

IELTS READING – What is it like to run a large supermarket?

S9GT5



IELTS READING What is it like to run a large supermarket? Reading Practice Test has 10 Questions belong to the Workplace environment

Jill Insley finds out

A: You can't beat really good service. I've been shopping in the Thamesmead branch of supermarket chain Morrisons, in south-east London, and I've experienced at first hand, the store's latest maxim for improving the shopping experience – help, offer, thank. This involves identifying **q9 customers who might need help, greeting them, asking what they need, providing it, thanking them and leaving them in peace. If they don't look like they want help, they'll be left alone.**

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But if they're standing looking lost and perplexed, a member of staff will approach them. Staff are expected to be friendly to everyone. q1 My checkout assistant has certainly said something to amuse the woman in front of me, she's smiling as she leaves. Adrian Perriss, manager of the branch, has discussed the approach with each of his 387 staff. He says it's about recognising that someone needs help, not being a nuisance to them. When he's in another store, he's irritated by someone saying, 'Can I help you?' when he's only just walked in to have a quick look at the products.

B: How anyone can be friendly and enthusiastic when they start work at dawn beats me. **q2 The store opens at 7 am, Monday to Saturday, meaning that some staff, including Perriss, have to be here at 6 am to make sure it's clean, safe and stocked up for the morning rush. q10 Sometimes he walks in at 6 am and thinks they're never going to be ready on time, but they always are.** There's so much going on overnight – 20 people working on unloading three enormous trailers full of groceries.

C: **q3 Perriss has worked in supermarkets since 1982, when he became a trolley boy on a weekly salary of £76. 'It was less money than my previous job, but I loved it. It was different and diverse. I was doing trolleys, portering, bread, cakes, dairy and general maintenance.' After a period in the produce department looking after the fruit and vegetables, he was made produce manager, then assistant store manager before reaching the top job in 1998.** This involved intensive training and assessment through the company's future store manager programme, learning how to analyse and prioritise sales, wastage, recruitment and many other issues. Perriss' first stop as the store manager was at a store which was closed soon afterwards, though he was not to blame.

q11 When Perriss first became a store manager, he knew the store was going to close. NOT GIVEN

D: Despite the disappointing start, his career went from strength to strength and **q4 he was put in charge of launching new stores and heading up a 'concept' store, where the then new ideas of preparing and cooking pizzas in store, having a proper florist and fruit and vegetable 'markets' were trialed. All Morrisons' managers from the whole country spent three days there to see the new concept.** That was hard work,' he says, 'long days, seven days a week, for about a year.'

E: Although he oversees a store with a large turnover, there is a strong practical aspect to Perriss's job. As we walk around, **q5 he chats to all the staff while checking the layout of their counters and the quality of the produce.** He examines the baking potato shelf and rejects three, one that has split virtually in half and two that are beginning to go green. He then pulls out a lemon that looks fine to me. When I ask why, he picks up a second lemon and says: 'Close your eyes and just feel and tell me which you would keep.' I do and realise that while one is firm and hard, the other is going a bit squashy.

F: Despite eagle-eyed Perriss pulling out fruit and vegetable that most of us would buy without a second thought, the wastage each week is tiny: **q12 produce worth £4,200 is marked down for a quick sale, and only £400-worth is scrapped.** This, he explains, is down to **q6 Morrisons' method of ordering, still done manually rather than by computer. Department heads know exactly how much they've sold that day and how much they're likely to sell the next, based on sales records and allowing for influences such as the weather.**

G: Perriss is in charge of 1,000 man-hours a week across the store. To help him, he has a key team of four, who each have direct responsibility for different departments. He is keen to hear what staff think. **q7 He recently held a 'talent' day, inviting employees interested in moving to a new job within the store to come and talk to him about why they thought they should be promoted, and discuss how to go about it. 'We had twenty- three people come through the door, people wanting to talk about progression,' he says. 'What do they need to do to become a supervisor? Twenty-three people will be better members of staff as a result of that talk.'**

q13 perriss was surprised how many staff asked about promotion on the 'talent' day. NOT GIVEN

H: His favourite department is fish, which has a four-meter-long run by Debbie and Angela, who are busy having a discussion about how to cook a particular fish with a customer. But it is one of just 20 or so departments around the store and Perriss admits the pressure of making sure he knows what's happening on them all can be intense. **q8 'You have to do so much and there could be something wrong with every single one, every day,' he says. 'You've got to minimise those things and shrink them into perspective. You've got to love the job.'** This is what Perriss certainly does.

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