Reading Passage 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 27-40**, which are based on Reading Passage 3.

WINNING AT WORK

Why hot-desking and open-plan offices are bad for you?

A. Two trends have dominated workplace design in the past few decades: open-plan offices, where everyone sits in the same space, and "non-territorial" or hot-desking offices, where no one has their own place. The stated aim of both is to foster creativity and collaboration – by having everyone within sight in an open-plan office for example. But while there is some evidence that workers do move around more in open-plan settings, and so benefit from increased physical activity, it seems it's not to talk to each other. The lack of privacy in an open-plan setting makes us retreat into our shells, putting on headphones to block background noise and emailing and instant messaging people just a few desks away.

B. Open-plan isn't necessarily bad, says Casey Lindberg, who researches workplace design at HKS architects in Texas – it is just that it isn't good for all the people all the time. "We are only just starting to recognise individual differences, including age, personality, the type of work and more," he says. "This means office design needs to be flexible." Hence hot-desking. In principle, this allows people to move to areas best suited to their task and mood: a private room if they need to concentrate hard, an open area if they want to collaborate and be inspired. But in 2004, Theo van der Voordt at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands and his colleagues surveyed companies that switched from fixed-desk offices to hot-desking. They found no evidence of a productivity boost, but there was a definite minus: animal territorialism. "Users often try to claim a familiar place by arriving at work earlier or by leaving items behind during their absence," van der Voordt wrote. So perhaps I should learn to love my flimsy, shared cubicle.

C. In the end, few of us have much control over the design of our workplace, but employers might do well to pay heed: according to William Bordass, a London-based building scientist, changes in individual efficiency of up to 15 per cent "might be attributable to the design, management and use of the indoor environment".

How to stay focused and avoid distractions?

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D. The world is full of distractions. Unfortunately, the world also requires us to work. If you work in an office, it might be emails, phone calls or colleagues with queries; if you're at home, the contents of the fridge or a sudden fixation on dust mice under the sofa. Sometimes it takes even less. "If you're sitting and doing work and someone near you says something particularly interesting, like 'love' or maybe 'Brexit', that can pull your focus," says Adrian Furnham, a psychologist and management expert at the BI Norwegian Business School in Oslo.

E. So how can we rein in our wandering minds? Switching off email and messaging services helps. And put your smartphone and other extraneous screens away – they attract our attention even if they are off. "If you've got a screen, that's not good if you're trying to process information," says Furnham. If you are tempted to pop on headphones and use music to shut out distractions, avoid listening to anything familiar: knowing the words or tune well will distract you even more. Furnham's own research shows this effect is most pronounced for introverted people. "The worst distraction of all-time would be introverts doing complex word-processing tasks with loud, familiar music," he says. But not all distractions are bad, however. If you are doing something repetitive like stuffing envelopes or laying bricks, being distracted by listening to music or a podcast or engaging in a conversation with a co-worker can ultimately boost productivity.

How to stay awake?

F. During dull meetings, it is sometimes hard to stifle a yawn. In the worst case, you feel your eyes getting heavier and heavier… Next time you gruntingly return from the land of nod to your colleagues' disapproving stares, try blaming the room. The fact is, our buildings are making us sleepy. "In the past 40 years, we have tried to conserve energy by building airtight offices," says Joseph Allen at Harvard University. "But it's not beneficial to the people working within." As ventilation rates fall, odours and harmful chemicals build up. In poorly ventilated offices, carbon dioxide can reach as high as 2500 parts per million, a concentration more than six times that outdoors. This increases the incidence not just of fatigue, but also of headache and respiratory tract irritation.

G. In controlled experiments, Allen and his team put workers in an office space in which the CO2 level was varied from day to day, and measured their information-gathering skills, attention levels and ability to manage crises. On days when the CO2 concentration

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was at a common indoor level, workers performed 15 per cent worse than when the level of this gas was halved. If the windows are sealed in your workplace, the best thing you can hope for is a good ventilation system. Otherwise, crack open windows regularly to replenish indoor oxygen. If colleagues who are sensitive to the cold protest, tell them it is for their own good.

H. While you are there, take a good look at the view, too. "Human eyes are organs to exercise. It's good to focus on something far away, then near and then far away," says architect Vivian Loftness at Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania. The muscles in your eyes will get stiff after too long staring at a computer screen, increasing your sense of tiredness. Plus, exposure to daylight has a role in regulating the hormone melatonin. This helps us stay awake during the day and get a good night's sleep – the number-one way to avoid embarrassing board-room snoozes.

Questions 27-30

Reading Passage 3 has eight sections, ***A-H***.

Which section contains the following information?

Write the correct letter, ***A-I***, in boxes *27-30* on your answer sheet.

27. a downside of open workspace driving us to isolate ourselves

28. a measured drop in performance resulted from higher concentration of a particular toxic gas

29. several types of beneficial distractions in certain situations

30. the severe consequences of inadequate ventilation on workers' health

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Questions 31-34

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 3?

*In boxes **31-34** 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 on this

31. People are able to choose places where they feel most suitable for working in non-territorial offices.

32. Working at home may prevent you from being distracted more easily compared to working in an office.

33. Listening to recognizable tunes is a good way to stay away from distractions.

34. Talking to another person when doing monotonous tasks can improve productivity.

Questions 35-40

Looking at the following statements and the list of people's names below.

Match each statement with the correct person, **A-F.**

Write the correct letter, **A-F**, in boxes **8-13** on your answer sheet.

List of people

A. Joseph Allen

B. Casey Lindberg

C. Adrian Furnham

D. Vivian Loftness

E. Theo van der Voordt

F. William Bordass

35. The interior design of workplace might affect people's productivity.

36. Fascinating words from others can act as a distraction in workplace.

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37. Workplace design should be divided into areas which suit different working preferences.

38. Airtight buildings might be harmful to people working inside.

39. People can relax their eyes by alternating their distance-related visual concentration.

40. People tend to deliberately hold their preferred working territories.

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