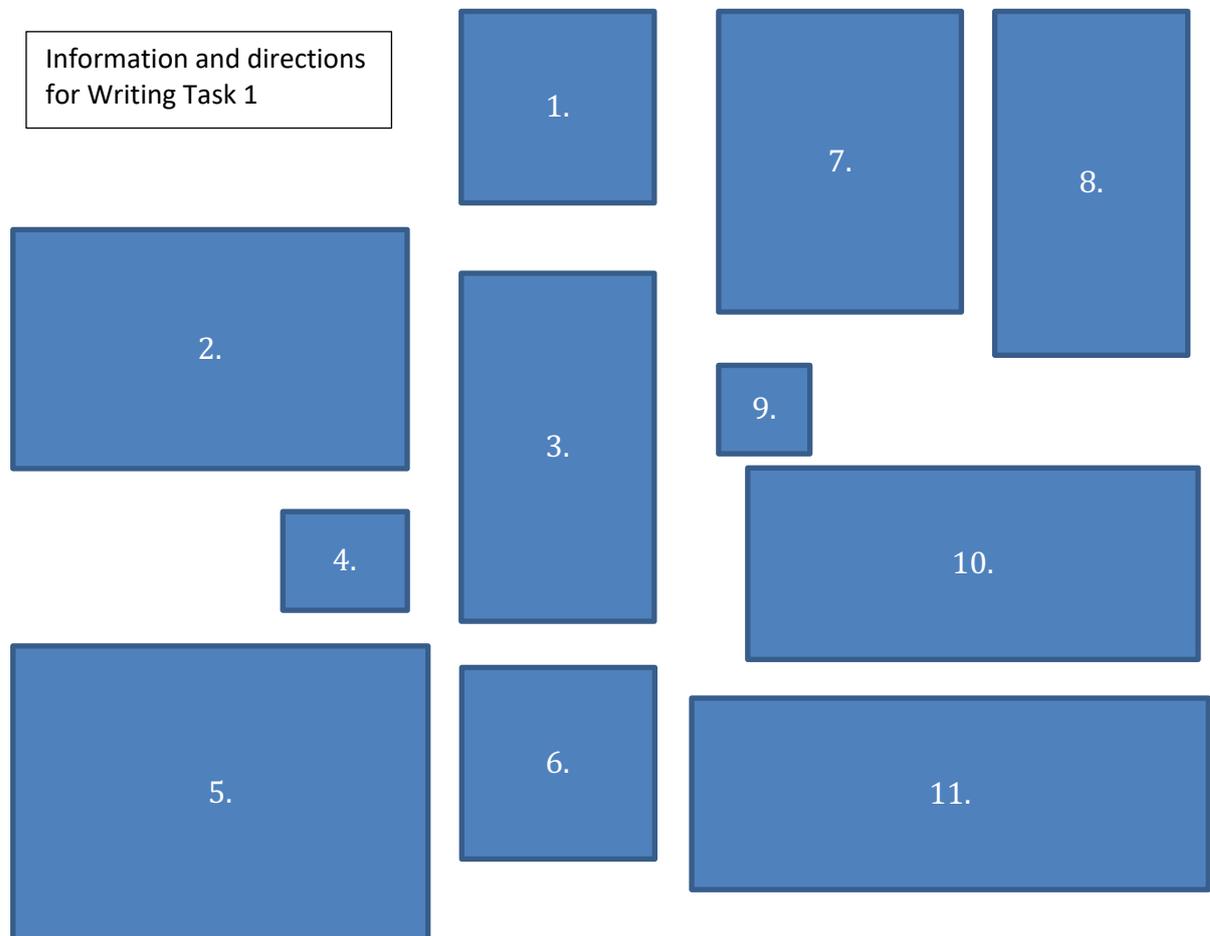


Numbering the stimulus material in Writing task 1.

The rectangles represent the 11 pieces of information provided for the exposition.



Scents of... smell

People have valued the scent of perfume for ages. Beautiful and ornate perfume bottles have been found in the tombs of ancient Egyptian pharaohs. Today, global perfume industry sales are measured in the tens of billions of dollars. (1, 11)

Because the suggestiveness of smells can be overwhelming (5)- they can disgust us or enchant us- as well as spending a lot of money on perfumes, we buy deodorants (10) to conceal our natural bodily odours from one another. Both markets, for perfume and for deodorant, are growing steadily. (11) The way we smell (7) has a physical effect on other members of our species so we can infer that other people will enjoy a perfume as we do or recoil from an unpleasant odour, as we do. However, about 2% of the population is allergic to perfume (11) and our attempt to make ourselves more attractive in this way might have the opposite effect from the one we intended.

(2) Smells are picked up by the olfactory bulb in the nose as it comes into contact with microscopic odour particles. The brain interprets these smells and connects them with long-term memory. Our ability to recall smells (11) is much greater than our ability to remember things we have seen. (11) Our sense of smell and our ability to taste are closely connected, and our pleasure in good food derives partly from the way it smells. Food that smells disgusting, (6) like old fish, repels us. Because the sense of smell and taste is closely linked, (11) things that smell bad will probably taste bad. This obviously is important in protecting us from food poisoning and other harm. The scents of the mother (7) and her child helps bond the two in the early days of their relationship. Thus, our sense of smell helps us survive from infancy and throughout our lives.

An individual's sense of smell is influenced by many things such as diet, (2) age and the weather. Human sense of smell is at its most acute when a person is about ten years of age. This is useful for survival because the judgements a of ten-year-old are sometimes flawed and a sharp sense of smell might warn the young individual not to stay near, or ingest, substances that smell bad, which might also be toxic or dangerous.

Our ability to detect odours can give us great pleasure (4, 9) and also protect us but the human sense of smell is much less acute than that of other species such as rabbits and dogs(8), whose smell receptors are far more abundant than those of human beings. Unlike dogs, modern homo sapiens do not need to be able to draw conclusions about the way our quarry went, or which of our neighbours last urinated on wall we are now walking past. (3,8)

Meaningful work and a purposeful life

It is true that meaningful work can give people's lives a sense of purpose, and those who have this sort of work are very lucky. If people's work is in line with their values and they can think of themselves as benefiting others or society more generally, then their motivation to work hard will be high, along with their sense of satisfaction as they complete it.

But many people do not make a living by doing work that they find meaningful. A lot of work is not very fulfilling. Working on a production line or doing highly repetitive piecework might not seem very meaningful when one has no idea of the final product or of the sort of contribution one is making to the group of people who are working towards completing the final product.

What gives many people a sense of purpose in their lives is not their work but the relationship they have or look forward to having with a partner and children. I think lots of people work at whatever they can find, or whatever pays well enough, so that they can afford to look after themselves and their families well and save towards luxuries like holidays away or some new furniture. Instead of focusing on the meaningfulness or otherwise of their work, they think and dream about the lives they will be able to give their family- the education they will be able to afford for their kids, the comfort of the house they will buy eventually, the pleasure that they will all enjoy during a shared holiday they plan to take in a couple of years' time.

People who enjoy the work they do and value it highly can sometimes let it become all-consuming. One hears of career-oriented people who regret that they did not spend more time with their children as they were growing up. In hindsight, they realise that their purpose in life did not really reside in their work but in relationships they were able to build with the people they love.

The work to live philosophy

“I don’t live to work; I work to live.” That is my brother’s motto, and I agree with him. Living is meant to be fulfilling and enjoyable, but too many people are so absorbed in their work, and think they are indispensable in their jobs. They forget about having fun and caring for their friends and family.

Don’t get me wrong; work is necessary, even enjoyable, but you need to have boundaries. If you take your work home with you, or if you don’t even take a break during the day for lunch or a chat with workmates, then you’ve got the balance completely out of whack. You are forgetting that looking after social relationships, and your health – mental and physical – are your responsibility too. My cousin is a chef. He is a food nut. He works about 10-12 hours six days a week, and in his ‘spare time’ he pores over recipe books and searches online for new ideas. He never takes a break. His only leisure is going out for a meal and even then, he’s assessing it as a possible addition to his own menu. He looks exhausted all the time.

Right now, I work a couple of shifts a week at Maccas, and when I’m there I really enjoy it. They want me to do more, but I need time to study and time to wind down with friends as well, so I have resisted the temptation to make more money and climb the hierarchy. When I finish studying and find a full-time job, I want it to be one that I can switch off at the end of the day. I want to be able to head home, eager for the possibilities that a free evening or a whole weekend have to offer. My favourite pastimes are hiking and camping, and I have a great group of mates who love it like I do. Sure, we need money to be able to buy equipment, pay for petrol and all that, but if we didn’t have a ‘work to live’ philosophy we wouldn’t get the most out of our leisure time.