

READING A Blog Entry

1 IDENTIFYING THE MAIN IDEA Read the first sentence of each paragraph of the blog entry. Decide which paragraph (2-7) answers each question (a-f) below.

- What is the lifestyle of sumo wrestlers?
- Do people outside of Japan do sumo?
- What will happen to the sport of sumo?
- Can Japanese women do sumo?
- What happens at a sumo match?
- What motivates new wrestlers to join?

Reading Strategies page 148

2 Read the blog entry and choose the correct answer.

- At first sight, sumo may seem like ...
 - a serious sport
 - a spiritual ritual
 - a humorous performance
 - an ancient art
- What is one result of the ban on women in sumo?
 - Sumo is not an Olympic sport.
 - Japanese girls do not learn sumo.
 - Sumo has become less popular.
 - Classes for males and females are separate.
- The writer finds sumo a challenge ...
 - because she is not obese
 - due to the weight divisions
 - when she trains for the championships
 - although she is in good shape
- What would be beneficial for the future of sumo?
 - giving wrestlers a bigger allowance
 - including women in traditional sumo
 - developing an alternative to traditional sumo
 - attracting more young people to sumo

3 TRUE / FALSE STATEMENTS Decide if the following statements are true or false. Find evidence in the blog entry to justify your answers.

- Most sumo matches are long.
- Wrestlers do not have an easy life.
- Japanese girls hope to become professionals.
- The writer would like to take part in the Olympics.

Answering Techniques page 150

YOUR OUTLOOK CRITICAL THINKING

Do you think the Olympic rule of 1991 has had a positive effect on women's sport? Explain.

Ann's Blog

SUMO

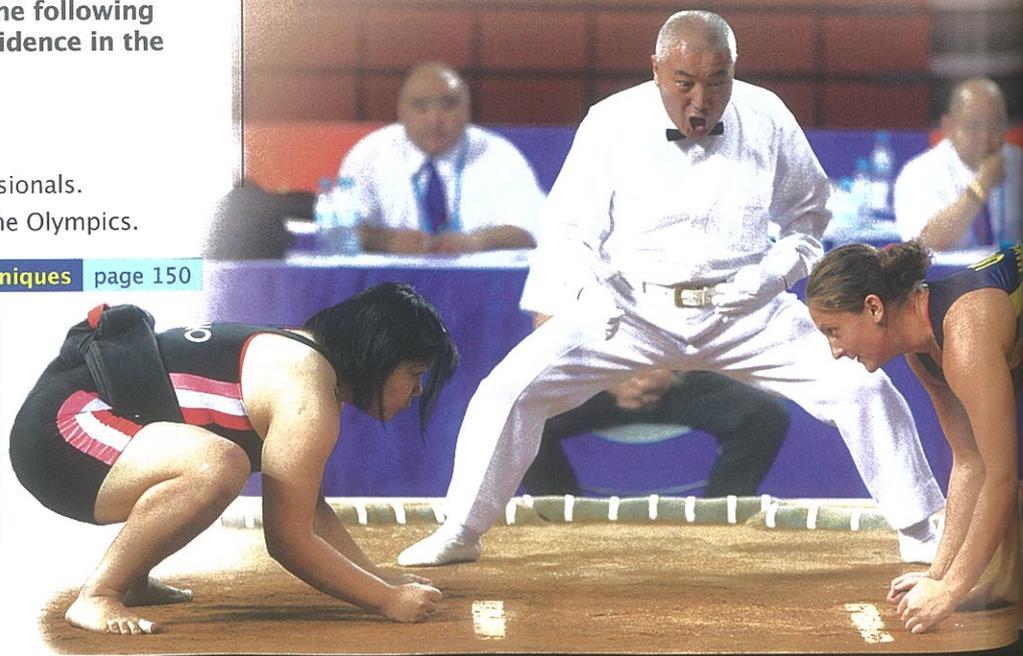
BODY AND SPIRIT

You've probably seen sumo wrestling on TV and thought it was funny to watch two obese, half-naked men pushing each other around. But I do sumo, and I can tell you it's more than that. Sumo is both a sport and a spiritual ritual of Shinto, Japan's official religion. This ancient art was performed at Shinto temples, and to this day, the sumo wrestling ring is considered a sacred place.

The rules of sumo are simple: the goal is to push your opponent out of the ring or make them lose their balance and touch the ground with anything other than their feet. This usually takes only a few seconds, so spectators have to keep alert. Since there are no weight categories, a wrestler can end up fighting someone twice their size. That's why they all try to get as big as possible!

The sumo way of life is harsh. It centres around a "stable", where a group of 15 wrestlers live and train throughout their career. Getting up at dawn, they go through hours of practice on an empty stomach, as they are forbidden to eat until lunch. Wrestlers that are ranked the lowest must wake up early, cook, clean and serve the others. In public as in private, sumo wrestlers are expected to be polite and modest, being the role models of perfect behaviour. They may not drive a car and must be seen only in traditional clothes.

With a lifestyle that is so harsh, why do young men join this sport? Their ambition is to work their way up to the highest level, winning fame and mountains of prize money. Of course, not everyone makes it to such a high level of skill or wealth, but even novices are given a small allowance.





WORDS FROM THE TEXT

4 Find words or expressions in the blog entry that mean:

- 1 difficult and severe (lines 13-20)
- 2 money given regularly to someone (lines 21-25)
- 3 include or show (lines 26-32)
- 4 enthusiastic (lines 26-32)
- 5 not definite or secure (lines 42-46)

5 Choose the correct continuation for each sentence. Pay attention to the words in colour.

- 1 This is a **sacred** place.
 - a Please be respectful.
 - b You'll have a great time here.
- 2 Crossfit exercise has **taken off** recently.
 - a I don't know anyone who still does it.
 - b It's especially popular among young people.
- 3 You can **work your way up** in this job.
 - a You'll start as a manager.
 - b You may become a manager one day.
- 4 Being short is an **asset** in gymnastics.
 - a No gymnasts are tall.
 - b It's easier to balance if you're short.
- 5 He has really **made it** in the world of football.
 - a He's a star now.
 - b He's making a lot of effort.

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and ends with a noun.

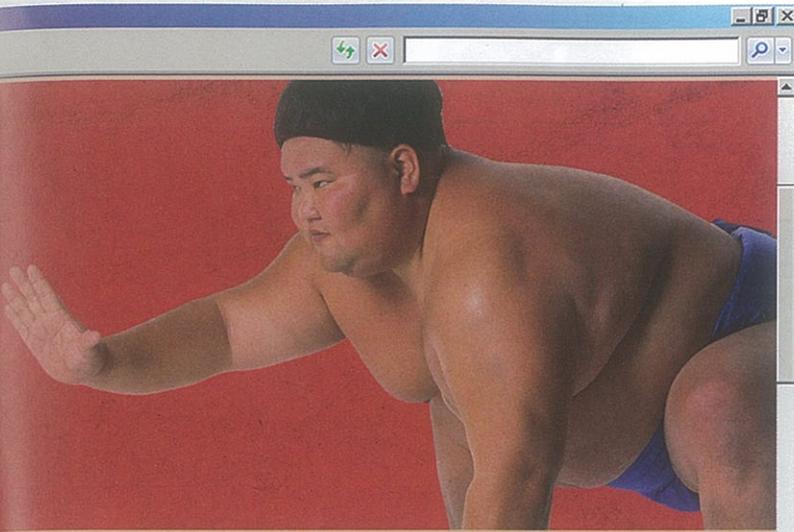
To this day, the sumo wrestling ring is considered a sacred place. (= up until now)

Sumo is **out of bounds** for women. (= not allowed)

6 Complete the sentences using the prepositional phrases below.

out of place | **on our own** | **under pressure**
in the lead | **in future**

- 1 You'll have to make more of an effort ...
- 2 Athletes are expected to perform well ...
- 3 Susan was ... for the last two minutes of the race.
- 4 If the coach doesn't come, we'll practise ...
- 5 The coach looked ... among the massive wrestlers.



Sumo is out of bounds for Japanese women. This is one of the reasons why it has never been included in the Olympics. Since 1991, every new Olympic sport is required to feature women's events. In Japan, girls and young women are aware that they will never compete in professional tournaments. Despite this, an equal number of eager boys and girls – some as young as six – can be seen in studio classes.

I'm a woman and I'm not Japanese, so why am I doing sumo? In several countries, including the UK and Russia, sumo is slowly taking off as a sport for both sexes. When I first tried it, I was already in pretty good shape, so I was amazed at its difficulty – and at how enjoyable it is. I soon became addicted, and I'm now being trained to compete in the World Sumo Championships against top wrestlers from around the world! Unlike traditional sumo, there are weight divisions, so you don't have to be massive, although size and strength are an asset.

The future of traditional sumo is uncertain, mainly because fewer young men want to take part in its harsh lifestyle. A parallel, more open type of sumo could be a way of keeping the sport alive. And who knows? Perhaps, we'll soon be seeing sumo in the Olympics. If so, I plan to be there – and not as a spectator!

LOOKING AT LANGUAGE

- 1 Look at the false friend underlined in the text. How do you say it in your language?
- 2 *So* is followed by an adjective or an adverb.
With a lifestyle that is so harsh, ...
Such is followed by a noun phrase:
Not everyone makes it to such a high level.
Complete the sentences with *so* or *such*.
 - a That was ... an exciting match.
 - b Sumo wrestlers are ... huge!

PRONUNCIATION

- 3 Listen and repeat the words from the text.
/k/ sacred spectator naked
/g/ goal eager big
- 4 Listen and decide which word you hear.
back / bag | cold / gold | goal / coal | sack / sag