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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/22**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **February/March 2022**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

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

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Read **both** texts, and then answer **Question 1** on the question paper.

Text A: Why can't some people just keep still?

The following text discusses why some people fidget more than others.

Not long ago, handheld toys called fidget spinners became so popular that they had to be banned from some schools. They were marketed as useful 'stress relievers' but had become distracting in classrooms. However, it's not just kids who like to fidget. Look around your office and you will probably see people bouncing their legs up and down, turning pens over in their hands, chewing, doodling – not because there's something wrong with them: they're just fidgety people!

We all know someone who can't keep still, but why do some people fidget more than others? And if fidgeting really helps to relieve stress, does that mean we should all embrace it?

Research suggests fidgeting or moving around might help us to increase or lower our attention, depending on what is required – either calming or energising us.

People who fidget tend to do so when their minds are wandering and their fidgeting can affect concentration. Memory and comprehension are sometimes badly affected by fidgeting, but for some people it can provide a solution. Fidgeting could provide physiological stimulation to bring our attention and energy to a level that allows our minds to better focus on the task at hand.

Supporting this, one study found that people who were allowed to doodle or draw during a conversation remembered more facts from it than those who weren't. We also know that some children with specific attention problems perform better when they are engaged in spontaneous physical activity, though no such effect was seen for children without such problems.

Fidgeting might also help us to unconsciously maintain our weight. How can such tiny movements make a difference? Well, it turns out fidgeting while sitting or standing actually increases the calories you burn and can use up around 800 calories a day. One study following 12,000 adults over time found that high levels of fidgeting reduced mortality amongst those with more sedentary lifestyles.

You can't learn to become a fidgety person – it seems some people are just born fidgeters. Studies show that levels of spontaneous physical activity do run in families.

One final explanation for fidgeting is that it is a behavioural coping mechanism for stress. It seems that being bored can cause stress. Physiological signs of stress rise significantly during periods of sustained attention, such as listening in lessons, so learners may fidget to relieve that stress.

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Text B: The fidget fad

The following text, written by a teacher, is about the use of fidget gadgets in their lessons.

Having already endured many teenage fads, I was beginning to hope that we could make it to the end of the academic year without another craze. Then came various so-called fidget gadgets.

One example is the Fidget Cube, the brainchild of dynamic business partners Dominic and Yvonne Duchamp. It has graced many classrooms recently. It is a small plastic device with temptingly clickable, twistable and flickable surfaces. The makers claim the cube reduces more disruptive fidgeting such as rulers being wobbled on the edge of tables. They also claim it increases memory capacity and boosts creativity. To be fair, my mother can't sit still either, even in old age – she knits all the time – and many workers' devices are packed with pleasantly distracting apps and games.

Many users of fidget gadgets defend them as a relief to classroom tedium. The Duchamps hoped to highlight that fidgeting itself ought not to be 'stigmatised and mocked'. I agree that these gadgets benefit some students in certain situations, but to claim that they will destigmatise fidgeting is spurious.

My problem with these devices is not with the dubious claims of the beneficial effects on users but with the effect they have on others in the home or the classroom. They're an inescapable distraction. While most adults at work may use these devices responsibly, teenagers lack the self-discipline to avoid making a display of their new toy.

If I were a parent, I would want to maximise my child's learning in whichever way I could but where's the evidence these gadgets work? I would simply ask them to consider whether their child really needs one.

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