

Exam practice 5

Where do you eat?

A As our lives get busier, some parts of our behaviour are changing quite dramatically. We may interrupt a conversation to answer a mobile phone, or spend most of our day looking at a computer screen rather than communicating with the people around us. It seems that food consumption is also changing. Fewer people now eat meals as a family around a table. This shift in behaviour is partly caused by changes in the way we interact, but what are the effects of it?

B A lot of research has been done recently about the effects of eating in front of a TV or computer. Some of these studies have revealed that eating in this way has an effect on our awareness, attention and memory – showing that people who eat while looking at a screen are less aware of how much they have consumed because they are distracted. On average, people who eat snacks while watching TV increase their usual food intake by 10%. And at a meal later in the day, they may increase the amount they eat by more than 25%.

C But TVs and computers are not the only things that affect what and how we eat. Experimental psychologists at Oxford University have been looking at ‘multisensory dining’ and how it changes our food intake. Some of their findings are very interesting. For example, people who prefer strong coffee will drink more in brightly lit rooms, while people who prefer weaker coffee will drink more in darker rooms. In addition, people have rated wine as sweeter when it is consumed in a room with red lighting.

D Other research has shown that the colour of a plate can affect what we think. When people ate strawberry-flavoured mousse from a white plate, it was perceived as fifteen per cent more intense and ten per cent sweeter than when it was served from a black plate. This may be due to colour contrast, but that does not explain why, in a similar experiment, people judged unsalted popcorn to be salty when eaten from a blue bowl.

E Restaurant owners have taken note of the effect of our environment on what we eat and are changing the way they do business. This can mean changing the lighting and decoration in the restaurant. One restaurant in Chicago has removed artwork from the walls to ensure diners are not distracted from the food. As we become more aware of how *where* we eat affects *what* we eat, and by just how much, our behaviour at mealtimes may begin to change again.

Reading

- 1 Read the text and mark the sentences *true* or *false*. Provide evidence from the text to justify your answers.**
- 1 Eating in front of a TV has little effect on people.
.....
 - 2 Researchers discovered that colour affects what we eat.
.....
 - 3 Business owners aren’t interested in the research.
.....
- 2 Answer the questions according to the information given in the text. Use your own words and full sentences.**
- 1 Why do people eat more in front of a TV or computer?
.....
 - 2 What is the effect of red on wine drinkers?
.....
 - 3 What is one possible explanation for different perceptions of food on differently coloured plates?
.....
 - 4 How are restaurant owners reacting to the research?
.....

Use of English

- 3 Circle the word that is the odd one out in each group.**
- 1 change / shift / transition / beginning
 - 2 consume / drink / serve / eat
 - 3 awareness / understanding / perception / distraction
 - 4 effect / conclusion / result / consequence
- 4 Join the sentences using suitable linkers.**
- 1 Most people have busier lives. They don’t usually eat together.
.....
 - 2 People need to eat away from the TV and computer. It will improve their health.
.....
 - 3 People drank wine under a red light. Due to this, they said the wine tasted sweeter.
.....

Writing

- 5 Choose *one* of the tasks. Write 100–150 words.**
- 1 You have read about a part-time job working in a sports club. Write a formal email to the employers applying for the job, explaining why you are interested and asking for further information.
 - 2 Write an opinion essay with the following title: ‘People behave differently when they are in large groups because we are all influenced by society.’ Discuss.

