Open cloze (gap fill) — free worksheet

A text with gaps; think of one word which best fits each gap.

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1. Memory Athletes: Training the Mind to Remember Anything

Open cloze (gap fill) · Competitive memory championships and how memory can be trained like a skill

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

Memory sport is often described as a form of mental athletics, and competitors treat their training with the same seriousness as any other sport. Competitors design special strategies (1) _____ order to memorise thousands of digits within minutes, together with shuffled packs of cards and lists of random words. Every year, hundreds of these people travel to take part (2) _____ national and international memory championships. In fact, (3) _____ of these memory athletes has ever been born with a naturally exceptional memory; every one of them worked hard to develop the skill through training. Instead, they put their faith (4) _____ techniques that anyone can learn, such as the memory palace method, in which information is linked to familiar locations. Not only do the top competitors train for several hours a day, (5) _____ they also follow strict routines covering sleep and diet to keep their minds sharp. Scientists, (6) _____ have spent years studying these competitors, found that their brains are not structurally different from those of ordinary people. (7) _____ differs is simply the way they organise and retrieve information. This suggests that memory is less a fixed talent (8) _____ a skill that can be trained, much like a muscle.

2. The Vinyl Revival

Open cloze (gap fill) · Why vinyl records are making a comeback in the streaming era

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

At a time when digital music dominates almost every aspect of life, something old-fashioned is making a surprising comeback. Vinyl records were supposed to have disappeared decades ago, overtaken first (1) _____ cassettes, then CDs, and finally by streaming services. Yet interest (2) _____ vinyl has been growing steadily (3) _____ the mid-2000s, and in some countries records now outsell CDs altogether. (4) _____ makes this revival so surprising is that streaming gives listeners instant access (5) _____ almost any song ever recorded, all for the price of a monthly subscription. Part of the answer lies in the ritual: holding an album cover, reading the lyrics, and hearing the faint crackle associated (6) _____ analogue sound all make listening feel like an event rather than background noise. (7) _____ inconvenient as it is, many listeners feel the format makes music matter more. If vinyl (8) _____ been just a passing trend, sales would surely have declined again by now instead of climbing every year.

3. All Aboard Again: The Return of Europe’s Night Trains

Open cloze (gap fill) · The revival of night trains in Europe

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

Not long ago, night trains seemed destined to disappear for good. Budget airlines had made flying both cheaper (1) _____ more convenient, so few travellers wanted to spend eight hours in a sleeper carriage when they could reach the same city in ninety minutes by air. By the (2) _____ the decade ended, dozens of overnight routes had been quietly shut down, and railway companies showed little interest (3) _____ reviving them. Yet in the last few years, the picture (4) _____ changed dramatically. Growing concern about the environmental cost of aviation, combined with a wave of nostalgia for slower travel, (5) _____ driven several governments to invest in new night services. Sweden, Austria and France (6) _____ all launched fresh routes in the last two years, and demand has often exceeded expectations. Passengers seem willing to pay more and travel more slowly, so (7) _____ they can avoid airports and reduce their carbon footprint. (8) _____ anything, demand for night trains has grown faster than expected, and more routes are already being planned.

4. Open Cloze: Yellowstone and the New American Western

Open cloze (gap fill) · Yellowstone - western- Cowboy - cowgirl valued series

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

Yellowstone has become one of the most talked-about television series on contemporary television. Filmed largely (1) _____ location on a vast Montana ranch, it follows the Dutton family as they struggle to protect their land from developers, politicians and rival ranchers. The series appeals (2) _____ viewers who enjoy both family drama and old-fashioned western action. Despite being set in modern times, the show draws its inspiration (3) _____ the conventions of classic cowboy films, which have shaped the genre for decades. It also differs sharply (4) _____ typical television dramas because of its focus on horseback riding, cattle branding and the daily grind of ranch work. The cowgirls, who appear throughout the series, are just as tough and capable (5) _____ the cowboys, breaking away from old stereotypes. Thanks (6) _____ its huge popularity, Yellowstone has inspired several spin-off shows exploring different corners of the same fictional world. The producers, (7) _____ had once doubted the appeal of a modern western, were amazed by (8) _____ quickly the series came to dominate popular culture.

5. Lights in the Deep: The Mystery of Bioluminescence

Open cloze (gap fill) · Bioluminescence in deep-sea creatures

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

Beyond the reach of sunlight, in the deep ocean, an extraordinary kind of light show takes place. Around ninety per cent (1) _____ the creatures living in this dark realm can produce their own light, a phenomenon known as bioluminescence. It evolved independently many times, (2) _____ strongly suggests that the ability offers real survival advantages. Some fish use flashing lights to lure prey close enough (3) _____ catch, while others communicate (4) _____ means of light signals that only members of the same species can recognise. Despite the technical challenges, researchers remain deeply interested (5) _____ studying these glowing species, including fish (6) _____ tiny light organs cover almost their entire body. This

cold light, created by a chemical reaction rather than by heating a filament, contrasts sharply with an ordinary light bulb, in which as much (7) _____ ninety per cent of the energy turns into heat rather than light. In some species, the light produced is so intense (8) _____ it can temporarily blind potential predators, giving the prey precious seconds to escape.

6. Frozen for the Future: The Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Open cloze (gap fill) · The Svalbard Global Seed Vault and global food security

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

Deep inside a mountain on a remote Norwegian island lies one of the world's most unusual storage facilities. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault was built (1) _____ protect crop seeds from wars, natural disasters and climate change. Since it opened in 2008, countries ranging (2) _____ small island nations to major agricultural powers have sent samples of their most important seeds to be kept safe there. The vault was placed deep inside a frozen mountain so (3) _____ the seeds would stay cold even if the electricity supply failed completely. Visitors are rarely allowed inside. (4) _____ fact, the vault is not a tourist attraction but a last resort for humanity. Each sample is sealed in a special, airtight package, (5) _____ keeps moisture and air away from the seeds. So far, the vault (6) _____ never been used on a large scale, although one country did withdraw seeds after its own seed bank was damaged by conflict. Scientists hope the vault will never be needed, but they agree (7) _____ it is better to be prepared (8) _____ to risk losing crops that took centuries to develop.

7. Books for Everyone: The Phone Box Library

Open cloze (gap fill) · Tiny community libraries in old red telephone boxes

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

In a small village in England, there is an old red telephone box that nobody uses for calls any more. A few years ago, the local council wanted to take it away, but local people did not want to lose it. They decided to turn the box (1) _____ a small library instead. Now volunteers look (2) _____ the books, so they are never lost or damaged. The box is packed (3) _____ books, and anyone can borrow one for free. There is no need (4) _____ a library card, and nobody checks how long you keep a book. Children often choose a new book (5) _____ their way home from school. The phone box library is much smaller (6) _____ the village hall, but it is just as popular. Both children (7) _____ adults enjoy visiting it every week. Today, local people are very proud (8) _____ the phone box library, and many other villages have copied the idea.

8. The Mystery of the Contagious Yawn

Open cloze (gap fill) · The science of yawning and why it is contagious

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

Have you ever yawned just because someone near you did? Scientists have been studying this curious habit for decades, but they still don't fully agree on (1) _____ causes it. One theory suggests that yawning helps the body get rid (2) _____ extra heat by cooling the brain slightly. Another theory suggests that yawning has something (3) _____ do with empathy, since people often copy the expressions of those they feel close to. Research shows that we are far more likely to catch a yawn from a friend (4) _____ from a stranger, which supports this idea. Even dogs catch yawns: many will yawn soon after seeing (5) _____ own owner yawn, a sign of how closely the two species are bonded. Although yawning still looks like a simple reflex, it may reveal something surprising about social behaviour, (6) _____ is an idea many scientists now take seriously. In fact, some studies have found that yawning is (7) _____ contagious that simply reading this sentence might make you yawn. Yawning is almost impossible to stop (8) _____ though you press your lips together tightly.

9. Heads in the Clouds: The Rise of Amateur Cloud Spotting

Open cloze (gap fill) · Cloud spotting as a growing outdoor hobby

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

Cloud spotting might sound like an unusual pastime, but across the world more and more people are choosing to look up (1) _____ than scroll through their phones. The trend took off after an enthusiast founded a society (2) _____ aim was simply to get others noticing the sky above them. Beginners often struggle to tell one cloud type (3) _____ another, since both can look dramatic before a storm. There is neither a test to pass (4) _____ a fee required to join, and no paperwork is needed either — all of which is part of the appeal. Those who have never been members can simply sign (5) _____ and create a profile on the society's website before posting photographs. Spotters are advised to take their photographs immediately; (6) _____, the cloud's shape will probably have changed completely by the time they look up again. Several schools have begun inviting members to speak to pupils, convinced (7) _____ direct experience, not theory, teaches observation best. Membership numbers are growing (8) _____ quickly that the society now has branches in more than twenty countries.

10. Pressed for Time: The Letterpress Revival

Open cloze (gap fill) · The resurgence of letterpress printing as a craft hobby

For questions 1–8, read the text and write one word in each gap.

Long before digital fonts existed, printers set every letter by hand, pressing inked metal type onto paper. For decades the method seemed doomed to extinction, pushed aside first by offset lithography and then by computers. Yet letterpress has enjoyed an unexpected revival among designers who crave tactile results no screen can reproduce. A devoted network of hobbyists, (1) _____ enthusiasm has turned old presses into treasured heirlooms, now organises festivals across the country. Neither the cost of the equipment (2) _____ the slowness of the process has discouraged this growing community. (3) _____ advanced digital printing becomes, devotees insist nothing rivals the texture a metal letter leaves on handmade paper. The slower the printing process, the (4) _____ prized each finished sheet becomes. So deeply (5)

_____ this patience embedded in the craft that apprentices spend years learning to set type by hand. Enthusiasts argue the appeal boils down (6) _____ touch rather than efficiency. No sooner (7) _____ a sheet been printed than collectors begin hunting for its flaws, prizing the tiny imperfections machines cannot replicate. All (8) _____ separates a masterful print from a mediocre one is the printer's patient eye.

Answer Key

1. Memory Athletes: Training the Mind to Remember Anything

1. in
2. in
3. none
4. in
5. but
6. who
7. What
8. than

1. The fixed phrase 'in order to' introduces a purpose clause; no other preposition can precede 'order to' with this meaning, and leaving the gap blank or using 'to' alone would break the three-word structure.

2. 'Take part in' is a fixed expression meaning to participate in an event; no other preposition completes this particular verb phrase correctly.

3. 'None of these memory athletes has ever been born...' pairs a quantifier meaning zero with a singular verb, unlike quantifiers describing a small amount, which take a plural verb; the following clause confirms every athlete trained rather than being naturally gifted.

4. 'Put your faith in' is a fixed expression meaning to trust something completely; prepositions like 'on' or 'upon' do not collocate with the noun 'faith' in this meaning.

5. 'Not only... but (also)...' is a fixed correlative structure that reinforces a point by adding a second, equally true fact; it forces inversion in the first clause ('do the top competitors train') and must be completed with 'but' to add the second fact, not with contrastive words such as 'yet' or 'however'.

6. Because a comma precedes the gap and an auxiliary verb ('have') follows it, the clause needs a subject relative pronoun referring to people; 'which' cannot refer to people and 'having' cannot be followed by another auxiliary verb.

7. 'What differs is...' uses this word as the subject of the sentence, meaning 'the aspect that differs', and introduces a point of contrast with the previous idea about brain structure.

8. 'Less X than Y' is a fixed comparative structure for contrasting two descriptions; words like 'as' or 'like' cannot pair with 'less' in this comparative pattern.

2. The Vinyl Revival

1. by
2. in
3. since
4. What
5. to

6. with

7. As

8. had (also: 'd)

1. The passive phrasal collocation 'overtaken by' introduces the agent that replaces something; 'overtaken with' is not used in English.

2. 'Interest in something' is the fixed collocation used to describe curiosity or enthusiasm about a subject; 'interest towards' is not standard English.

3. 'Since' introduces a specific starting point in time ('the mid-2000s') and matches the present perfect continuous tense; 'for' and 'over' require a length of time rather than a fixed starting point, so neither fits here.

4. 'What' introduces a nominal relative clause acting as the subject of the sentence, equivalent to 'the thing that'; a simple relative pronoun cannot begin a sentence without an antecedent.

5. 'Access to something' is the standard noun-plus-preposition combination describing the ability to reach or use it; 'access for' and 'access on' are not used this way.

6. 'Associated with' is the fixed verb-preposition pairing meaning 'connected to'; 'associated to' and 'associated by' are both incorrect.

7. The pattern 'As + adjective + as it is' is a fixed concessive structure meaning 'Although it is true that...'; the word that opens it must match the second occurrence of the same word later in the clause, so 'However' and 'So' cannot complete this exact frame.

8. The past perfect 'had been' forms the if-clause of a third conditional, describing an unreal past situation; the main clause 'would have declined' describes the imagined past result. A simple past form would break this conditional pattern.

3. All Aboard Again: The Return of Europe’s Night Trains

1. and

2. time

3. in

4. has (also: 's)

5. has (also: 's)

6. have (also: 've)

7. that

8. If

1. The correlative pair 'both... and...' links two parallel qualities, cheaper and more convenient; only 'and' completes this fixed structure, since 'but' or 'yet' would break the required correlation that follows 'both'.

2. The fixed expression 'by the time' introduces a clause (subject + verb) marking a point before which something had already happened, matching the past perfect 'had been shut down'.

3. The noun 'interest' takes the preposition 'in' before a gerund, as in 'interest in doing something'; no other preposition forms this collocation.

4. The verb 'changed' is a past participle, so it needs an auxiliary; the singular subject 'the picture' requires 'has', which can also appear as the contraction 's.

5. 'Driven' is a past participle and cannot stand alone as a finite verb; the singular subject 'growing concern... combined with... nostalgia' (the phrase after 'combined with' does not make the subject plural) requires the singular auxiliary 'has', which can also be written as 's.

6. With the plural subject 'Sweden, Austria and France', the auxiliary before the past participle 'launched' must agree in number, giving 'have', which can also appear as the contraction 've.

7. 'So that' introduces a clause of purpose, signalled by the modal 'can', explaining why passengers accept slower travel; since a full clause (subject + modal) follows, not an infinitive, only 'that' completes the conjunction correctly.

8. 'If anything' is a fixed idiom used to introduce an emphatic contrast with expectations; no other word forms this expression with the noun that follows it.

4. Open Cloze: Yellowstone and the New American Western

1. on
2. to
3. from
4. from
5. as
6. to
7. who
8. how

1. The fixed phrase 'filmed on location' means shooting outside a studio, in a real setting; no other preposition completes this expression.

2. The verb 'appeal' takes the dependent preposition 'to' before the people it attracts; no other preposition completes this collocation.

3. The fixed phrase 'draw inspiration from' shows the source of creative ideas; only 'from' completes this collocation correctly.

4. The verb 'differ' takes the dependent preposition 'from' when comparing two things; this is a fixed grammatical pairing.

5. The equal comparison 'as tough and capable as the cowboys' requires the same short word on both sides of the adjectives to show equal degree.

6. 'Thanks to' is a fixed two-word expression meaning 'because of', introducing the reason for the show's spin-offs.

7. After the comma, 'who' is the subject relative pronoun referring to the producers (people) and fits directly before the auxiliary 'had'; 'that' cannot follow a comma and 'which' refers only to things.

8. The phrase 'how quickly' introduces an indirect question about speed; no other word correctly precedes the adverb in this structure.

5. Lights in the Deep: The Mystery of Bioluminescence

1. of
2. which
3. to
4. by
5. in
6. whose
7. as
8. that

1. 'Ninety per cent of' is the fixed pattern used to state a proportion of a group; only this preposition links the percentage to the noun phrase that names the group.

2. The relative clause refers back to the whole idea of evolving independently many times, not to a single noun, and such whole-clause comments after a comma require 'which'; 'that' cannot introduce a non-defining clause like this.

3. 'Close enough to catch' uses 'to' to connect the adjective phrase 'close enough' to the verb naming the action that becomes possible once the prey is near; a preposition such as 'for' cannot do this job before a bare verb.

4. 'By means of' is a fixed expression meaning 'using'; the noun 'means' combines only with this one preposition in this sense.

5. 'Interested in' is the fixed preposition pattern that follows this adjective; no other preposition completes this collocation in standard English.

6. The missing word shows that the light organs described next belong to the fish just mentioned; neither 'who' nor 'which' can express possession this way.

7. 'As much as ninety per cent' is a fixed quantifier expression used to emphasise a surprisingly large proportion; only 'as' completes it, since 'so' or 'that' cannot form this comparative structure before a following number.

8. The pattern 'so + adjective + that' introduces a clause describing what follows from the stated intensity; only 'that' completes this fixed structure, since 'which' would require a specific noun to refer to, which is absent here.

6. Frozen for the Future: The Svalbard Global Seed Vault

1. to
2. from
3. that
4. In (also: in)
5. which
6. has (also: 's)
7. that
8. than

1. The infinitive marker 'to' introduces the base verb 'protect', showing the purpose of building the vault; no other word can link 'built' to a bare verb this way.

2. 'Ranging from X to Y' is a fixed pattern for describing a spread of examples; only 'from' can open this pairing with the later 'to'.

3. 'So that' introduces a clause of purpose explaining why the vault was placed deep inside the mountain; no other conjunction completes this fixed pattern after 'so'.

4. 'In fact' introduces a clarifying point about the vault's real purpose after the statement that visitors are rarely allowed inside; only 'in' completes this fixed two-word phrase with 'fact'.

5. After a comma, a non-defining relative clause referring back to 'package' must use 'which', not 'that'.

6. The singular subject 'the vault' needs the singular auxiliary 'has' to combine with 'never been used'; 'have' would not agree with this subject.

7. 'Agree that' introduces the clause stating the opinion that follows the verb 'agree'.

8. 'Than' completes the comparative structure 'better... than', joining the two contrasting actions of being prepared and risking loss.

7. Books for Everyone: The Phone Box Library

1. into
2. after
3. with
4. for
5. on
6. than
7. and
8. of

1. Turn something into something else is the phrase used when one thing changes completely into another; turn to does not carry this meaning of transformation.

2. Look after is the phrasal verb meaning to take care of something, which fits because caring for the books is what stops them being lost or damaged.

3. Packed with is the fixed collocation meaning completely full of something; of does not follow packed in this common expression.

4. Need for is the standard phrase used to say something is necessary; it is followed by a noun, here a library card.

5. On your way home is a fixed phrase meaning while travelling home; no other preposition completes this everyday expression.

6. Than always follows a comparative adjective such as smaller to compare two things; no other connecting word can take its place here.

7. Both ... and is a fixed pair used to link two groups together; only this word can complete the pair after both.

8. Proud of is the fixed collocation used to say someone feels pleased about something; no other preposition pairs naturally with proud in standard English.

8. The Mystery of the Contagious Yawn

1. what
2. of
3. to
4. than
5. their
6. which
7. so
8. even

1. The gap must supply the subject of the verb 'causes', so the question word 'what' is needed to ask about the cause of yawning.

2. 'Get rid of' is a fixed three-word phrase meaning to remove something unwanted; no other word completes it correctly.

3. The fixed expression 'have something to do with' needs 'to' before 'do'; this is a set phrase and no other word fits here.

4. The comparative structure 'more likely ... than' requires 'than' to introduce the second thing being measured against the first.

5. The possessive word must match the plural subject 'many' and come right before 'own', since 'the own owner' is not correct English.

6. After a comma, a non-defining relative clause referring back to the whole previous idea needs 'which', never 'that'.

7. The pattern 'so + adjective + that' shows a high degree leading to a result; 'such' would need a noun after it, which is missing here, so only 'so' fits before the adjective 'contagious'.

8. 'Even though' is a fixed concessive linker meaning 'despite the fact that'; 'especially though' is not natural English, so only 'even' fits before 'though' here.

9. Heads in the Clouds: The Rise of Amateur Cloud Spotting

1. rather
2. whose
3. from
4. nor
5. up
6. otherwise
7. that
8. so

1. Rather than links two parallel actions to show one is chosen instead of the other and takes a bare verb afterwards ('scroll'); a comparative word like 'more' would need a different construction such as 'more than they scroll'.

2. Whose introduces a relative clause showing that the aim belongs to the society; 'that' and 'which' cannot express this kind of possession.

3. Tell one thing from another is a fixed collocation meaning to distinguish; no other preposition completes this meaning with the verb 'tell'.

4. Neither … nor is a fixed correlative pair: because 'neither' already opens the sentence, only 'nor' can introduce the second item it is paired with. 'Or' is ungrammatical after 'neither', and 'and' would break the required pairing.

5. Sign up is the phrasal verb for registering as a new member; signing in would mean accessing an account that already exists, and signing on usually refers to formally committing to a job or course rather than joining a hobby website.

6. Otherwise links the instruction to photograph the cloud immediately with the fact that its shape may already have changed; 'unfortunately' would illogically suggest the change happens regardless of acting quickly, and 'however' or 'therefore' do not fit this cause-and-result link.

7. Convinced that + clause introduces the belief the schools hold; 'convinced why' or 'convinced how' are not natural patterns, so only this connector completes the structure.

8. So pairs with 'that' later in the sentence to form the result structure 'so + adverb + that'; 'such' cannot modify an adverb like 'quickly', and 'too' or 'very' cannot be followed by a 'that' clause here.

10. Pressed for Time: The Letterpress Revival

1. whose
2. nor
3. However (also: however)
4. more
5. is
6. to
7. has
8. that

1. Whose links the hobbyists to their enthusiasm in a non-restrictive clause after a comma; only a possessive relative pronoun can show the enthusiasm belongs to them, which rules out subject pronouns like who or location words like where.

2. Nor completes the structure opened by neither, joining two things that together fail to discourage the community; no other conjunction can follow neither in this way.

3. However can stand directly before an adjective to form a concessive clause meaning 'no matter how advanced'; although or even cannot occupy that position immediately before an adjective in this construction.

4. The correlative pattern pairs slowness with value: the slower the process, the more prized the result, so only more keeps the comparison logical; less would reverse the intended meaning.

5. Fronting 'so deeply' triggers inversion, and because the subject 'this patience' is singular and the statement is a general present truth, only is fits; was would mismatch the present tense, and are or were would mismatch the singular subject.

6. Boil down to is a fixed idiom meaning 'can be summed up as', and it always takes to regardless of context; no other preposition completes this expression.

7. The participle 'been printed' after the gap requires the present perfect auxiliary has to complete the no sooner ... than inversion; is would need 'printed' alone without 'been', and did would require the base form print, so only has fits.

8. After 'all' used to summarise an idea rather than point to a specific person or thing, standard English requires the relative pronoun that; which does not follow all in this fixed structure, and who is reserved for people.

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