
PRACTICE EXAM - ENGLISH

It's Not the Heat, It's the Humidity

Say the word “humidity” and most people think of steamy summer days, long sleepless nights and perspiring bodies – almost enough to make you long for frosty January nights. They are reacting to water vapour, that invisible cargo of moisture suspended in the earth’s atmosphere. We tend to become aware of water vapour when humidity is high because the air feels sticky, clothes feel damp and our skin feels clammy, or when it is low because our lips chap and our fly-away hair will not behave.

More than most elements in the weather, humidity affects our comfort whether we are indoors or out – almost always increasing our discomfort as it moves above or below average levels.

High humidity may help to cause migraines, ulcers, and rheumatoid arthritis, not to mention cramps, irritability, exhaustion and wandering attention. Sticky weather also brings out a person’s worst looks. The complexion is flushed, the skin becomes oily, and the hair stretches.

Excessive humidity can be downright destructive, corroding metals and breaking down many materials. Bacteria sprout in high temperatures with high humidity causing mildew and mould to develop. Got a squeaky chair, a guitar that will not stay in tune, or a drawer that sticks? It is not the heat, it is the humidity.

(Source: Canadian Geographic July/August '94)

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