Reading Part 1
Read the text and the questions. Choose the correct answer for each question.

There's a reason why we love computer games

Computer games have become as much a part of our entertainment world as books and movies. Why is it that so many of us are drawn to the computer monitor or TV screen? A bit of history might help explain the phenomenon. Originally, computers were all work and no play, being expensive to build and operate. But computer engineers and designers, being overgrown kids after all, soon began to get comfortable with their big machines. It occurred to some of them that it might be a good idea to have the computer show some spaceships and planets cruising around the galaxy.

And in the 1960s a group of fun-loving computer geniuses created a game called *SpaceWar* in their idle hours. *SpaceWar* was well received by geniuses and many others as well, which motivated the geniuses to design some more fun stuff. Somehow the visual element of the games activated the imagination. Over time we got *Pong*, *PacMan* and a continually evolving string of games.

By the late 1980s, with the invention of *Sim City*, computer games software became quite sophisticated. This product expanded on what was going on in all the previous games; the players were drawn into an imaginary world. But *Sim City* actually allowed the user to create amazing cities and even worlds. Not unlike books and movies, such video games were therefore mentally very satisfying.

Also in the 1980s, a group of computer programmers began creating software that would show moving figures. The figures were stick people, but they could move their bodies to music. They had no facial features, but it was very exciting to think what might come with more powerful computers.

We have come a long way since then. The power of computers grow massively and the realism of games has taken a huge step forward. A good computer game shows you in to another world and, unlike a book or a movie, it offers an interactive experience. There are now hundreds of options, numerous consoles to choose from and regular upgrades to keep the excitement high. You can really develop some hand-eye coordination by playing many of the current titles out there. But the biggest reason we love our computer games is that they capture our imagination in a variety of interactive ways.

1. *SpaceWar* was developed

   a) as part of a serious computer project.
   b) by computer experts in their spare time.
   c) to show people what space travel is like.

2. After *SpaceWar*, more games appeared because

   a) computer design improved.
   b) it was fun to play enough.
   c) people enjoyed playing it.

3. *Sim City* was different because it

   a) gave players more power.
   b) showed cities in the future.
   c) depended on advanced computers.

4. The first moving figures

   a) were very simply drawn.
   b) were easy to tell apart.
   c) weren't able to dance.

5. According to the writer, many modern computer games

   a) take their themes from movies.
   b) allow players to be part of the game.
   c) are only effective if you play them online.

6. One of the benefits of computer games is that

   a) players learn to develop games themselves.
   b) special equipment is never necessary.
   c) they improve physical abilities.

Reading Part 2
Read the text. Use the sentences to complete the text. Choose the correct sentence for each 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. (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-control 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

Reading Part 3
Read the four texts. Which text gives you the answer to each question? Choose the correct text (A-D) for each question.

A

Ideal for the weekend sailor, this boat can be towed by car and trailer to and from your house to wherever you would like to sail. Sailing areas have slipways where you can reverse your boat into water and then park your car. You may decide to store your boat near the water, in a boatyard or a caravan park. The boat can also be moored on the water. The safest and most secure ways to use a marina. These can easily be found on the coast, inland waterways and lakes.

B

When I was thirteen and my brother was ten, this former ore store where we were staying on the Cornish coast was our playground. We spent the whole day, it was a fantastic day. We had a great time, caught some fish and then very quickly the skies turned dark grey and we were in a race against time to get back to the coast as the winds got up and the rain poured down. It's only thinking back that I realise the danger we were in.

C

Before you start, ask someone who is experienced to show you the equipment on your boat. All boats are different. You should know the names of the different pieces of equipment and should have prepared your boat for the water at least once by yourself before setting sail. Your first sailing experience should be on a small inland lake. Pick a nice day with a steady light breeze and no rough weather. If you have a friend who can sail, take them along. Their experience will be invaluable.

D

We are a small club established to promote safety at sea and small boat angling. We have more than 150 members with over 90 boats. Members store their boats on club land, benefiting from full security. Boat sizes range from small outboard-driven dinghies up to those with a maximum length of 10.5 metres. The club aims to cater for the needs of sea anglers fishing from small boats within club waters that extend from St Catherine's Point in the East to Portland Bill in the West.

Which text

1. describes a personal experience? ☐
2. encourages people to join an organisation? ☐
3. is aimed at potential purchasers? ☐

Which text provides the answers to the following questions?

4. Where's the best place to store a boat? ☐
5. What sort of weather did someone have to cope with? ☐
6. Who wants to avoid accidents at sea? ☐
7. Where's the best place to learn to sail? ☐

Reading Part 4
Read the text and answer the questions. Use a maximum of five words for each question.

The Panama Canal

The Panama Canal is a vital shipping lane linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Opened in 1914, it was one of the greatest engineering projects of the modern age. However, the concept of a canal through the isthmus of Panama, a comparatively narrow strip of land linking North and South America, had been thought of as far back as the 16th century. When the Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa led an expedition across the isthmus of Panama in 1513, he saw the potential for a passage that would allow access from sea to sea without having to navigate around Cape Hornat the southernmost tip of South America.

In 1534, Charles V, King of Spain, formally ordered further investigation into the possibility of the construction of a ship canal across the isthmus. The surveyed route followed, to a large extent, the course of the present-day Panama Canal. However, the governor politely informed Charles V that the undertaking of such an engineering operation was impossible.

Not until the late 18th century was a new Panama Canal construction project given much serious thought. This was when the historic 1780–1794 scientific expedition led by Alessandro Malaspina landed in Panama. By actually planning the excavation of the Panama Canal, Malaspina was able, for the first time, to demonstrate the feasibility of such a huge project.

Overland links continued on the isthmus of Panama, facilitated by the construction of a railway in 1855. By then, Panama was free of Spanish colonial rule, but the idea of a water route through the isthmus of Panama had not been forgotten. A new phase in the history of the Panama Canal was beginning.

In 1882, a French company under the renowned engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, who had earlier built the Suez Canal, finally set about the construction. Their attempt was a disaster. Malaria and yellow fever killed most of the workforce, equipment failed in the heat and humidity, and geological and hydrological considerations were badly managed. The project was abandoned in 1889 at the expense of over 20,000 lives.

The construction of the Panama Canal as we'd finally be realized when the United States, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, bought out the French company, its equipment and excavations. Work began in 1904 and the Panama Canal was finally opened in 1914. The two great oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, had finally been linked through the landmass of Latin America.

The canal is approximately 80 kilometres long and incorporates a series of three locks, which are basically water-tight compartments. The first raises ships to the Gatun Lake, the second lowers ships to another lake and the third lowers ships to sea level. The whole trip takes between eight to ten hours.

1. Which part of South America did Balboa want to avoid?

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2. What was Charles V told about his plan for a canal?

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3. What did Malaspina do to show the canal could be built?

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4. What made the crossing of Panama easier in the 19th century?

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5. What important political development occurred in the 19th century?

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6. How long did the French attempt at canal construction last?

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7. What happened to the French company?

LIVEWORKSHEETS