

Reading



Orientation

1 Discuss these questions with another student.

- What does the word 'wireless' mean when referring to modern technologies? What did the word 'wireless' mean fifty years ago?
- What 'wireless' technologies and applications do you know about?
- What does this technology allow people to do?
- What are the practical alternatives to working this way?

2 Read the text below quickly to check your ideas.

Making notes

3 As you read a text, making notes can help you identify and remember the main points and how they are related.

- Read paragraphs 1–4 of the text again, and identify the key idea in each paragraph.
- Complete these notes on paragraphs 1–4. First, complete the key ideas column with appropriate words and phrases. Then complete the notes in the Details column.

note

IELTS questions normally reflect the organization and ideas of the text. Practising note-taking is an effective way of preparing for the test.

Paragraph	Key idea	Details
Para 1	three <i>technologies associated with</i> mobile working	mobile phones, text messaging and
Para 2 of mobile devices for	lets them work ; there is less
Para 3	real-time working	benefits to , employees and
Para 4 of mobile devices	advantages and of this

4 Make similar notes on the rest of the text. When you have finished, compare them with another student. Have you both selected the same key points?

- 5 **IT'S DIFFICULT TO REMEMBER A TIME** when we lived without mobile phones, SMS text messaging, and email. In those far-off days of landlines and snail mail, who could possibly have predicted that these technologies would become such an integral part of our daily lives. Text messaging especially was never predicted to take off in the way it has, becoming the norm in instant communication for everyone from primary school children to executives. In the same way, as a new generation of portable devices is emerging, the implications for how and where we work and play are still taking shape.

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Mobile devices will probably never entirely replace the wired systems that define our workplaces, but they will offer a range of new working possibilities, allowing people the freedom to work in ways better suited to their needs. The advantages for a workforce who adopt the new technologies are considerable, not least the impact on productivity. A range of products and services is now available to enable users to manage emails, access databases, or edit documents when they are on the move. A simple calculation of the benefits this provides can be quite surprising. If each employee spends a total of ten hours a week travelling, this represents millions of pounds a year in lost productivity.

The new technology also means that the component parts of a business can work together in real time. Whereas staff on the move have traditionally had to wait for their return to the office in order to type up notes or update their records, they can now enter information directly into the system from any location. Likewise, by being able to access information on the move, employees can offer a more complete service to clients, accessing details from a central database and potentially placing orders on the spot.

The other advantage of the currently available technologies is the flexibility to adapt the devices which employees use to their particular role in an organization. Some might need laptops to manage larger documents, others might use smaller hand-held devices for quick emails and product tracking purposes, but all the devices can feed into the same system in different ways. The downside of this flexibility is that the options for business can be mesmerizing. Currently the three main wireless technologies in operation are Bluetooth, GPRS and WiFi. Each technology has different capabilities and particular strengths and weaknesses.

In situations where secure short-range connections between devices such as personal computers and mobile phones are required, Bluetooth technology provides an ideal cost-effective service. Bluetooth, which typically has a range of about ten metres, works well in small office space and provides flexibility for businesses where mobile employees come into an office to download information from their laptop computers or to access databases. The

main disadvantage of Bluetooth is that data transfer is relatively slow at 1 MB per second. If speed of data transfer is important, then WiFi, short for Wireless Fidelity, is vastly superior to Bluetooth. Although it works over a relatively short range, it can transmit data at up to 54 MB per second. It is most useful for individuals who need to work remotely, for instance while travelling. To do this, users have to locate a 'hotspot' near to where they happen to be, for example in a café or a public library. Hotspots operate over a range of 100 metres and allow access by 256 users at any one time.

GPRS, General Packet Radio Service, is a technology related to mobile phones which allows transmission of emails and small amounts of data as well as high-speed access to the Internet. It is ideal for reliable communication as well as Internet browsing, but is not suitable for full mobile working in the way that WiFi is, because of the restricted amounts of data that can be transmitted at any one time.

Two other important aspects of the new technologies which need to be considered are security and cost. Currently, because it works within a limited environment, Bluetooth is more secure than WiFi or GPRS, but in terms of cost, GPRS is relatively cheap with mobile phone networks offering a range of value-for-money packages. Bluetooth technology is built into the latest versions of mobile phones and other devices, but an adapter which adds Bluetooth capability to a device costs only about £50. To set up a WiFi hotspot can cost from £120 to £500, but an individual network card allowing users access at existing hotspots costs between £40 and £60.

With this range of technologies competing for users and others currently being developed, it is fascinating to speculate where this communications revolution will lead. No one expects it to end. The companies developing the technologies would like to see everybody connecting to the Internet via a hotspot in their local fast-food restaurant, or accessing their emails on high-speed trains via their laptop. In reality, however, it is the users, not the developers of the technology, who will finally decide which ideas take off and which remain the pipe-dreams of their inventors. ■

note

Study the layout of tables carefully, especially the organizing features, like the headings at the top of the columns.

5 In the IELTS Reading test you may have to complete a table with information from a text in note form. Study the table below and discuss these questions with a partner.

- How is the table organized?
- What kind of information do you need to find in the text?
- What makes tables like this an effective approach to making notes?

IELTS practice

Questions 1–7: Table completion

Complete the table below. Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer.

Technology	Range	Data transfer per second	Cost	Best for
Bluetooth	(1).....	1 MB	(4)..... for an adapter	secure short-range connections
WiFi	(2).....	(3).....	(5)..... for a network card	people who need to work while (6).....
GPRS	no limit		value-for-money packages	(7)..... and Internet browsing

Question 8: Multiple-choice question

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C, or D. Which of the following is the most suitable title for the text?

- Technology companies determine future work patterns.
- An introduction to wireless technology.
- Wired and wireless technologies: a comparison.
- The impact of wireless technology on productivity.