

Urban Farming: Bringing Agriculture to City Rooftops

COMPREHENSION • VOCABULARY • DISCUSSION

INTERACTIVE ONLINE TEST

Take the full interactive test with instant feedback →

<https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/urban-farming-agriculture-city-rooftops>



Reading Passage

Read the passage carefully. Each paragraph is labelled with a letter for easy reference.

A In recent years, urban farming has become an innovative solution to several problems faced by modern cities. With growing populations, limited green space, and increased food demands, many city dwellers are turning to rooftops as places for growing fruits, vegetables, and even herbs. This new trend, known as rooftop farming, is changing how people think about agriculture in urban environments. Rooftop farming provides several environmental and social benefits. One of the most important is the reduction of the urban heat island effect. Cities are often warmer than surrounding rural areas due to buildings and concrete absorbing and retaining heat. Rooftop gardens help cool these surfaces by offering shade and increasing evaporation. Additionally, these gardens can absorb rainwater, reducing the risk of flooding and easing pressure on urban drainage systems. Another benefit of rooftop farming is the improvement of local food security. By growing food locally, cities can decrease their reliance on imported goods, which are often transported long distances. This not only reduces carbon emissions but also ensures fresher produce for consumers. In some communities, rooftop farms support local markets and create jobs, especially in low-income neighborhoods where access to healthy food is limited. Although the advantages are clear, rooftop farming also has challenges. Buildings must be strong enough to hold the weight of soil, water, and plants. Furthermore, setting up an urban farm can be expensive due to costs related to design, irrigation systems, and maintenance. Climate conditions such as strong winds or limited sunlight on certain rooftops can also affect crop production. Despite these difficulties, many cities around the world are investing in rooftop farming initiatives. In New York City, for example, one company operates the world's largest rooftop soil farm, producing thousands of pounds of vegetables each year. In Tokyo, some schools have rooftop gardens where students learn about growing food and sustainability. Meanwhile, Paris is home to one of the largest urban farms in Europe, offering workshops and community-supported agriculture programs. In the future, rooftop farming may become a regular feature of city planning. Architects and city officials are already considering green roofs in their building designs. With increased awareness of environmental issues and a stronger push for sustainable living, rooftop farms may soon be as common as public parks.

Vocabulary Glossary

Key words and phrases from the passage. Study them before attempting the exercise below.

WORD / PHRASE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
innovative	new and creative in a way that solves problems	<i>The company used an innovative method to save energy.</i>
dwellers	people who live in a certain place	<i>City dwellers often have busy lives.</i>
evaporation	when a liquid turns into a gas	<i>Water evaporation happens faster on hot days.</i>
carbon emissions	gases released into the air when burning fuels	<i>Cars and factories are major sources of carbon emissions.</i>
initiatives	plans or actions aimed at solving a problem	<i>The government started new initiatives to reduce pollution.</i>
sustainability	using resources in a way that does not harm the environment	<i>Recycling is important for sustainability.</i>
irrigation	a system for bringing water to plants	<i>Farmers use irrigation to water their crops.</i>
urban heat island	areas in a city that are warmer than nearby rural places	<i>The urban heat island effect makes the city feel hotter.</i>

Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blank

Use one word or phrase from the glossary above to complete each sentence. Each item is used only once. Answers are on the final page.

1. The new park was part of the city's green _____ to improve air quality.
2. Farmers in dry areas depend on _____ to grow their plants.
3. _____ from cars can damage the environment and affect climate change.
4. In hot cities, the _____ effect can make summer days feel even warmer.
5. The _____ design of the phone made it very popular among teenagers.
6. City _____ often enjoy cultural events and busy nightlife.

Comprehension Questions

These questions are different from the online practice test. Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D). Answers and explanations are on the final page.

Question 1

What is one environmental benefit of rooftop farming mentioned in the passage?

- A. It increases the number of tall buildings.
- B. It helps reduce the urban heat island effect.
- C. It makes cities look more modern.
- D. It prevents all types of air pollution.

Question 2

Why might some cities be hesitant to start rooftop farming?

- A. Lack of interest from the community.
- B. The potential high cost and structural challenges.
- C. The abundance of traditional farms.
- D. Concern over too much sunlight.

Question 3

What is a social benefit of rooftop farming?

- A. It makes buildings taller.
- B. It creates jobs in low-income areas.
- C. It turns all rooftops green.
- D. It eliminates the need for markets.

Question 4

What is the role of schools in Tokyo regarding rooftop farming?

- A. They grow plants to sell in markets.
- B. They use them as a place for student recreation.
- C. They teach students about growing food and sustainability.
- D. They prevent students from accessing rooftops.

Question 5

What might be a reason cities invest in rooftop farming initiatives?

- A. To increase the height of buildings.
- B. To make cities more attractive to tourists.
- C. To address environmental and food security issues.
- D. To eliminate the need for rural farms.

Discussion & Writing Prompts

Each prompt references a specific detail from the passage above. Use for classroom discussion or a short written response (150–200 words).

1. Paragraph A describes rooftop farming as an innovative solution to urban problems. What other innovative solutions can you think of that address city issues like overcrowding or pollution?

2. The passage mentions that New York City has the world's largest rooftop soil farm. How could other cities learn from New York's example to implement similar projects?

3. According to the passage, Paris has one of the largest urban farms in Europe. What benefits or challenges do you think Paris faces with this farm, and how might they differ from other cities?

Answer Key

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Q1 B

Q2 B

Q3 B

Q4 C

Q5 C

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

FIB1 initiatives

FIB2 irrigation

FIB3 Carbon emissions

FIB4 urban heat island

FIB5 innovative

FIB6 dwellers

Comprehension Question Explanations

Why the correct answer is right — and why each wrong option is incorrect.

1. What is one environmental benefit of rooftop farming mentioned in the passage?

✓ B — It helps reduce the urban heat island effect.

B is correct because the passage states rooftop gardens help cool surfaces and reduce the urban heat island effect.

✗ A — It increases the number of tall buildings.

A is incorrect because the passage does not mention increasing the number of buildings.

✗ C — It makes cities look more modern.

C is incorrect as the passage does not focus on aesthetics or modern appearance.

✗ D — It prevents all types of air pollution.

D is incorrect because rooftop farming does not prevent all air pollution.

2. Why might some cities be hesitant to start rooftop farming?

✓ B — The potential high cost and structural challenges.

B is correct because the passage mentions the costs and structural needs as challenges.

✗ A — Lack of interest from the community.

A is incorrect as the passage implies interest in urban farming is growing.

✗ C — The abundance of traditional farms.

C is incorrect because cities do not have an abundance of traditional farms.

✗ D — Concern over too much sunlight.

D is incorrect; the passage mentions limited sunlight as a challenge, not too much sunlight.

3. What is a social benefit of rooftop farming?

✓ B — It creates jobs in low-income areas.

B is correct because the passage states that rooftop farms create jobs, especially in low-income neighborhoods.

✗ A — It makes buildings taller.

A is incorrect because farming does not affect the height of buildings.

✗ C — It turns all rooftops green.

C is incorrect as not all rooftops are turned green by farming.

✗ D — It eliminates the need for markets.

D is incorrect because markets are still needed for selling produce.

4. What is the role of schools in Tokyo regarding rooftop farming?

✓ C — They teach students about growing food and sustainability.

C is correct because the passage mentions schools in Tokyo have gardens to educate students about food and sustainability.

✗ A — They grow plants to sell in markets.

A is incorrect as the passage does not state that schools sell plants.

✗ B — They use them as a place for student recreation.

B is incorrect because the passage emphasizes education, not recreation.

✗ D — They prevent students from accessing rooftops.

D is incorrect as schools use rooftops for educational purposes, not prevention.

5. What might be a reason cities invest in rooftop farming initiatives?

✓ C — To address environmental and food security issues.

C is correct because the passage mentions cities invest in rooftop farming to improve environmental and food security issues.

✗ A — To increase the height of buildings.

A is incorrect as rooftop farming does not affect building height.

✗ B — To make cities more attractive to tourists.

B is incorrect because the passage does not discuss tourism.

✗ D — To eliminate the need for rural farms.

D is incorrect as rooftop farming cannot replace the need for rural farms.

MORE B2 LEVEL READING PRACTICE

Letters Refugee Camp Family Story Hope — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/letters-refugee-camp-family-story-hope>

Global Health Preparedness Lessons Recent Pandemics — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/global-health-preparedness-lessons-recent-pandemics>

Climate Migration Communities Move — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/climate-migration-communities-move>