TFNG Reading Exercise 4

Passage: Spam Messaging

SPAM, as every user of mobile phones in China is aware to their intense annoyance, is a roaring trade in China. Its delivery-men drive through residential neighbourhoods in "text-messaging cars", with illegal but easy-to-buy gadgetry they use to hijack links between mobile-phone users and nearby communications masts. They then target the numbers they harvest, blasting them with spam text messages before driving away. Mobile-phone users usually see only the wearisome results: another sprinkling of spam messages offering deals on flats, investment advice and dodgy receipts for tax purposes.

Chinese mobile-users get more spam text messages than their counterparts anywhere else in the world. They received more than 300 billion of them in 2013, or close to one a day for each person using a mobile phone. Users in bigger markets like Beijing and Shanghai receive two a day, or more than 700 annually, accounting for perhaps one-fifth to one-third of all texts. Americans, by comparison, received an estimated 4.5 billion junk messages in 2011, or fewer than 20 per mobile-user for the year—out of a total of more than two trillion text messages sent.

Questions 1-7

Decide if the following questions are true, false or not given.

1. In China, SPAM text messaging is a successful business.
2. People's phone numbers are collected through the use of technology which cannot be readily bought.
3. In no other country do people receive more Spam texts than in China.
4. In 2013, the number of SPAM texts increased considerably to reach 300 billion.
5. The majority of all texts received in Shanghai and Beijing are SPAM.
6. In 2011, Americans sent more texts than anywhere else in the world.

Hiking for Life

Hiking is one of the best exercises for the body. Few other physical activities can match it. Whether it is a beginner course through low hills, or a multi-day trek in steep mountains, hiking is a great way to burn calories and lift the spirit. The endorphins released during a hike give a natural high that is well worth the preparation and strenuous effort.

People can condition their bodies for a hike by using exercise machines or by running. There is also, of course, the option of going on actual hikes to train one's body and mind. An area with low elevation or with trails that are not too steep are good places to start. To keep up stamina and endurance, bring a pack with high energy foods and water. Sunglasses, sunscreen, a hat, and even measures to prevent blisters on the feet all contribute to an enjoyable experience. Taking along a music player is not recommended since nature provides her own soundtrack and since one of the purposes of hiking is to commune with the natural world.

Going on a solo hike provides time to think about oneself. For longer hikes that span several days, it is probably best to go with at least one other person. The necessary gear, like food, water, and sleeping equipment, is not easy to carry alone. Also, just in case the unthinkable happens, there is someone else there to get help. Hiking provides a chance to meet new people and spend time with close friends. There are many hiking groups all over the world that can give advice and also give information on the best places to go.

(275 words)

Questions 1–5

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the passage?

In boxes 1–5 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	if the statement agrees with the information
FALSE	if the statement contradicts the information
NOT GIVEN	if there is no information about this

1 Hiking has only average health benefits compared to other physical activities.

2 People need to see a doctor before starting a hiking regime.

3 Bringing provisions is recommended when going on a hike.

4 Going on long hikes with other people is inefficient and quite a hassle.

5 A device that plays MP3s would be a distraction on a hike.

That Gunk in Your Ears

Everyone in the world has to deal with earwax. As part of a hygiene routine, it is necessary to clean out the matter that accumulates in the ear canal. Excess accumulation of earwax can reduce sensitivity to sounds and impair the functioning of hearing aids.

Earwax has a few special functions and is secreted naturally by special cells. It prevents the ear canal from drying out and also protects it by trapping dust and bacteria, which are all carried out when the ear is cleaned. Without the wax, delicate parts of the body, like the ear drum, would become more vulnerable to infection.

Among humans, there are two different types of earwax. Most people in the world have a 'wet' type of earwax. The color ranges from honey to dark brown and the consistency is moist and somewhat smooth. It is found in Caucasians, Africans, and their descendants. Asians and Native Americans, on the other hand, produce a 'dry' type of earwax. This wax is flaky and gray in color. Anthropologists have used this distinction to track the movements of some indigenous groups.

Cleaning earwax is a relatively simple process, but one that must be done with care. It is possible to safely wipe the opening of the ear. Inserting an instrument deeper into the canal has the potential to push the wax further down, causing blockage. Though, for ears without too much accumulation, this technique might be sufficient. For those with a greater amount of wax in deeper locations, a doctor or a specialist in ear cleaning should remove it.

(261 words)

Questions 1–5

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the passage?
In boxes 1–5 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	if the statement agrees with the information
FALSE	if the statement contradicts the information
NOT GIVEN	if there is no information about this

1 Earwax is a problem for the throat and nose, as well as the ear.

2 There is no known reason for the existence of earwax.

3 Among the world's population, there is a dominant type of earwax.

4 The earwax found in Asian people contains high levels of moisture.

5 Consulting a medical professional is the safest way to deal with earwax.