnival (procession)/festival.

8. I never knew exactly what people meant by it until recently, when I got my own laptop. Now if I'm not careful I can waste hours every day going from one site to another or reading endless blogs about other people's lives. It's amazing what a huge diversity of information you can come across. Sometimes it seems as if everybody on the globe is reaching out to contact everybody else. And it's certainly a marvellous tool for students of any discipline.

Question: What activity is being described?

Expected answer: Surfing the internet.

9. We have a fleet with dual controls so we can take over if the learner is in a difficult situation. Apart from learning how to use all the controls like gear and clutch they have to be taught how to manoeuvre safely and to be aware of other road users and pedestrians. These days as well as passing the practical they also have to do a theory test relating to highway rules and safety before they can get a full licence.

Question: What is the speaker's job?

Expected answer: Driving instructor/teacher.

10. I'm not a great fan of them because I find it rather depressing to see all those poor creatures in cramped conditions and looking miserable through the bars of their cages. However, my children were really insistent on going there as they'd seen some advert on the TV. So I was forced to take them. I drove them there and feared the worst. Anyway, we went in and I was afraid of what I might see, but I have to admit they've changed a lot since I was a kid and I actually really enjoyed it.

Question: What place is the speaker describing?

Expected answer: A zoo.

Grade 12 - Sample listening tasks - Type 1

1. As they approached the long tunnel through the mountains, Bill felt a tiny flicker of foreboding. He'd always loathed this particular stretch of the line - it brought on a feeling of breathlessness, almost of panic. A few seconds into the tunnel and the carriage was suddenly plunged into pitch darkness without the slightest warning. Bill heard heavy footsteps coming along the aisle towards him and then, as they stopped beside him, a clearing of the throat and the click of a small machine. As they emerged from the tunnel, it was with relief that Bill realised that...

Expected response: ...it was the ticket collector/inspector.

2. My uncle Charlie used to be a famous magician, you know, though he's getting on a bit now. Even so, he looked incredibly smart at my sister's wedding. He was wearing a morning suit with tails and even sporting a top hat. When I asked him where it was from he laughed and said it was one of the props from his old show, pensioned off now, like him. So I'm not sure who was the most surprised later on when we got to the reception and he took it off and out jumped...

Expected response: ...a rabbit (or another suitable live creature which can jump).

3. I was fed up with what they sell in supermarkets nowadays. None of it seems to have any taste. So I decided to do something about it. Today, I've been out digging in the garden all day. I've turned over all the earth, taken out the big stones and dug in the compost; and tomorrow I'll be able to start planting. I have to hope I'll be able to keep the slugs and snails off. As far as I'm concerned though, all the hard work will definitely be worth it when in a few months time I'll be able to sit down and enjoy...

Expected response: ...my own home-grown produce/salad/vegetables.

4. The inhabitants of our village have become increasingly distressed by the growing volume of traffic passing through it. A proposal to build a ring-road was thrown out by environmentalists some years ago. Other measures such as humps in the road have been tried over the past few years but, of course, although they slow down the traffic, they don't reduce the volume. So last week a public meeting was held in the village hall and it was decided that, in spite of previous objections, we should...

Expected response: ...build the ring road.

5. When I was about 14, I was an enthusiastic correspondent with pen-friends in many countries of the world. My Australian pen-friend, Anna, told me about her life on an isolated sheep farm in the outback and how, because of the distance from the nearest town, she had to board at a school far away from her home. Some years later my family offered hospitality to some Australian students. The Australian girl, Kate, who came to our house described her school life to us and then talked about her room mate. I couldn't believe my ears when it turned out that ...

Expected response: ...my pen-friend had been Kate's old room mate.

6. Oh, it was really funny. The agency was run by a bunch of fuddy-duddies who were afraid of any idea that hadn't been used a thousand times before. And here was I here coming along, doing my tough young, creative, genius act, being outrageous, insisting on selling my ideas directly to the client, never budging from doing only the best possible work. I tell you, they'd never seen anyone like me. Most of them wanted to fire me; there was always a conspiracy to throw me out, but they couldn't because the clients thought ...
Expected response: ...I was very good at my job.

7. Anna was to have been in Bermuda on this glorious, sunny spring day, having the holiday of a lifetime with her husband in order to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary in grand style. Instead, she found herself in rain-soaked London, dressed all in deepest black and following the cortege as it moved slowly towards the graveyard. She had never liked her grandfather - he'd been so cruel to her and her mother - and could feel nothing but fury that his departure had prevented her from...
Expected response: ...going on holiday.

8. Mary's always had two great interests in life - literature and paintings. At school she'd always been hopeless at maths and science, but had excelled in English and Art. Sadly, her parents couldn't afford to send her to university, so when she was sixteen she left school and found a job. In her spare time, she was a self-confessed book worm and a regular visitor to art galleries. On one of these visits, she was amazed to be offered a post as curator's assistant, which naturally she...
Expected response: ...accepted/took.

9. People always think of James Bond with lots of glamour and fast cars but in reality it's nothing like that. In fact they tend to recruit people who blend in. I go to the office every day, just like anyone else, and spend ages on the computer tinkering with search engines. Sometimes I have to listen to bad-quality recordings and that's pretty tedious too. Of course, there is some risk working in high security. I had to sign the Official Secrets Act and I'm not supposed to discuss the job, but to be honest there's nothing exciting about being...
Expected response: ...a secret agent/spy/spook/a government agent/an MI5 or MI6 agent.

10. It's funny in those old films when you see people winding them up and talking to an operator. What a long way we've come since then. At one time, they all used to be heavy and black and then, gradually, they got more streamlined and that interminable dialling was replaced with press buttons. Now, at home, they're mostly cordless and you can have any style you like. Nearly everyone carries one around with them and they've got smaller and smaller, but more and more sophisticated. Really, a century ago, how did people exist without...
Expected response: ...telephones/phones.

Grade 12 - Sample listening tasks - Type 2

1. Finally...third time lucky!! I was so nervous before we started, I had to take several deep breaths and wait until my hands stopped shaking. It didn't help any that I had to do the complex manoeuvres - not my favourite, - right at the beginning but once they were over and done with, I guess I did manage to relax a bit more. I stalled once and missed one road sign but they were my only mistakes. She was great - in her mid-fifties I'd guess. Lovely gentle voice and a nice smile - reminded me of my old aunt. That helped to put me at my ease too.

Question: What has the speaker just done?

Expected answer: Taken a driving test.

2. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when we were instructed to retire to consider all that we'd heard over the past two months. We had been given strict instructions not to let our emotions influence our decision. The twelve of us had spent a lot of time together and knew how serious our responsibilities were. It was a particularly unpleasant case and the details revealed by both counsels had often been very difficult to listen to. Fortunately, we were able to reach a decision in a very short time and were able to return a unanimous verdict.

Question: Who is the speaker and what is the context?

Expected answer: A juror in a court of law.

3. Please leave your things at the back of the room and then sit at the desk which has the number as on your registration card. If at any time you wish for assistance, raise your hand and one of us will come and attend to you. Do not leave your seat until you are given permission. Should you need to go outside or feel unwell, one of us will accompany you. If you finish early, you may collect your things and leave the room but you will not be able to re-enter. It goes without saying, there is to be no talking. You may turn over your paper now.

Question: Who is the speaker?

Expected answer: An invigilator of a written examination.

4. It's so boring my job. All you do is sit and watch several screens in front of you. You can't read a newspaper, you can't go and make a cup of coffee but you daren't fall asleep. Nothing happens for hours and hours. Just rows and rows of cars from different angles. The greatest activity is first thing in the morning and when they leave at night. There was great excitement last week. I'd been watching the screens for three hours when I really thought I'd caught a thief, but it just turned out to be Mr Brown from finance.

Question: What is the man's job?

Expected answer: A security guard.

5. Learning to breathe properly is difficult at first but once you've got the hang of it, it becomes second nature. You must check your and your buddy's equipment meticulously before you go down. Tanks and regulators must all be working properly as any mistake could be fatal. Then, you have to clear out your mask and spit in it so it doesn't mist up. There are clear guidelines about how long you can stay under and how deep you can go but even more important is coming up slowly and in stages so you avoid getting the bends.

Question: What activity is the speaker describing?

Expected answer: Diving.

6. My dad used to bring them back for me when he went away on business. And when I was eight he gave me a special album with transparent pockets to keep them in. I've arranged them according to size, value and the country they came from. Some of them are round and some six or eight-sided. My favourites are a set of big, heavy, silver ones from Morocco and I've also got a set of beautiful bronze ones from South America, with the head of the President on one side. Every few months I take them all out and polish them.

Question: What is the speaker describing?

Expected answer: Coins/a coin collection.

7. That's the worst part of it for me. I love the creative bit even though I tear my hair out trying to get down exactly what it is I want to express. I spend weeks organising different chapters and rewording anything which just doesn't sound right. But sending it off for someone else to pull to pieces is awful. I'm so nervous, as I wait to get it back and when I do, it's inevitably got loads of squiggles in the margins and phrases underlined. But the very, very worst thing is reading the critique at the end. I'll keep trying though - one day I'll make it!

Question: Who is the speaker?

Expected answer: A (budding/would-be) writer.

8. I walked past the photographers and journalists towards the back straight where I tried some starts and then opened up my stride for a few metres. The television cameras were all on this event and I knew that back home everyone would be watching. Now I had a second chance after messing up last time. I turned and approached the starting line at the top end of the stadium with the left-hand curve just ahead and the finishing line in my sights. I set my blocks and practised another start. There were seven of us in the final heat. The pistol fired and we ran.

Question: Who is the speaker?

Expected answer: An (Olympic/competitive) runner/sprinter.

9. I've been to loads of different conflict zones around the world – most recently predominantly in Africa and the Middle East. I can't say that you ever become immune to these situations and it's particularly harrowing when children are involved. People ask you if you ever pause before taking the shot and whether you think about trying to step in to stop what's going on. But that wouldn't achieve very much though. Far more important is to get my pictures published and bring these issues to the public's attention.

Question: What exactly is the speaker's job?

Expected answer: A war photographer/photojournalist.

10. Many people just come and browse, especially if it's raining outside. I have nothing against that, as often they'll be tempted by some of the titles, especially if we have a 'three for the price of two' offer. There was speculation that places like this wouldn't survive, because of competition from the internet. But I actually think there's been a revival, with film adaptations and TV dramas, and more literary awards and festivals. I must say I'm pleasantly surprised at the number of bestsellers that have come out recently that everyone seems to want on their shelves.

Question: Where does the speaker work?

Expected answer: In a bookshop/book store.

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