Unit 3: Exercise 8

Read the information. Then do the IELTS Reading task.

The text has seven paragraphs (A–G). Which paragraph contains the following information? Choose the correct paragraph.

Try this exam task, but note that in the real IELTS Reading test there would not be as many questions in a matching information task such as this.
• Read the passage and think about the purpose or function of each paragraph (explaining, comparing, giving details, etc.).
• Look at the questions and identify the type of information you need to look for (a reason, a comparison, etc.).
• Try to match the type of information with the functions of the paragraphs.
• When you think you have identified the right paragraph, read it carefully to check that it contains all the correct information.
• Remember that the words in the question may be expressed differently in the Reading passage.
• Remember that just because you see a word from the question, it does not necessarily mean that you have found the correct paragraph.

What does it take to become an astronaut?

A What could be more thrilling than travelling through space and seeing the Earth from miles above? Becoming an astronaut used to be a typical ambition for children, but one they were unlikely ever to fulfil – it was even harder to achieve than becoming a rock star or Hollywood actor. However, since it was launched, the International Space Station (ISS) has been home to well over 200 people from 18 different countries. Although some critics complain that investing in the ISS is a poor use of billions of dollars, they should not forget that research in the unique conditions of the ISS has resulted in some incredible discoveries in medical treatments, weather science and satellite technology, which we now use on Earth. More teams are scheduled to be sent up in the future and are certain to make even more valuable contributions to humanity.

B So what are the requirements for someone wanting to work on the ISS? First, the applicant must be a citizen of the nation whose space programme they are applying for, or be willing to become one. Age is also important, mid-20s to mid-40s being the preferred range. Natural intelligence is vital, and so is achievement in such fields as engineering, biological and physical sciences, and mathematics. Candidates are nearly always from a military background, often because they already have piloting skills, but in some countries, civilians can also apply. For example, in the USA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) considers people from a wide range of backgrounds.

C Obviously, applicants are unlikely to have previous space-travel experience when they attend an interview, but recruiters also look for qualities such as adaptability and determination. Even after an applicant has got through the first stage of the interview process, there are still other tests they have to pass. For example, if it is discovered that the quality of an applicant's eyesight is poor then, unfortunately, it's time to go home. There is a tough physical examination as well. Astronauts need to prove they are in good shape because if

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they are eventually chosen to go on a mission, they will have to survive long months in microgravity, something which can cause uncomfortable swelling in the arms and legs, and can affect the cardiovascular system.

D Eventually, out of all the applicants that apply, a small group is chosen to attend a two-year period of study. During this time, they will learn a whole range of new things, such as a new language (they will have to communicate with other nationalities on the ISS). They will also have media awareness lessons and special preparation in a simulated zero-gravity environment. Once they have completed these sessions, the potential astronauts may have to wait years before being chosen to go up to the ISS. In other words, they need to be willing and able to depart at any time.

E If an astronaut is lucky enough to be sent to the ISS, he or she will have plenty to keep them busy. Mostly they will be involved in scientific research, experimentation and maintaining equipment. But just as in any home, the ISS must be kept clean. In fact, wiping and vacuuming up dirt and debris is even more important in space, as the tiny particles could cause huge problems if they got inside some of the computers or other equipment. Astronauts on board the ISS certainly report that they miss their children, their families and their friends on Earth, but few ever complain about boredom. Of course, technology makes it a lot easier to stay in touch nowadays.

F While the daily routine for an astronaut on the ISS may be little different from any other kind of job, there are many new challenges each astronaut faces when they take their first trip into space. One of these is getting used to the fact that there is no more 'night' and 'day' – at least, not in the way the astronauts have previously experienced them. In fact, astronauts on the ISS will see a sunrise, or sunset, every 45 minutes. Travelling at 17,500 miles an hour means they orbit the Earth 16 times in a normal 'day'. As a result, it means they won't know when they are supposed to sleep any more. This is one of the reasons why they need to follow the schedule that is organised for them. The schedule also tells them when they need to visit the gymnasium – which is at least once a day. If they do not exercise regularly, they will soon lose all the muscle in their legs.

G Another challenge concerns when, what and how the astronauts eat. The schedule, of course, tells them when it's time to heat up a packaged meal, some of which are now prepared especially to suit the tastes of the different nationalities amongst the crew. However, for a long time astronauts have reported that normal food loses its flavour in the ISS, and they find it harder to taste anything. Scientists think this has something to do with the fact that fluid moves to the upper body in microgravity, especially the head. This causes the tissues of the face to swell slightly and makes the nose feel blocked. This is why ISS crews often prefer really spicy food and strong flavours. If the food still isn't spicy enough, they can add salt and pepper, but these have to be squeezed out of tubes in liquid form!

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 details of the way that the ISS moves around the planet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 a reason why applicants are rejected early on in the recruitment process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 an account of how a particular human sense can be affected during time spent on the ISS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 a challenge to the idea that the funding of the ISS is wasteful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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5 a justification for the fitness tests that potential astronauts have to pass	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 a mention of both specialised and routine work that is carried out on the ISS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 examples of the necessary academic requirements for applicants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 an explanation of why astronauts need to stick to a strict timetable in space	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 a comparison between different kinds of occupation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 a reference to the kind of skills acquired during an astronaut training programme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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