



Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/21

Paper 2 Reading

May/June 2023

INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading passages.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



This document has 4 pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Passage 1

Working from home

- 1 In recent times, advanced technologies available to us have allowed increasing numbers of people to work from home, a development which has sparked an exciting revolution in the world of work. People ought to consider carefully whether working from home is a change for good.
- 2 One advantage of working from home is that no time is spent travelling to and from work, which for some employees might have involved a long commute by public transport or a tiring drive through congested city traffic. Employees are now able to choose the hours they work. If they are given a target for the week, the expectation is that the target will be met – whether the work is done within conventional office hours or outside of them. Workers can take refreshing breaks when and as often as they like, rather than at specific times which might be dictated by the cafeteria queue, for example. 5
10
- 3 There is often no need for childcare if parents work from home. One parent can work while the other stops to collect the children from school and take them to the park or to cook the evening meal, possibly returning to work after the children have gone to bed. Because you don't need to pay travel and transport costs, such as for bus or train journeys, or to fill up the car with fuel, there are financial savings to be made in working from home. Moreover, a typical car emits a huge amount of carbon dioxide every year, and buses obviously much more. This means that working from home is eco-friendly, and we should all commit to reducing our collective carbon footprint. 15
- 4 Not being in the town or city centre during a break from work, as well as saving money, removes the temptation to buy unhealthy or fattening snacks. Some of the coffee sold in high street coffee shops is damaging to our health; for example, one popular hot drink contains an astonishing 14 teaspoons of sugar and more than 500 calories! The money saved when working from home can be used on other, more useful or interesting things, such as holidays, clothes or treats for the family. 20
25
- 5 However, there are also disadvantages of working from home. One of these is that computer technology might let you down. You need to know about technical issues such as connectivity and bandwidth, whereas when working in the office you might have a whole team of technological experts close by. Working alone without interruptions from colleagues is an attractive idea, but for some people the lack of social contact leads to loneliness. You might even start to miss those queues in the cafeteria – at least you had people to talk to! For some, working from home might lead to more serious adverse effects on mental health, including severe anxiety. 30
- 6 Running for the bus, or walking to the office from the car park, might not be an attractive prospect on a rainy Monday morning, but at least you have moved. Some workers are dismayed to find that, having sat in front of a screen all day at home, they have taken absolutely no exercise; even light exercise reduces the risk of heart disease and helps to control weight. Staring at a device like a laptop all day can also harm the eyes, causing, for example, blurred vision, headaches or eye strain. Whereas in the office employees are encouraged to take regular screen breaks, if you are working from home, it is important that you remember to give your eyes a chance to rest. It is possible to have virtual meetings from home with colleagues, but these tend to be formal and organised in advance. Helpful chats across the desk or the office often help to solve problems or provide ideas; these impromptu meetings don't occur in the silence of your home. 35
40
- 7 When cities or town centres are deserted because so many people are working from home, restaurants and coffee shops have fewer customers and sometimes are forced to shut down, causing unemployment. When public transport is being under-utilised, bus and train companies have to reduce their services, meaning that those people who do need to use them have less of a choice. 45

Passage 2

The new fountain pen

- 1 Farris was becoming increasingly unhappy in his job as junior architect. The senior architect, Mr Arsalan, was extremely demanding and put too much pressure on him. Flicking through the newspaper one morning, Farris read an advert for a shop specialising in fountain pens which claimed that using one gives people a feeling of supreme confidence. The idea came to him that changing his image might help him to shake off his discontent and he decided to buy himself an expensive, top of the range fountain pen – a fountain pen was the answer. 5
- 2 At the next staff meeting, presided over by the company director, Mr Benjamin, there was a lively discussion about the company's objectives for the year. As usual, Farris was silent; as usual, Mr Arsalan had plenty to say. 'I don't agree with you, Mr Arsalan,' Farris suddenly dared to say, shaking his head. He touched his new fountain pen, which he had placed in front of him on the table. Mr Arsalan and his colleagues stared at him in amazement. Farris allowed a few moments to pass before he attacked, point by point, the arguments put forward by Mr Arsalan. With unprecedented eloquence, he watched himself outline the complicated sections of his own argument. When he had finished, there was silence in the room. One of his colleagues ventured to speak out, saying that Farris had conveyed the staff's misgivings perfectly. 'Well done, Farris,' announced Mr Arsalan coldly. 10 15
- 3 Back in his office, Farris sat at his desk and stroked his fountain pen. He closed his eyes and sighed contentedly. He had got through the meeting without any of the anxiety that had plagued him since early childhood. Just a few days ago, a confrontation with Mr Arsalan would have caused his heart to race. He would have played back their conversation repeatedly in his mind, blaming himself for some clumsy word, some weak point that would have lost him the argument to Mr Arsalan. Eating lunch would have brought on an attack of indigestion. Farris would have gone home miserable at the end of the day. 20
- 4 There was a knock on the door and the company director, Mr Benjamin, came into Farris's office, smiling. 'Farris, I was very struck by your analysis of the company's objectives,' he exclaimed. 'I want to promote you to second senior architect.' The fountain pen! It was the pen that was responsible for this opportunity that would totally alter the course of his life. Since purchasing it, it had shielded him from the terrors of life just by being there. Better still, it improved his mind and encouraged him to take important decisions. Without it, he would never have spoken to Mr Arsalan as he had at that meeting. 25 30
- 5 That evening Farris and his wife went out for dinner to celebrate, choosing the best restaurant in town. The interior was stunning, with high ceilings and glittering chandeliers. Farris read the menu. The prices were higher than his current salary stretched to; he hoped his wife did not notice his gulp of surprise. The speciality dish was framed in the middle of the page in elegant print and, to prove a point, both Farris and his wife ordered this dish. The food was delicious and, when the bill arrived, Farris signed the cheque with a flourish of his fountain pen and left a generous tip. 35
- 6 They jumped into a taxi to take them home. As it pulled away from the kerb, his wife turned to him, frowning. 'Did you remember your fountain pen?' she asked. Time stood still for Farris. He clearly pictured his pen lying on the table in the restaurant. Still unaccustomed to using a fountain pen, he had left it behind. 'Please turn round immediately!' he yelled from the back seat of the taxi. Doing an about-turn, the taxi driver accelerated back towards the restaurant. Farris leapt from the taxi and ran. But it was no good. No-one had handed in the fountain pen to a member of staff. Days, weeks, months went by. Farris called the restaurant every day. Finally, when he sensed a note of irritation in the restaurant manager's voice, he realised that it was time to give up the search. He knew he would never see his fountain pen again. 40 45

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