Cambridge IGCSE

Cambridge Assessment International Education
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/31**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2019**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Reading Booklet Insert contains the reading passage for use with **Section 1**, **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

You may annotate this Reading Booklet Insert and use the blank spaces for planning.
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This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

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Read the passage carefully, and then answer **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

In this article from an online website called 'Digital Trends', the writer discusses how much time young people should spend looking at screens.

Are screens scrambling our kids' brains?

Most of us adults would probably admit that we spend too much time staring at screens. It's not unusual to reach for our smartphones first thing in the morning, spend all day in front of a computer monitor, and then relax by collapsing in front of the TV. Sometimes, we even browse on a smaller screen while watching a bigger one. It's not just a chore either – we enjoy our gadgets. Screens aren't just for entertainment anymore: we use them to communicate, to shop, to share. In fact, we use them for everything.

Children are learning to use them for everything, too. In the UK, kids aged between five and sixteen spend an average of six and a half hours per day in front of a screen, according to the Connected Kids Report. In the USA, it's a similar story, with children between the ages of 8 and 18 averaging around 7 hours per day with some form of media, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. The American Academy of Paediatrics recommends that entertainment screen time, as opposed to other ways of using screens, is limited to one or two hours per day, and that children under two years of age shouldn't have any screen time at all.

'That recommendation came out 25 years ago, and it was based on a study of obesity in children,' explained Dr Victor Strasburger, professor of paediatrics at the University of New Mexico. 'Since that time, we've seen the rise of iPads and smartphones and Internet access for all.'

A lot has happened in 25 years.

The two hour recommendation hasn't changed, but kids today are spending more time than ever with screens and using them for more activities. A concern that was initially about the physical risks of being sedentary in front of the TV for hours has now grown to include the potential mental impact of exposure to all those screens.

It's long been an accepted wisdom that too much time spent sitting in front of the TV is bad for us. It may not lead to square eyes, as our parents told us, but it is strongly linked to obesity in adults and children. TV viewing has also been linked with disruptions to sleep; one hour of TV viewing per day for kids can shorten sleep by seven minutes per day. For babies under the age of two, there's strong evidence that screen viewing has a negative effect on language development.

Exposure to the wrong kinds of media could also contribute to a range of serious disorders beyond sleep deprivation and delayed development. Increased levels of aggression and anxiety related to exposure to material which is not appropriate for a child's age and development can also occur. Conversely, children can become dependent and passive. Children and young adults are much more likely to be influenced by media than older adults. 'Adults can make reasoned decisions, which adolescents can't always do,' explains Dr Strasburger. 'The last part of your brain to develop deals with judgement, decision-making, and impulse control and it doesn't fully mature until around the age of 25.'

Many parents will make the argument that they watched hours of TV every day while growing up and they turned out fine, but content and access has changed. Kids today can potentially see whatever they want, whenever they want, and can stumble on inappropriate content accidentally, unlike those in previous generations.

'Many parents are clueless,' says Dr Strasburger. 'There's plenty of good content out there, but you can't trust that your kids will find it.' Dr Strasburger is quick to point out that entertainment and media are not inherently harmful. Some content, for example, can help teach kids letters and numbers. It's not necessarily screen time itself that's the problem, but rather the content that's being consumed and

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the environment it's being consumed in. 'Watching with parents can be good, but only if they talk about what's happening onscreen. Just being in the same room is not enough.'

The research suggests that positive parental influences will still outweigh the media. The wrong videogame, music, or movie is not going to turn a good kid bad, but a constant stream of violence for a prolonged period could have an impact.

When you factor in school, playing, clubs, and meals, it's not too difficult to limit screen time to that all-important two hours, but weekends are a different matter. Keeping TVs and other devices out of kids' bedrooms is really important. If technology is in their bedroom, they'll use it more, and without supervision. It's also vital to take an interest in what they're watching or playing. There's no doubt that it's tough to restrict screen time for children in the modern world, particularly when many of us adults are spending so much time with screens ourselves, but it's something you need to think about early. Changing older kids' habits isn't easy.

'If you have a teen who plays first-person shooters five hours a day, then good luck,' says Dr Strasburger. 'You really have to start from the beginning. If you limit screen time from an early age, then your kids will get into healthy habits.'

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