

READING SKILLS

Identifying different types of information
Scanning text for specific details

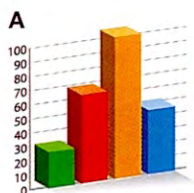
EXAM PRACTICE

Matching information in a text
Multiple-choice
Completing sentences

Answering multiple-choice questions

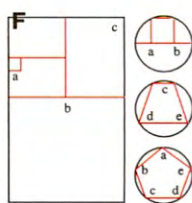
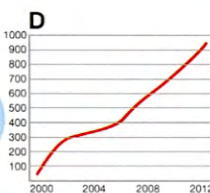
- 1 a When you are asked to look for specific information in a text, it helps to know what *kind* of information you want to find. For example, in a text describing the graph below, you would expect to find *numbers*, *percentages*, *dates* and *ratios*.
b What kind of information does the arrow indicate in this graph?
- 2 What kind of information would you find in the graphs and tables A–F below? Match the different types of information in the box with the images.

tendencies ■ ratios ■ areas ■ percentages ■ eras ■ schedules



B

| | |
|-------|---------|
| 18:00 | MUNICH |
| 18:30 | MADRID |
| 18:45 | HAMBURG |
| 19:00 | LONDON |



- 3 Look quickly over this block of text and find the following words and numbers: *proportion*, *Northumberland* and *1900*. Underline them, and then answer the questions below.

juiperabtelegunerazeoirucremdebbatsNorthumberlandoemormmport
mosl493waproportionstermeluquestasldinhaoloelbatskipszmxottrowet
msuejid1900kwqjsdnndndhoo

Which ones could you see most easily? Choose the reason or reasons why.

The information:

- is in a bold font.
- is in the first line of the text.
- is in the middle of the text.
- starts with a capital letter.
- is a date.
- is a number.
- is a technical term.

Skills

Scanning for information

When you scan a text for specific information you do not need to read every word or line from left to right. Once you have decided what kind of information you want, you can let your eye move around the text and search for the features that are characteristic of that particular information. For example, you would look for *capital letters* for names of people and places, *symbols* and *numbers* for percentages, statistics and dates. Technical terms may be in *italics* or inverted commas ('...').

Computer Technology in the Workplace

- A** Although the earliest computers were developed in the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century, it was not until the beginning of the 1970s that computers (known as 'mainframe' computers) were used in industry and business. At this stage, however, computers were so large they needed a room of their own, and were not practical in the workplace.
- B** Nevertheless, soon afterwards, rapidly evolving technology produced smaller, more practical, desktop computers, which were developed commercially between the late 1970s and the mid-1980s. Despite this, it was only in the late 1980s that personal computers (PCs) became standard equipment in the workplace.
- C** Subsequently, and especially during the first 10 years of the 21st century, the concept of the workplace has been revolutionized. By creating *virtual environments*, technology has freed businesses from the restrictions of time and place. Thanks to sophisticated communication software, colleagues in countries as distant as Australia and the UK can talk to each other through their PCs, laptops, tablets and mobile phones, meeting almost as if they were in the same room and no longer limited to their physical location.

4 Answer the questions with information from the reading passage. Practise letting your eye skip over the text to search for particular words, numbers or groups of letters. For example, to find out when the events in the passage took place, focus on dates and verb tenses.

- 1 How many times are the 1980s mentioned in the passage?
- 2 How many references are there to time in the passage?
- 3 How many times does the word 'were' appear in the passage?
- 4 In which paragraph does the verb change to the present tense?
- 5 Why does the writer use 'were' again in paragraph C?

5 Scan the text again and complete the timeline with the letters A–E for each of the events in the list below. The first one has been done for you.

- A mainframe computers utilized in commerce and manufacturing
- B offices adopt widespread use of desktops
- C online conferencing has broken down geographical barriers
- D PCs widely available on the market
- E initial developments in computer technology

E _____ _____ _____ _____

1900–1960

1970–1975

1976–1985

1986–1989

present

6 Scan the text again and underline examples of other types of information from the list below.

place names ■ periods of time ■ technical terms

Exam skills

Matching information questions

In this type of exam question you will have to identify the paragraph or section of the passage that contains specific information. Before you answer the questions, decide what kind of information you are looking for.

- 7** Practice finding information in a section of the reading passage. The passage has three paragraphs, A–C. Which paragraph contains the information you need to answer the questions? Complete the table with the type of information and the paragraph where it can be found.

| Question | Type of information | Paragraph |
|--|---------------------|-----------|
| 1 When were computers first used in industry? | | |
| 2 What were the early computers called? | | |
| 3 How does technology allow people in different countries to work together? | | |
| 4 What kind of technology has contributed to the expansion of the office beyond its geographical boundaries? | | |

Exam skills

Multiple-choice questions

In these exam questions you will have to choose the best answer from a list of alternatives provided and write the letter (A, B, C ...) on your answer sheet. The number of alternative answers you have to choose can vary and you should read the question carefully to make sure you select the correct number. You may be asked to select:

- ONE answer out of FOUR alternatives
- TWO answers out of FIVE alternatives
- THREE answers out of SEVEN alternatives

Skills

When you are asked to select the correct answer from a list of alternatives, you can use the following techniques:

- Skim the alternatives quickly to identify any that are not possible. Remember, they may be on a different topic, or contain incorrect data.
- Decide which alternatives are grammatically possible.
- Compare the meaning of the grammatically correct alternatives with the sentences in the passage.
- Look for words or phrases in the statements that match or have a similar meaning to the words in the alternative answers.

8 Practice scanning for words that do not refer to the topic of the text. Underline the word in each list that does not relate to the same topic as the other three.

- 1 contest employment manufacturer labour
- 2 communication aspect announcement broadcast
- 3 advance evolution progress provision
- 4 economy routine competition cost
- 5 global rights worldwide universal

9 Read the following text. Questions 1–4 are taken from a multiple-choice task that asks you to complete a sentence. You must choose ONE correct alternative out of FOUR.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 Equal gender rights</p> <p>A are the result of globalization.</p> <p>B have been influenced by communication technology.</p> <p>C are one of the causes of new approaches to work.</p> <p>D have affected the global economy.</p> | <p>3 Communication technology has</p> <p>A improved working conditions in the office.</p> <p>B eliminated the need for business meetings.</p> <p>C expanded the boundaries of the workplace.</p> <p>D increased the cost of business trips.</p> |
| <p>2 Workers in India work</p> <p>A in call centres.</p> <p>B longer hours than they did in the past.</p> <p>C standard office hours from 9–5.</p> <p>D for lower salaries than workers in other countries.</p> | <p>4 Flexible working hours</p> <p>A are the result of women's dual roles.</p> <p>B have reduced the number of working mothers.</p> <p>C were introduced in 2003.</p> <p>D are a legal right for all employees.</p> |

A Over the past 30 years, both employer and employee attitudes to work and working patterns have been shifting. For many forward-looking companies, the office is no longer perceived as an indispensable base for work and business, and the effectiveness of the traditional 9–5 working day is increasingly being challenged.

B Three factors that have affected attitudes towards the working day and the ways in which workers interact with each other are: the globalization of the economy, widespread developments in communication technology and the expansion of equal opportunities for women.

C As a result of the globalized economy, there is intense competition for trade and service provision throughout the world. More than ever, workers in both developed and developing nations are recognizing the inevitable changes in their working environment, as they come into direct competition with each other for employment

opportunities. An example of this is the growth of call centres in countries such as India, where technology is advanced, but the cost of labour comparatively cheap. Employees in these centres, working unsocial hours, routinely provide telephone support to callers in time zones far from their own. The growth of these 'timeless workplaces' has been made possible by other factors affecting perceptions of the office, the evolution of online communication software and the proliferation of wireless and mobile networks across the globe.

D One of the more obvious consequences of these technological advances is that businesses in distant countries can discuss and complete deals over the Internet, through online conferencing software, without the need for international travel. Additionally, as these conferences can be held not only in the office but anywhere – at home, in a coffee shop or in an airport – the concept of the office as a unique centre for work has been brought into question.

E Whilst the global economy and technological advances can account for some of the changing perceptions of the workplace, another contributing factor, is social innovation, particularly with regard to equal rights for women. Although large numbers of women have been employed in business and industry over the last century, they have also continued to be responsible for childcare and running the home. For this reason, they have traditionally worked

part-time and have often needed to adapt their working hours to the demands of the family. To support this working pattern, a new law was passed in the UK in 2003, giving women with young children the right to request flexible working hours. Since then, further changes in equal rights legislation, allowing both men and women with families to apply for flexitime, have encouraged a widespread revision of attitudes to the workplace.

- 10** Look at the reading passage again. Questions 1–4 are taken from a different type of multiple-choice task. In this type of question, you must choose TWO correct alternatives out of FIVE.

Before you answer:

- a** Read the question.
- b** Find the paragraph in the reading passage that refers to the topic of the question.
- c** Read the alternatives.
- d** Delete any alternatives that are not possible.
- e** Choose the TWO correct alternatives.

- 1** What do innovative employers think about modern working styles?
 - A** Working patterns are 30 years out of date.
 - B** Workers' opinions about employers have changed recently.
 - C** The workplace has become less important as a centre of operations.
 - D** The office is an essential part of their business.
 - E** The standard eight-hour day is not as beneficial as it used to be.
- 2** Why do employees have to compete for work internationally?
 - A** Opportunities for work have decreased in developing countries.
 - B** Technological advances and low wages have made some countries more competitive than others.
 - C** The worldwide economic climate has affected the labour market.
 - D** People in India are prepared to work long hours in call centres.
 - E** Wireless networks have extended throughout the world.
- 3** How have developments in technology affected the workplace?
 - A** They have expanded the boundaries of the office.
 - B** The office has become more important as a place to meet clients.
 - C** Personal meetings have become more significant.
 - D** People have the option to work from different locations.
 - E** They have encouraged international travel.
- 4** How has legislation in Britain supported families?
 - A** It has reduced working hours for parents.
 - B** It has given parents the right to ask for flexitime.
 - C** It has given women the right to work part-time.
 - D** It allows fathers to spend more time with their children.
 - E** It has made women work fewer hours.

Reading Passage 2

You should spend 20 minutes on questions 1–12, which are based on Reading Passage 2.

- A** For years, employers have been aware of employee engagement* and retention issues in their workplaces. These organizations have engagement policies that typically address engagement for the organization under one policy, without any differentiation for the generations of employees. As the millennial generation (also commonly known as Gen-Y and includes births from 1982–2000) grows in the workforce and *baby boomers** retire, managers and human resources professionals will need to develop new engagement models that take into account the generational differences between baby boomers and millennials. In this article, I will highlight some of the characteristics that differentiate millennials from other generations and explain why employee engagement should be *top of mind* for managers.
- B** Baby boomers are currently the largest generation of active workers. Research has shown that boomers identify their strengths as organizational memory*, optimism and their willingness to work long hours. This generation grew up working in organizations with large corporate hierarchies, rather than flat management structures and teamwork-based job roles.
- C** Millennials have a drastically different outlook on what they expect from their employment experience. Millennials are well educated, skilled in technology, very self-confident, able to multi-task and have plenty of energy. They have high expectations for themselves, and prefer to work in teams, rather than as individuals. Millennials seek challenges, yet work-life balance is of utmost importance to them. They do, however, realize that their need for social interaction, immediate results in their work and desire for speedy advancement may be seen as weaknesses by older colleagues.
- D** The millennial generation is the largest age group to emerge since the baby boom generation, and as this group grows into a significant proportion of the workforce over the next 20 years, employers will need to make major adjustments in their engagement models. Motivating, engaging and retaining people will never cease as managerial priorities, but employers will have to carefully consider what strategies they will use to cultivate and retain valuable millennial employees now and into the future.
- E** Millennials are creating a change in how work gets done, as they work more in teams and use more technology. Their social mindset, however, is also a significant factor. As Leigh Buchanon writes in *Meet the Millennials*, 'One of the characteristics of millennials, besides the fact that they are masters of digital communication, is that they are primed to do well by doing good. Almost 70 percent say that giving back and being civically engaged are their highest priorities.'

- F** Coupled with the socially minded millennial comes their desire to be creative. Millennials have grown up in a time where information has become available instantly. Through a Google or Wikipedia search, answers to even quite complicated questions can be found. As such, millennials have developed into a group that wants to work on new and tough problems, and ones that require creative solutions. In a 2009 article by Tamara Erickson, a millennial who had been struggling in her role, she admitted to peers that, 'I guess I just expected that I would get to act on more of my ideas, and that the higher-ups here would have figured out by now that the model's changing' (*Gen-Y in the Workforce*, Tamara Erickson, Harvard Business Review, February 2009).
- G** The millennial employee is interested in feedback on his or her performance. But traditional semi-annual reviews are too infrequent for millennials. They want to know that they've done a good job, and they want to know now. A 2008 article in *Nonprofit World* provides readers with a checklist on the topic of providing millennial feedback. The list includes: give them checklists, offer plenty of help, reward them for innovating and taking appropriate risks, engage them with frequent feedback, provide them with mentors, create a collegial and team-oriented culture, etc. Feedback must also be given in such a way that millennials are receptive.
- * **engagement** – motivation and involvement (management term)
 - * **baby boomers** – people born between 1946 and 1964
 - * **organizational memory** – understanding of how the structures and systems of a company have developed over time

Questions 1–5

Reading Passage 2 has seven paragraphs labelled A–G. Which paragraph contains the following information? Write the correct letter A–G on your answer sheet.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

- 1 how to advise and motivate the younger generation
- 2 the professional characteristics of Gen-Y
- 3 Gen-Y attitudes to baby boomers
- 4 a professional profile of baby boomers
- 5 millennials and social responsibility

Questions 6–10

Complete the sentences with information from Reading Passage 2. Select **ONE** correct alternative.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>6 Until recently, employers have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A tried to motivate all employees in the same way. B created new policies to motivate Gen-Y employees. C implemented innovative engagement policies for baby boomers. D recognized the difference between millennials and the older generation. <p>7 People born between 1946 and 1964 are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A less productive than other generations. B harder working than younger people. C used to working within highly structured businesses. D used to working in teams. <p>8 Gen-Y and baby boomers are seen to be different because Gen-Y employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A like to work individually. B prefer to work on several projects at the same time. C expect rapid promotion. D work long hours. | <p>9 The majority of Gen-Y workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A have accepted traditional ways of working. B think that contributing to society is very important. C find digital technology challenging. D prefer to communicate online. <p>10 Gen-Y employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A want occasional feedback on their performance. B are satisfied with checklists. C prefer to work in a collaborative environment. D do not need very much support. |
|---|--|

Questions 11–12

Answer the questions with information from Reading Passage 2. Select **TWO** correct alternatives.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>11 Why does management need to change its approach to employee retention?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Gen-Y employees will soon represent the majority of workers. B Baby boomers have never needed motivating. C Gen-Y employees do not expect to work hard. D Millennials are more demanding of their employers than baby boomers. E Gen-Y workers are not satisfied with traditional organizational styles. | <p>12 In what ways can employers motivate Gen-Y employees?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Keep feedback to a minimum. B Give them the opportunity to implement their ideas. C Ask them to complete review forms. D Encourage them to work in rigidly structured organizations. E Give them challenging issues to resolve. |
|---|--|