

# 5A One thing at a time

## 2 READING

- a** You are going to read two extracts about time management: one from a newspaper article and one from a science website. Read the extracts once. With a partner, look at the four headings and choose the best one for each extract.

Get started, get finished

Increased efficiency, increased satisfaction

You think you can do it, but can you really?

The sport of saving time

- b** Read the extracts again. Mark the sentences **T** (true) or **F** (false). Correct the **F** ones.

- 1 It is often dangerous to chat to a friend while walking in the street.
- 2 It is more difficult to make a decision when you are doing two things at the same time.
- 3 It is difficult to maintain a conversation when you are driving if you also have to read a road sign.
- 4 Researchers have discovered that people trained in mindfulness are unable to multitask.
- 5 Mindfulness training develops people's ability to concentrate.
- 6 The quality of your work is not affected by how much you enjoy it.

### LEXIS IN CONTEXT

#### Learning verbs with dependent prepositions

Some verbs are always followed by a particular preposition before an indirect or direct object, e.g. *depend on*, *worry about*, etc. It is important to make a note of these prepositions when you learn new verbs.

- c** Look at some common verbs and verb phrases from the texts. Complete the gaps with the preposition that normally follows them.

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 deal _____ sth        | 4 focus _____ sth        |
| 2 concentrate _____ sth | 5 become aware _____ sth |
| 3 be capable _____ sth  | 6 be faced _____ sth     |

- d** Answer the questions in the square above the text.

- 1 Have you ever made a mistake or had an accident because you were multitasking? Does the first text explain in any way why it might have happened?
- 2 What advice do you get from the two texts about how to multitask successfully?

### A

**M**ULTITASKING is a natural everyday occurrence. We can cook dinner while watching TV and we can talk to a friend while walking down the street without bumping into anybody or getting run over. However, research suggests that there is an enormous difference between how the brain can deal with what are referred to as 'highly practised tasks', such as cooking or walking, and how it responds when, for example, you think about adding another ingredient or you decide to change the direction you are walking in. In this case, our brains require us to concentrate on the activity at hand.

Problems also arise when we try to carry out two or more tasks that are in some way related. Most people feel they are perfectly capable of driving and having a conversation at the same time. This is fine until they need to process language while driving, for example, read a road sign. Then the language channel of the brain gets clogged and the brain can no longer cope. A similar thing occurs if the conversation is about something visual, for example your friend describing what his new flat looks like. In this case, as you try to imagine what he is describing, the visual channel of the brain is overloaded and you can no longer concentrate on the road.





## B

**MINDFULNESS** refers to moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment. It focuses the brain on the present moment, instead of on the past or the future, and is gaining popularity as a practice in daily life.

A recent experiment conducted by psychologists in the USA looked at the effects of mindfulness training on the multitasking behaviour of workers in high-stress environments. They found that when asked to do multiple tasks in a short period of time, those who had been trained in mindfulness had a better memory for details and were able to maintain more focus on each task. They did not get distracted by worrying about the other tasks that still needed doing. This may well be because mindfulness training helps us to become more aware of where we are focusing our attention, so it makes sense that we are then better equipped to deal with a demanding work environment. According to another study, mindfulness training can help improve people's attitudes towards work. Let's say you are faced with a large pile of invoices to process. If your mind starts to look for more interesting things to do, it is going to take you longer and you will probably make mistakes. If you can look at this task with a calm, clear, and engaged mind, you will be more efficient and you might even find some enjoyment in the process.

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## 3 LISTENING

- a You are going to listen to *The Chocolate Meditation*, a well-known exercise used to introduce people to the idea of mindfulness. Before you listen, with a partner, say what you think these verbs mean.

unwrap inhale pop (sth) into melt chew swallow

- b (3/2)) Close your eyes and listen. Imagine doing all the stages.

- c Listen again. What does the speaker say about ...?

- 1 the type of chocolate to choose
- 2 what to do before you unwrap it
- 3 what to notice as you unwrap it
- 4 what to do before you eat it
- 5 what to notice and do as you eat it
- 6 when to swallow it

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....
- 6.....

- d What is the main message of the meditation? Do you agree that mindfulness could 'change your whole day'? Can you think of any other everyday activities you could try this approach with?

## 4 GRAMMAR distancing

- a Read some sentences about the origins of mindfulness. Then focus on the **highlighted** phrases. What do they have in common? What effect would it have on the meaning if they were left out?

- 1 Jon Kabat-Zinn, Professor of Medicine at the University of Massachusetts, is **considered to be** the 'father' of mindfulness.
- 2 He **claims to** help patients cope with stress, pain, and illness.
- 3 **It appears that** mindfulness is beneficial in lowering blood pressure and decreasing anxiety.

- a Complete the sentences with one word to distance the speaker from the information. Sometimes more than one answer may be possible.

*Apparently*, people who multitask often have concentration problems.

- 1 It \_\_\_\_\_ that the less children sleep, the more likely they are to behave badly.
- 2 It \_\_\_\_\_ appear that someone has been stealing personal items from the changing rooms.
- 3 Mark \_\_\_\_\_ to have aged a lot over the last year.
- 4 He may not look it, but he is \_\_\_\_\_ to be one of the wealthiest people in the country.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ to some sources, the latest research is seriously flawed.
- 6 Despite the fact that there will be an autopsy, his death is \_\_\_\_\_ to have been from natural causes.
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ are thought to be several reasons why the species died out.
- 8 The missing couple are believed \_\_\_\_\_ have had financial difficulties.
- 9 It is understood \_\_\_\_\_ the minister will be resigning in the near future.

- b Rewrite the second sentence so that it means the same as the first.

People say that mindfulness helps people to deal with stressful work environments.

It is *said that mindfulness helps people to deal with stressful work environments*.

- 1 Apparently, people who work night shifts die younger.  
It would \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 It is possible that the prisoners escaped to France.  
The prisoners may \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 We expect that the Prime Minister will make a statement this afternoon.  
The Prime Minister is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 The company has announced that the new drug will go on sale shortly.  
It \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 People believe that stress is responsible for many common skin complaints.  
Stress \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 The instructions say you have to charge the phone for at least 12 hours.  
According \_\_\_\_\_.

