

FCE READING HOMEWORK **Part 2**

You are going to read an article about a woman who is a downhill mountain-bike racer. Seven sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences A – H the one which fits each gap (9 – 15). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Downhill racer

Anna Jones tells of her move from skiing to downhill mountain biking and her rapid rise up the ranks to her current position as one of the top five downhill racers in the country.

At the age of seven I had learnt to ski and by fourteen I was competing internationally. When I was eighteen a close friend was injured in a ski race, and as a result, I gave up competitive skiing. To fill the gap that skiing had left I decided to swap two planks of wood for two wheels with big tyres. My first race was a cross-country race in 1995. It wasn't an amazing success.⁹----- After entering a few more cross-country races, a local bike shop gave me a downhill bike to try. I entered a downhill race, fell off, but did reasonably well in the end, so I switched to downhill racing.

I think my skiing helped a lot as I was able to transfer several skills such as cornering and weight-balance to mountain biking. This year I'm riding for a famous British team and there are races almost every weekend from March through to September.¹⁰----- In fact, there's quite a lot of putting up tents in muddy fields.

Last season I was selected to represent Great Britain at both the European and World Championships. Both events were completely different from the UK race scene.¹¹----- I was totally in awe, racing with the riders I had been following in magazines. The atmosphere was electric and I finished about mid-pack.

Mountain biking is a great sport to be in. People ask me if downhill racing is really scary. I say, 'Yes it is, and I love it.' Every time I race I scare myself silly and then say, 'Yeah let's do it again.' When you're riding well, you are right on the edge, as close as you can be to being out of control.¹²----- However, you quickly learn how to do it so as not to injure yourself. And it's part of the learning process as you have to push yourself and try new skills to improve.

Initially, downhill racing wasn't taken seriously as a mountain-biking discipline. ¹³----- But things are changing and riders are now realising that they need to train just as hard for downhill racing as they would do for cross-country.

The races are run over ground which is generally closer to vertical than horizontal, with jumps,

drop-offs, holes, corners and nasty rocks and trees to test your nerves as well as technical skill. At the end of a run, which is between two and three minutes in this country your legs hurt so much they burn.¹⁴----- But in a race, you're so excited that you switch off to the pain until you've finished.

A lot of people think that you need to spend thousands of pounds to give downhill mountain biking a go.¹⁵----- A reasonable beginner's downhill bike will cost you around £400 and the basic equipment, of a cycle helmet, cycle shorts and gloves, around £150. Later on you may want to upgrade your bike and get a full-face crash helmet, since riders are now achieving speeds of up to 80 kilometres per hour.