

READING COMPREHENSION

C1 | Adults / Teens | Reading + Vocabulary | 45-60 minutes

Topic: Health & Fitness | Skills: Reading, Vocabulary, Speaking

Read the text carefully. Then answer the questions on Page 2.

The Return of the Long Queue

After complaints about waiting times, the leisure centre introduced online booking for swimming sessions. The queue outside reception disappeared almost immediately. A monthly report described this as an improvement in access. For regular swimmers who owned smartphones and could plan ahead, it was exactly that: they arrived with a confirmation code and walked straight in.

Other users encountered a queue that was no longer visible. Places were released at eight each morning and often disappeared within minutes. A cleaner whose shift began at seven could not pause work to book. A parent with an unpredictable care schedule could rarely commit several days ahead. They spent less time outside the centre because they were entering it less often.

The manager initially suggested computer training. This helped some people, but it treated the difficulty primarily as a shortage of digital skills. Several excluded swimmers were perfectly capable of using the website. What they lacked was control over the particular moment at which they had to use it. A technical solution had quietly introduced a scheduling requirement.

The centre reserved some spaces for same-day telephone bookings and some for people arriving without a **reservation**. Predictably, a physical queue returned. Users who preferred the fully digital system regarded this as a step backwards. Reception staff also had to manage three routes into a limited pool rather than one.

The revised system did not create extra **capacity**. It distributed the inconvenience differently and made part of it visible again. This distinction mattered when councillors reviewed the service. A photograph of an empty reception area could no longer stand in for evidence that residents were able to swim.

There was no reason to **romanticise** the original queue, which had disadvantages of its own. But the comparison needed to include people who had stopped appearing in the picture. Removing a line of waiting bodies is a design achievement; whether it **constitutes** wider access depends on where the waiting, and the exclusion, have gone.

Key vocabulary

capacity - the maximum amount a service or space can accommodate

reservation - an arrangement that keeps a place available for someone

constitutes - amounts to or counts as

romanticise - represent something as better or more attractive than it was

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

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Answer in complete sentences. Support interpretations with evidence from the text.

1. Why did the initial report overstate the improvement in access?

2. What barrier did the cleaner face?

3. Why was computer training only a partial response?

4. What did the alternative booking routes change, and what did they leave unchanged?

5. What does the photograph of an empty reception symbolise?

6. How does the final paragraph avoid an argument against technology in general?

Discuss with a partner

- What measures would show whether a booking system is genuinely accessible?
- How should scarce places be shared among people with different schedules?

ANSWER KEY

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Suggested full-sentence answers. Accept other supported interpretations where appropriate.

1. Why did the initial report overstate the improvement in access?

It treated the disappearance of the visible queue as evidence of access without considering people who could no longer obtain places.

2. What barrier did the cleaner face?

The cleaner could not interrupt a shift to book at the exact time places became available.

3. Why was computer training only a partial response?

Some excluded users already had digital skills but lacked control over their schedules.

4. What did the alternative booking routes change, and what did they leave unchanged?

They redistributed booking opportunities and inconvenience but did not increase pool capacity.

5. What does the photograph of an empty reception symbolise?

It symbolises an appealing but incomplete measure that excludes the experiences of absent users.

6. How does the final paragraph avoid an argument against technology in general?

It acknowledges flaws in the original queue and evaluates the digital system by its effects on access rather than rejecting it outright.

Teaching notes

Read once for the main idea, then reread for evidence. Compare answers before discussing the two open questions. Interpretive answers may vary; ask learners to justify their reading.

Language and reading focus: Nominalisation; evaluating proxies and qualified conclusions.

Text: Original commentary using a fictional scenario. Discussion questions have no fixed answers.