

Learning a New Skill

Reading Passage, Comprehension & Practice Questions

Learning a New Skill: From Beginner to Better

Have you ever tried to learn something completely new and felt frustrated at first? Many people give up too quickly when a skill feels difficult. Before you read, think about these two questions: **What new skill would you like to learn, and why?** And: **Do you think it is better to learn alone or with other people?** Keep your answers in mind as you read about one person's experience.

Reading Passage: Six Weeks on Two Wheels

Last spring, Priya decided to learn how to ride a bicycle. She was 24 years old and had never tried before. Her friends were surprised because most people learn as children, but Priya grew up in a busy city where bikes were not common. She was nervous, but she really wanted to cycle to work instead of taking the bus every day.

On her first lesson, Priya fell off three times. Her arms were tired, and her knees hurt a little. She felt embarrassed, but her neighbour Kofi was patient and encouraging. He showed her how to balance slowly without pedalling first. "Don't look at the ground," he told her. "Look forward." That advice was more helpful than anything else. After two weeks of practising every evening in the car park near her building, she could ride in a straight line without any help.

Six weeks later, Priya cycled to work for the first time. It took her 20 minutes — much faster than the bus. Now she cycles five days a week and loves it. She says the hardest part was not giving up at the beginning. Priya is already thinking about her next challenge: she wants to learn how to swim before summer.

Key Vocabulary in Context

Word / Phrase	Part of Speech	Definition	Example Sentence
frustrated	adjective	feeling annoyed or unhappy because something is difficult or not going well	He felt frustrated when he couldn't understand the instructions.
nervous	adjective	feeling a little afraid or worried about something before it happens	She was nervous before her first driving lesson.
patient	adjective	able to wait calmly and not get angry when something takes a long time	A good teacher must be patient with beginners.

encouraging	adjective	giving someone confidence and support to continue trying	Her coach was very encouraging after she made a mistake.
balance	verb	to stay steady without falling to one side	It is hard to balance on one leg for a long time.
pedalling	verb (present participle)	pushing the pedals of a bicycle with your feet to make it move	She was pedalling fast to get up the hill.
challenge	noun	something new or difficult that requires effort and skill	Running a marathon was a real challenge for him.
common	adjective	happening or seen often; not unusual	Cycling to work is very common in the Netherlands.

Reading Strategies & Comprehension Tips

Skimming for the Main Idea

Read the passage quickly — just 30 to 40 seconds — without stopping at every word. Ask yourself: *Who is this text about, and what does she do?* You should be able to answer this after a quick skim, even before reading every detail carefully.

Scanning for Specific Information

If a question asks about a number or a time, scan the text for figures like **24**, **two weeks**, **six weeks**, or **20 minutes**. These specific details are easy to spot quickly without re-reading the whole passage.

Understanding Opinions and Feelings

Pay attention to adjectives that describe how Priya feels, such as *nervous*, *embarrassed*, and *loves it*. These words tell you about her attitude at different points in the story. Notice how her feelings **change** from the beginning to the end — this is important for opinion and inference questions.

Understanding Sequence

The text follows a time order. Look for time expressions like *last spring*, *on her first lesson*, *after two weeks*, and *six weeks later*. These phrases help you understand the order of events and how Priya progressed step by step.

Common Reading Pitfalls & Traps

Trap 1: Misreading Why Priya Never Learned as a Child

Some students might think Priya never learned to ride a bicycle because she was lazy or uninterested. This is wrong. The text says she grew up in a city where bikes were **not common**. This is the reason — it was about her environment, not her attitude. Read carefully before choosing an answer about reasons.

Trap 2: Confusing Time References

The passage mentions two different time periods: **two weeks** (when she could ride in a straight line) and **six weeks** (when she cycled to work for the first time). These are easy to confuse. Always connect the time expression to the correct event when answering questions.

Trap 3: Who Gave the Advice?

It is clear that **Kofi** gave Priya the advice about looking forward, not looking at the ground. Some students may think this advice came from a teacher or a class. The text says Kofi is her **neighbour** — not a professional instructor. Details like this are common in exam questions, so read the text precisely.

Trap 4: Assuming She Already Swims

At the end of the passage, Priya says she *wants to learn* how to swim. This is a future plan, not something she can already do. The verb phrase "*wants to learn*" shows intention, not ability. Do not confuse future plans with present skills.

Quick Summary

This passage tells the story of Priya, a young woman who learned to ride a bicycle as an adult. She found it difficult at first, but with help from her neighbour Kofi and regular practice, she succeeded. The text explores themes of persistence, learning from others, and setting new goals. Now read the passage carefully and complete Exercise 1 (Multiple Choice) and Exercise 2 (Fill-in-the-gap dropdown) below.

Learning a New Skill – Practice Test

A2 | Reading Comprehension Exercises: Multiple Choice & Fill-in-the-Gap Dropdown (20 Questions)

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 What is the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A Priya decided to buy a new bicycle for her commute.
- ☐ B Priya successfully learned a new skill after practising hard.
- ☐ C Priya's neighbour Kofi taught bicycle lessons every evening.
- ☐ D Priya moved to a new city to learn how to cycle.

2 Why had Priya never learned to ride a bicycle before?

- ☐ A She was afraid of falling off and getting hurt.
- ☐ B She grew up in a busy city where bikes were not common.
- ☐ C Her parents did not allow her to ride a bicycle.
- ☐ D She preferred taking the bus because it was faster.

3 Why did Priya want to learn how to ride a bicycle?

- ☐ A She wanted to exercise more and get healthy.
- ☐ B Her doctor told her to stop taking the bus.
- ☐ C She wanted to cycle to work instead of taking the bus every day.
- ☐ D She wanted to teach her friends how to ride a bicycle.

4 What happened to Priya on her first lesson?

- ☐ A She learned to balance quickly and felt confident.
- ☐ B She fell off the bicycle three times.
- ☐ C She cycled to work for the first time.
- ☐ D She decided to stop learning because it was too difficult.

5 Who helped Priya learn how to ride a bicycle?

- ☐ A Her colleague at work
- ☐ B Her best friend
- ☐ C Her neighbour Kofi
- ☐ D A bicycle instructor at a sports centre

6 What advice did Kofi give Priya that helped her the most?

- A** Practise early in the morning when there is less traffic.
- B** Do not look at the ground — look forward.
- C** Start pedalling fast so you do not lose your balance.
- D** Always wear a helmet and knee pads when cycling.

7 Where did Priya practise cycling every evening?

- A** In the park near her office
- B** On the street in front of her house
- C** In the car park near her building
- D** On a quiet road outside the city

8 How long did it take Priya to cycle to work for the first time?

- A** 10 minutes
- B** 30 minutes
- C** 20 minutes
- D** 45 minutes

9 According to Priya, what was the hardest part of learning to ride a bicycle?

- A** Finding enough time to practise every evening.
- B** Not giving up at the beginning.
- C** Learning how to balance on the bicycle.
- D** Cycling in a straight line without any help.

10 What is Priya planning to do next after learning to cycle?

- A** She wants to learn how to drive a car.
- B** She is going to cycle in a competition.
- C** She wants to learn how to swim before summer.
- D** She is planning to teach Kofi a new skill.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap Dropdown (Questions 11–20)

11 Priya decided to learn how to ride a bicycle last ____.

- A** spring
- B** summer
- C** winter

12 Priya wanted to cycle to work instead of taking the ____ every day.

- A** bus
- B** train
- C** car

13 On her first lesson, Priya fell off ____ times.

- A** three
- B** two
- C** four

14 Her neighbour Kofi was patient and ____ when helping Priya learn.

- A** encouraging
- B** strict
- C** quiet

15 Kofi showed Priya how to ____ slowly without pedalling first.

- A** balance
- B** stop
- C** turn

16 Kofi told Priya, 'Don't look at the ground — look ____.'

- A** forward
- B** down
- C** sideways

17 After two weeks of practising, Priya could ride in a straight ____ without any help.

- A** line
- B** direction
- C** path

18 When Priya cycled to work for the first time, it took her ____ minutes.

- A** 20
- B** 30
- C** 15

19 Priya says the hardest part was not giving up at the ____.

- A** beginning
- B** end
- C** middle

20 Priya wants to learn how to ____ before summer.

- A** swim
- B** cook
- C** drive

Answer Key & Explanations

Learning a New Skill | A2

Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **B** **Correct Answer: Priya successfully learned a new skill after practising hard.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage describes how **Priya learned to ride a bicycle** step by step, despite difficulties at the beginning. The main message is about **not giving up** and achieving a goal through **practice and determination**.
2. **B** **Correct Answer: She grew up in a busy city where bikes were not common.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says Priya **grew up in a busy city** where **bikes were not common**, which is why she never had the chance to learn as a child. *Most people learn as children, but Priya did not.*
3. **C** **Correct Answer: She wanted to cycle to work instead of taking the bus every day.**
✓ **Explanation:** The text clearly states that Priya **wanted to cycle to work** instead of **taking the bus every day**. This was her main reason for learning the new skill.
4. **B** **Correct Answer: She fell off the bicycle three times.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says that **on her first lesson**, Priya **fell off three times**. Her arms were tired and her knees hurt a little, showing that the beginning was very **difficult**.
5. **C** **Correct Answer: Her neighbour Kofi**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says that **Kofi**, her **neighbour**, was **patient and encouraging**. He showed her how to **balance slowly without pedalling first** and gave her helpful advice.
6. **B** **Correct Answer: Do not look at the ground — look forward.**
✓ **Explanation:** Kofi told Priya, *'Don't look at the ground. Look forward.'* The passage says this advice was **more helpful than anything else**, making it the most important tip she received.
7. **C** **Correct Answer: In the car park near her building.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage states that Priya practised **every evening** in the **car park near her building**. After two weeks of practice there, she could ride in a straight line without any help.
8. **C** **Correct Answer: 20 minutes.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says that when Priya cycled to work for the first time, it took her **20 minutes** — and that this was **much faster than the bus**.
9. **B** **Correct Answer: Not giving up at the beginning.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage clearly states that Priya says **'the hardest part was not giving up at the beginning.'** This shows that **staying motivated** during the early difficulties was the biggest challenge for her.

10. **C** **Correct Answer: She wants to learn how to swim before summer.**
✓ **Explanation:** At the end of the passage, Priya is described as **thinking about her next challenge**. The text says she **wants to learn how to swim before summer**, showing she enjoys learning new skills.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** **Correct Answer: spring**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says Priya started learning **last spring**. This tells us the **season** when she began. *Last spring, Priya decided to learn how to ride a bicycle.*
12. **A** **Correct Answer: bus**
✓ **Explanation:** The text says Priya wanted to cycle to work instead of taking the **bus**. This was her main reason for learning. *She really wanted to cycle to work instead of taking the bus every day.*
13. **A** **Correct Answer: three**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage clearly states that Priya fell off **three times** on her first lesson. This shows how difficult it was at the beginning. *On her first lesson, Priya fell off three times.*
14. **A** **Correct Answer: encouraging**
✓ **Explanation:** The text says Kofi was **patient and encouraging**, which means he supported Priya and helped her feel confident. *Her neighbour Kofi was patient and encouraging.*
15. **A** **Correct Answer: balance**
✓ **Explanation:** Kofi taught Priya to **balance** before pedalling. This was an important first step in learning to ride. *He showed her how to balance slowly without pedalling first.*
16. **A** **Correct Answer: forward**
✓ **Explanation:** Kofi's advice was to look **forward**, not at the ground. This helped Priya stay balanced and in control. *'Don't look at the ground. Look forward.'*
17. **A** **Correct Answer: line**
✓ **Explanation:** The text says Priya could ride in a **straight line** after two weeks. This shows she made good progress. *She could ride in a straight line without any help.*
18. **A** **Correct Answer: 20**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says the journey took **20 minutes**, which was much faster than the bus. *It took her 20 minutes — much faster than the bus.*
19. **A** **Correct Answer: beginning**
✓ **Explanation:** Priya says not giving up at the **beginning** was the hardest part. This means the first days of learning were the most difficult. *The hardest part was not giving up at the beginning.*
20. **A** **Correct Answer: swim**
✓ **Explanation:** The text says Priya's next challenge is to learn how to **swim** before summer. This shows she enjoys learning new skills. *She wants to learn how to swim before summer.*

Score Guide

18–20 Correct	Excellent! You have mastered this topic.
15–17 Correct	Very good! Review the rules you missed.
12–14 Correct	Good start. Re-read the lesson and examples.
0–11 Correct	Study the lesson again before retaking the test.