Work and leisure

READING A room with a view

Read the text about working on the International Space Station, then choose the correct answer (A, B, C, or D) for questions 1–6. Put a cross (☒) in the correct box. The first one (0) has been done for you.

A room with a view

If you look up into the night sky, you may see a light passing overhead. It could well be the ISS (International Space Station), which is the largest artificial satellite currently orbiting Earth and is visible to the naked eye. For many young people, working as an astronaut would be a dream job, but what is the reality of life in space?

The ISS is constantly occupied by an international crew with a maximum of six astronauts. The crew of the space station works on a wide variety of research projects and carries out necessary repairs aboard the station. So whilst there's some free time to play around in the microgravity of the space station, working as a scientist or technician on board of the ISS is a serious business.

Before they can get started with their scientific work, astronauts need to learn to handle their new environment. Daily routines which we take for granted can be much more difficult in space. We all know that astronauts need special 'space food' which is packed so that it can be consumed without it floating away. However, even simple activities such as sprinkling salt on food can present difficulties. Ordinary salt and pepper would float around and could cause problems either for the air systems on the space station or get into the astronauts' airways causing them to choke. For this reason, salt and pepper are stored as liquids.

We are also familiar with the fact that astronauts cannot use a normal toilet: they have a type of 'vacuum cleaner'. And even sleeping in space can be tricky. Whilst it makes no difference which way up an astronaut sleeps – seeing as there's no up or down in space – they do need to fix themselves onto a surface in their small cabin. They have special sleeping bags so they don't float away!

The ISS is used to learn more about living and working in space. These lessons will make it possible to send humans farther across the universe than ever before. However, many medical and technical innovations on Earth are the result of work done on the ISS too. For example, the ISS has systems designed to purify and recycle the water on a daily basis as they only have a limited supply. This technology has been used to help provide clean water for people in areas where there is not enough drinking water. Also, the robotic arms on the station have been adapted to create surgical robotic arms which can remove tumours.

One of the advantages of the ISS being in a relatively low orbit over the Earth is that astronauts are able to make observations of geographical features such as mountains and glaciers. They can even monitor endangered coral reefs. It is possible to check the effects of global warming and pollution by measuring the size of glaciers and reefs to see if they are shrinking. This information can be sent back to scientists on Earth.

Working as an astronaut is certainly exciting but it may not be as glamorous – or even as well-paid – as it seems. Compared to many top-level jobs in business the pay is modest, and spending months eating 'space food' is not everyone's idea of luxury. However, the rewards in terms of contributing towards ground-breaking technical and medical developments mean it surely must remain a dream job for many. The view from the office window isn't bad either!

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0 The ISS is

A	a piece of space junk floating around the Earth.	☐
B	the largest man-made object in the Earth's orbit.	☒
C	only visible with a telescope.	☐
D	an object that doesn't move.	☐

1 The crew of the ISS

A	must always consist of six people.	☐
B	sometimes leave the space station unmanned.	☐
C	carry out more than just research.	☐
D	spend most of their time playing in microgravity.	☐

2 Living and working in space

A	can be learned whilst doing scientific research.	☐
B	takes some getting used to.	☐
C	isn't so much different to living and working on Earth.	☐
D	is something astronauts never have difficulties with.	☐

3 Crews use salt and pepper in liquid form so that

A	they won't get into the astronauts' nose and mouth.	☐
B	the space food becomes easier to swallow.	☐
C	they take up less storage space.	☐
D	they can be stored for longer.	☐

4 Astronauts sleep in a sleeping bag

A	floating anywhere they like.	☐
B	floating inside their small cabin.	☐
C	attached to one another.	☐
D	attached somewhere in their small cabin.	☐

5 Water cleaning systems from the ISS

A	have been used to help people in need on Earth.	☐
B	usually end up as space junk orbiting Earth.	☐
C	had an influence on the development of robotic arms.	☐
D	were first developed in areas with no clean water.	☐

6 Being an astronaut on the ISS

A	pays the same as a high-level job in business.	☐
B	doesn't have any good sides.	☐
C	is certainly a dream job for everyone.	☐
D	brings with it the satisfaction of making a difference.	☐

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Answer key

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1 C, **2** B, **3** A, **4** D, **5** A, **6** D

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