

Problems

- 1 Look at the following definitions and complete the issues they refer to. The first letters are provided to help you.



- a lack of jobs: u _____
- using scientific techniques to create edible plants:
g _____ m _____
f _____
- using scientific techniques to create humans or animals: c _____
- a worldwide economic problem: g _____
f _____ c _____
- being extremely overweight: o _____
- the increase of trade around the world:
g _____
- a lack of accommodation: h _____
- problems affecting nature on a large scale:
e _____ d _____
- a lack of oil:
e _____ c _____
- the way the world's weather is changing:
c _____ c _____

- 2.1 Most of these words can be used for everyday problems. Underline the three which refer to more serious problems. Write the adjective form of the words marked with an asterisk (*).

difficulty trouble hurdle obstacle predicament
*disaster issue *challenge *controversy setback
*catastrophe dilemma crisis

- 2.2 Match the words (1–5) that are used to talk about kinds of problem with the definitions (a–e).

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1 setback | a an unpleasant situation which is difficult to get out of |
| 2 dilemma | b a lot of disagreement or argument about something, usually affecting many people |
| 3 predicament | c something that blocks you so forward movement is prevented |
| 4 obstacle/hurdle | d a situation where a difficult choice has to be made between two things |
| 5 controversy | e something that happens which delays or prevents a process from advancing |

! Error warning



Trouble is usually an uncountable noun and so must be used in the singular form only: *I've had a lot of trouble with the second-hand car I bought.* (NOT *troubles*)

The word *troubles* is only used in very special circumstances to refer to all of the problems a person or country has: *Telling someone else your troubles can really help.*

However, it is better to avoid using it in this way unless you are completely sure. *Trouble* can also be used to mean *difficulty* in the phrase *have trouble + -ing*: *I had a lot of trouble starting the car this morning.*

2.3 Complete the sentences with the phrases in the box. Use the verbs in bold to help you choose the correct phrase.

major hurdle minor difficulties minor setback sensitive issue current predicament
total disaster significant challenge considerable controversy

- 1 We **experienced** a few _____ at the airport, but nothing very serious.
- 2 The enormous cost of this programme is a _____ that we need to **overcome**.
- 3 **Adopting** children from poor countries is a _____.
- 4 I doubt that recycling alone can **get us out of** our _____.
- 5 The building of this dam will **lead to** a _____ for the local wildlife.
- 6 Global warming **presents** a _____ for every government.
- 7 We **experienced** a _____ when we lost several plants, but the rest are thriving.
- 8 The use of drugs by athletes has **caused** _____ in the world of sport.

3.1 Read the passage below. Which **TWO** of the following statements are true?

- A People should try to ignore depression. D Ancient people may have suffered from depression.
B Depression is similar to obesity. E Depression is linked to old age.
C There may be an advantage to depression.

Depression is an ongoing and pervasive problem in our society, and it poses something of an evolutionary paradox: the brain plays a crucial role in our survival, so evolution should have left our brains resistant to such high rates of malfunction. The paradox could be resolved if depression was linked to growing old. After all, the functioning of all body systems and organs tends to deteriorate with age. This is not a satisfactory explanation for depression, however, as people are most likely to experience their first bout in adolescence. Perhaps depression is like obesity – a recent problem that has arisen because modern conditions are so different from those in which we evolved. Yet this is not a satisfactory explanation either as depression exists in every culture, including small-scale societies where people are thought to live in environments similar to those that prevailed in our evolutionary past.

There is another possibility: depression is, in fact, an adaptation, a state of mind which can bring real benefits. This is not to say that depression is not a serious problem. Depressed people often have trouble performing everyday activities and tend to isolate themselves socially. So what could be so useful about depression? Depressed people often think intensely about their problems. Numerous studies have shown that this thinking style is often highly analytical and can be very productive. Depressed people dwell on personal problems, breaking them down into smaller components. Each individual component is less problematic, so what begins as an insurmountable problem is far less difficult. This type of thinking allows people to gain insight into their problems. Indeed, when you are faced with a daunting problem, feeling depressed is often a useful response that may help you analyse and solve it. After all, depression is nature's way of telling you that you've got complex social problems that the mind is intent on solving.

3.2 COLLOCATION Highlight or underline each occurrence of the word *problem* in the passage and note the adjectives and verbs used with it.

4 Look at these words and decide if they mean the same as *make better* or *make worse*.

exacerbate alleviate hinder mitigate rectify compound complicate improve aggravate

make better: _____

make worse: _____

Solutions

5.1 Choose two of the issues in 1. What solutions can you suggest for them?

5.2 ▶ 28 Listen to five people. Which problem in 1 is each person talking about?

	Problems	Expressions
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

5.3 ▶ 28 Now listen again and complete the table above with expressions used to talk about dealing with problems.

6.1 Put the words in the box into the correct column below to show whether they collocate with *do*, *make* or *take*.

stock a mistake measures your best an effort notice of
sure a change a chance part more harm than good

<i>do</i>	<i>make</i>	<i>take</i>

6.2 Look at part of an essay on obesity and choose the correct alternative to complete the sentences.

Clearly, obesity ¹represents / presents a real ²problem / trouble today, but what can be done to ³find / resolve a solution to it? First, I think we have to ⁴do / make a real effort to deal ⁵with / in the underlying causes of obesity. If this isn't done, we will never completely ⁶resolve / raise this issue. All of our efforts will be wasted if we don't ⁷tackle / meet the ⁸difficult / difficulty situations that children face today, whether caused by increased pressure to succeed, isolation and loneliness, or boredom. Then we need to ⁹look to / deal with the factors that ¹⁰create / make the situation worse, namely poor diet and lack of exercise, and we also need to ¹¹take / make measures to ¹²protect / prevent this from happening in the future.

V Vocabulary note

Be careful with the verbs *prevent*, *protect* and *avoid*. Look at the following examples and how these verbs are used:

prevent (= stop something from happening): *Sunscreen can help to prevent skin cancer. / Sunscreen can prevent you from getting skin cancer.*

protect (= keep you safe): *Sunscreen can help protect you from skin cancer.*

avoid (= stay away from): *Using sunscreen helps you to avoid skin cancer.*

Writing Task 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

Obesity is now a major global epidemic. What can be done to tackle this increasingly common problem?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Plan your answer here:

Problem

Causes

Effects

Possible solutions



Test tip

For Writing Task 2, you may be asked to discuss a problem and possible solutions to it. For this type of question, you should explain exactly what the problem is (its causes and effects) and then consider the merits and drawbacks of various solutions.