

**Reading Part 2**

Read the text and fill the gaps with sentences A-G. Write the letter of the missing sentence in the box in the correct gap. There is one extra sentence you will not need.

**Playing and learning**

Throughout history children have played in groups and taken part in imaginative games. They've pretended to be pirates and princesses, heroes and villains. **1.** However, the way in which children play has changed during recent times. Children now have a much wider range of toys to choose from and as a result spend less time playing pretend games nowadays. **2.**

Pretend games actually help children to develop an important learning skill called 'executive function', which improves their ability to self-regulate. Kids with good self-regulation are able to manage their emotions and behaviour, and display self-control and discipline.

**3.** In the late 1940s psychologists carried out a self-regulation study, in which young children were asked to perform a number of different exercises. One of the exercises in the experiment was to stand perfectly still without moving, which most three-year olds were good at. **4.** They found that today's five-year-old children could only perform at the same level as three-year-olds in the 1940s and today's seven-year-olds were only just reaching the level of a five-year-old then.

A child's level of 'executive function' can have a big effect on the success they have at school, as children learn more when they can pay attention and manage their feelings. One reason imaginative play is such a vital tool for building self-discipline is because it teaches children to engage in 'private speech'. **5.** When children's play is more structured, their private speech declines.

Children are now starting their formal lessons in school at a much younger age and classes are often geared towards testing children and preparing them for exams. **6.** But it now seems that this environment we've created, which was designed to give children every advantage in life, may actually have deprived them of a vital activity. Play time, it seems, is extremely important for children.

- A Parents created secure environments to play in.
- B They've improvised and regulated their play by making up their own rules and characters.
- C Researchers recently repeated this experiment, and found very different results.
- D This recent trend has been shown to have an impact on their imagination.
- E As a result some teachers think playing is a waste of time.
- F This means that children talk to themselves about what they are going to do and how they are going to do it.
- G By comparing two studies, we can now prove that children's ability to self-regulate has been reduced in the past sixty years.

(Total: 6 marks)