Should I watch more sport on TV?

It sounds too good to be true — instead of exercising, we can get fit by watching sport on television. A new study in *Frontiers in Neuroscience* says watching sport isn't as good as a workout, but it raises your heart and breathing rates and increases blood flow to the skin – just like the real thing. These effects are caused by our responses to exciting events. They occur when our muscles contract in exercise or when we watch exercise. So if watching sport is healthy, are you doing it enough?

The study, from the University of Western Sydney, was small. The nine volunteers in the study didn't have any responses when they watched a screen on which nothing moved, but their heart rates and breathing increased when they saw someone running. None of the volunteers felt different and the increases, while statistically significant, were small. **They** were not sufficient to increase blood pressure, a sign of real physical activity.

However, other research has also shown that sitting is not always a completely passive event. Another study took four groups of volunteers who included competitive rowers and people aged between 50 and 60. Each volunteer was asked to imagine a rowing race, and their breathing and heart rates were measured. All the group showed increases in their heart rates. The competitive rowers showed the biggest difference – probably because they could imagine the race better than the others.

So, watching sport is not a passive activity – but the changes in heart rate are small and the energy used is tiny. Of course you could combine housework or gardening with watching rowing or athletics, but even that isn't as good as turning the TV off and going for a jog or swim.

EXAM TASK **Read the text. For questions (1–5) choose the correct answers (A, B, C or D).**

1 What is true about watching sport on TV?
- A It has the same effects as a good workout.
- B It increases your heart rate.
- C It contracts your muscles.
- D It needs to be done every day.

2 Which of the following did **not** happen during the study?
- A heart rate increased
- B blood pressure remained the same
- C breathing rate increased
- D subjects felt better

3 What does 'They' in paragraph 2 refer to?
- A the volunteers
- B signs of physical activity
- C increases in heart and breathing rates
- D the activities seen on TV

4 Why did rowers have a different physical response to other volunteers?
- A They were in better shape.
- B They didn't like the sport.
- C They knew the activity better.
- D Their hearts were stronger.

5 What is the writer's conclusion?
- A It is always best to get some real exercise.
- B TV can replace exercise if you watch the right things.
- C Doing household chores is as effective as exercise.
- D Watching TV is always good for you.

EXAM TASK **Read the texts. Match choices (A–H) to (1–5). There are three choices you do not need to use.**

Which advertisement describes ...

A a student exchange trip? ____
B a meeting with a psychologist? ____
C changing courses? ____
D why doing a degree is a good idea? ____
E a language course? ____
F a way to meet people? ____
G a relaxation technique? ____
H the advantages of a part-time course? ____

1

Are you unhappy with your current course, but worry that changing universities is a drastic measure?

Visit the university careers service!

We can help you see the bigger picture and choose a new course that is right for you.

We will make sure you have the right qualifications and help you with the admission process.

2

We run sessions with mental health experts and offer a range of courses and workshops that can help with stress, anxiety and other issues.

Join our student workshop for students who feel pressurized to perform, but lack motivation; this workshop will get your research back on track.

3

Joining a student club is a great way to make your social life thrive!

Try something new or foster a passion you already have with the friends you make, whether it's baking, rock climbing, or learning Mandarin!

We have hundreds of activities so there is bound to be something that you'll love.

4

Getting a degree these days doesn't mean you have to study for three or four years as a full-time student.

'As I work full-time, I knew doing a part-time degree at the same time would be hard work. But on the plus side, it gives me lots of flexibility and it will go a long way towards getting me a better job in the future.'

Lisa Preston, Birtwell University

5

We have learning materials in 50 languages. You aren't learning in isolation, you can practise conversation skills with native speakers through our language exchange.

If you're an international student, you can prepare to study in the UK with our English language courses. They conform to the university entry requirements for all our undergraduate courses.