

OLIMPIADA DE LIMBA ENGLEZĂ**ETAPA LOCALĂ****12 FEBRUARIE 2026****CLASA a IX-a****SECȚIUNEA B****SUBIECTUL A - USE OF ENGLISH****40 points****I. Read the text below and complete the following tasks.**

The average attention span has shrunk to roughly 40 seconds. Here's how to get it back.

Think about the last time you paused what you were doing to check something else—an email, a message, a notification. How far into your original task were you before you switched? For most people, the answer is less than a minute.

Over the past two decades, researchers have found that the average time people stay focused on a single task has dropped from about 2.5 minutes to roughly 40 seconds. That **erosion** of sustained attention is linked to higher stress, more errors, and reduced productivity. But scientists who study attention say the trend is not irreversible. With targeted strategies and training, they've found, the brain's capacity to focus can be strengthened again.

It's easy to assume that rapidly switching between tasks enables multitasking. But from a cognitive perspective, that's not possible. Our ability to focus can be directed to only one thing at a time, says Amishi Jha, a psychology professor at the University of Miami.

Attention, broadly defined, is the ability to direct the mind on a specific task, says Gloria Mark, author of *Attention Span: A Groundbreaking Way to Restore Balance, Happiness and Productivity*. There are two main types of attention, Mark explains. Involuntary attention is automatic—it's what allows us to react to a loud noise or a **jarringly** bright light. Focalized attention, by contrast, is the ability to concentrate on a specific task. This latter type is what scientists measure when researching attention spans.

Juggling multiple projects and responsibilities, and working against a backdrop of constant notifications, is a non-negotiable part of life for most people. But as experts like Jha and Mark explain, we can protect and replenish our limited attention even against the pressure of modern life.

One place to start is timing. Mark suggests planning demanding work around your chronotype—your body's natural rhythms of alertness and fatigue. To find out about your chronotype, keep a journal and note down your daily ebbs and flows of alertness and focus.

Once you have this personal attention map, you can plan your most important tasks around your “peaks of attention.” During those windows, Mark recommends minimizing **interruptions** by silencing notifications, blocking social media, and reducing other distractions.

(Vittoria Traverso, *National Geographic*, January 20, 2026)

A. Answer the following questions:

8 points

1. What has happened to the average attention span over the last 20 years?
2. According to the text, why is the idea of "multitasking" a misconception?
3. What is the difference between "involuntary" and "focalized" attention?
4. How does Gloria Mark suggest we use our "chronotype" to improve productivity?

B. Choose the correct synonyms of the underlined words in the text.

6 points

1. **erosion**: a) corrosion b) breakdown c) dissolution d) decline
2. **jarringly**: a) confusingly b) remarkably c) startlingly d) impressively
3. **interruptions** a) disturbances b) hiccups c) intervals d) distortions

C. Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

6 points

1. Scientists who study attention say the trend is not irreversible. **POSSIBLE**
According to attention researchers,the trend.
2. With targeted strategies and training, they've found, the brain's capacity to focus can be strengthened again. **USEFUL**
Targeted strategies and trainingfor strengthening the brain's capacity.
3. That erosion of sustained attention is linked to higher stress, more errors, and reduced productivity. **IN**
Erosion of sustained attentionhigher stress, more errors, and reduced productivity.

II. Read the text below and use the words given in capitals below to form words that fit in the gaps.

10 points

To ski or snowboard in Colorado is to experience the pinnacle of winter sports. The state of Colorado is known for its spectacular scenery and (1) (**BREATH**) views, which inspire today's travellers as much as they spurred on the (2) (**SETTLE**) who first arrived in this part of the US over a century ago. And whether you're seeking the outdoor adventure of a (3) (**LIFE**) exciting nightlife or a great family getaway, Colorado has everything you need.

November through April, snow conditions are (4) (**CONSIST**) and reliable, featuring Colorado's (5) (**LEGEND**) 'champagne powder' snow. Extensive

snowmaking and grooming operations always keep trails in top shape. The mountain destinations in the Colorado Rockies can turn your wildest ski dreams into thrilling (6) (REAL). There, you'll find the best skiing and snowboarding on (7) (PICTURE) slopes, as well as the finest ski schools in the US. Together, they present an (8) (PARALLEL) winter paradise. And the best part is that you'll enjoy friendly, (9) (CARE) service in resorts that are (10) (COMMIT) to delivering the highest quality amenities.

III. Translate into English:

10 points

„Ar fi putut prinde autobuzul de 8 dimineața, dar apropiindu-se de stație, zări o femeie tânără și i se păru că-l așteaptă pe el, așezată pe o bancă, prefăcându-se că citește. O văzu cum ridică mereu ochii din revistă și cercetează curios în jurul ei, întorcând uneori capul spre mesele de pe trotuar. Emanuel apucă pe prima străduță care-i ieși în cale, și pentru că foarte curând dădu cu ochii de o frizerie, intră înăuntru. Când reveni, pe la 8 jumătate, femeia era tot acolo pe bancă, răsfoind plictisită revista.”

(Mircea Eliade – *Pe strada Mântuleasa*)

SUBIECTUL B - INTEGRATED SKILLS

50 points

Read the text below and do the tasks that follow.

Deadly TikTok Challenges

TikTok, the popular app, that allows users to create and share short videos, is now the most downloaded app in the world. One of the most popular ways users engage with the app is to carry out challenges. (1) A successful challenge will go viral, with hundreds of thousands of people around the world taking part.

Copying another's person's video is hardly original or creative. Even so, it's easy to see the appeal, especially among young audiences. Anyone with a Smartphone can get involved. (2) Users can just ride the trend to gain popularity. As a result, challenges are ideal for people who have a little spare time, enjoy performing and like getting attention. Unsurprisingly, most of those who take part are children, teenagers and young adults.

The problem is that these are the very people who are most at risk from performing challenges. This is because the part of the brain that handles rational thought is not fully developed in humans until we are in our mid-20s. Until then, we are less able to make long-term plans and analyse risk. It's no secret that the young brain values things that provide a sense of inclusion and popularity. (3)

The TikTok challenge trend has had severe consequences. In 2020, the “skull-breaker” challenge, which involves two people kicking a third person's legs to make them fall over, caused teenagers in both the UK and the US to be badly injured. In response, TikTok stated that it did not allow content that encourages dangerous challenges that might lead to injury. (4) Any such content on its platform would be removed. Users searching for the skull-breaker challenge would only see a warning about its dangers.

This reaction was clearly not thorough enough because, in 2021, several fatal incidents occurred resulting from another viral challenge on TikTok, the “blackout” challenge, which encouraged people to choke themselves until they passed out. Three youngsters died from attempting this challenge in January 2021. This was followed later in the year by a number of deaths in the USA and UK. Two of those who died were young girls under the age of ten.
(5)

These tragic events have raised serious questions about the responsibility of social media platforms. Although the challenge did not originate on TikTok and has appeared on other platforms as well, many parents believe that social media companies should do more to protect young users. Finding a balance between creativity, entertainment and online safety remains a major challenge.

I. For questions 1-5, complete the text with the correct sentence. There is one extra sentence that you do not need to use. 10 points

- A. The bereaved families are suing TikTok for spreading the challenge among impressionable youngsters.
- B. They allow users not only to express their creativity through editing and special effects but also to participate and engage with a worldwide community.
- C. These encourage people to video themselves doing some kind of activity, such as singing, dancing or acting.
- D. The more attention a young person’s stunt might get, the less likely he or she is to consider its potential risks.
- E. It added that doing so was not funny and certainly wouldn’t make users famous.
- F. No talent is required beyond a little extroversion and commitment.

II. You see this announcement in your college English-language magazine:

App reviews wanted!

Have you recently used a social media app such as TikTok? Write us a **review** of the app explaining what it is used for and what users can do on it. Mention what you like or dislike about the app, including any advantages or risks for teenagers. Tell us whether or not you would recommend this app to other people.

The best reviews will be published in the magazine.

Write your review in 200-220 words.

40 points

TOTAL: 90 POINTS

NOTĂ: TOATE SUBIECTELE SUNT OBLIGATORII.

TIMPUL DE LUCRU ESTE DE 3h.

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