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Resources allowed: English/English dictionary – Collins Cobuild Advanced or equivalent

Notes: There are three sections in this exam. The M&S article is at the end of the examination packet.

SECTION I - 25 points

Read the article *Not quite there* about Marks & Spencers (M&S). Using the information in the article, select the correct answers to the questions. Some questions may have more than one correct answer. Select **all** of the correct answers for each item.

1. According to the most recent six-month report, profits have risen how much since last year?

- a. £600m
- b. 1.7%
- c. 2.3%
- d. 6.3%



e. None of the above

2. Clothing sales at M&S have:

- a. declined sharply
- b. stagnated
- c. risen dramatically
- d. held steady
- e. declined gradually

3. M&S's shareholders are described as:

- a. surrounded by concerns or worries
- b. deeply depressed
- c. relieved by the good news
- d. jumping ship

4. Which word or phrase best describes Britain's grocery market.

- a. very profitable
- b. sluggish
- c. slowly improving sales
- d. in decline

5. Which of the following factors might explain the increase in M&S food division profits?

- a. A focus on a wide-range of consumers
- b. Discounted food prices
- c. Britons no longer prefer large grocery stores
- d. A focus on healthy food selections

6. Which of the following factors is linked to the state of M&S's clothing sales?

- a. A general national decline in clothing sales since the financial crisis
- b. The broad demographic appeal of the M&S clothing line
- c. The fact that older consumers now demand fashionable choices
- d. The focus on a narrow segment of the buying public

Select the best word to fill each gap in the sentences below. Choose only **one** word for each question.

7. M&S is an old high street _____

- a. dealer
- b. wholesaler
- c. retailer
- d. investor

8. Launching a new website will cut into the _____ at M&S stores.

- a. market share
- b. food sales
- c. profit margin
- d. disposable income

9. The British high street is dominated by _____

- a. niche retailers
- b. grocery stores
- c. homeware sales
- d. large firms

10. Marc Bolland has _____

- a. sunk M&S deeper in debt
- b. introduced a new womenswear range
- c. stopped the company from losing money
- d. purchased the company



SECTION II – 40 points

Insert the most appropriate article – a, an, the or Ø - in the blanks of the following paragraph. Ø represents no article. Several of these items may have more than one correct choice. Choose only **one** of the correct choices for those items. You may simply write the number in the parenthesis and the selected article on you answer sheet.

When it pays to complain

A dissatisfied customer who complains is just as likely to remain loyal as _____ (1) completely satisfied customer. This surprising state of affairs has been observed by British Airways, which has turned the handling of _____ (2) complaints into something of _____ (3) science.

Charles Weiser, _____ (4) president of BA, calculates that about 13% of all of his customers are completely happy but will never fly with _____ (5) airline again. These customers may have moved, found _____ (6) frequent flyer program that better suited them, or found _____ (7) airline offering lower prices.

Half of all customers who experience problems but do not complain will not use _____ (8) airline again. This contrasts with the customers who are dissatisfied, but do issue _____ (9) complaints. Only 13% of this group will never use _____ (10) airline again.

Gerunds and Infinitives:

Complete each sentence using the appropriate form of the verb – either an infinitive or a gerund - in brackets.

Example. It is fascinating to show (show) groups of overseas visitors who have come to London something new and modern.

11. _____ (evaluate) risk is not easy to do in a complex and volatile market.

12. After describing the terrible journey, he went on _____ (complain) about the hotel room.

13. If you delay _____ (pay) the invoice there may be a 10% penalty charge.

14. Back in 1995, when Pierre Omidyar unveiled Auction Web, he had much more in mind than simply _____ (help) his girlfriend trade Pez dispensers.

15. Through generous donations to charity, Omidyar hopes _____ (give) others the chance to open their own businesses.

Sometimes, the choice of infinitive or gerund changes the meaning of a sentence. Explain the differences in meaning between sentence **a** and sentence **b** in the following two sentence pairs.

16. a. They stopped to take extra passengers on board.

b. They stopped taking extra passengers on board.

17. a. I'll try to phone her when the meeting finishes.
b. I'll try phoning her when the meeting finishes.

Conditional can do the following things.

- a. describe an unusual state of affairs
- b. talk about the past
- c. make an offer
- d. make a recommendation
- e. make a polite request
- f. describe an impossible situation

Which of these tasks (items a – f) do the following sentences perform. Some of these sentences may do several things. Select the item you believe is the dominant function of the conditional. You may add a sentence or two explaining your choices.

18. If you have enough time, you might want to visit the old library.
19. Should you have any problems, please let me know.
20. If I were you, I'd avoid the crowded areas.
21. If I had known you want to go to the main office, I would have offered you a lift.



Adjectives

Place the following adjectives in order from strongest (1) to weakest (5). You may write a couple of sentences explaining your choices.

22. slide, plummet, decline, fall, dip

Write the following examples of direct speech as reported speech.

Example: Don't file the report before I check the numbers.

He told me not to file the report before he checked the numbers.

23. The meeting will discuss M&S's new strategy to maximize sales.

24. I didn't want you to go public with that information.

25. If the numbers look good, we should go ahead and schedule a press conference.



SECTION III – 35 points

1. Write a brief email based on the following prompt. The email should be clear, well-written and follow English usage and politeness conventions.

Your name is Saul Taggert and you are the manager of an M&S store. Worried about declining clothing sales, M&S is introducing a new womenswear range targeting young professional women. Samples of garments from the new range have been delivered to your store and you would like to hold a meeting for the staff to discuss the launch of the new range. The meeting will be on the eleventh of November at 4pm in the west corner of the second floor. Staff will be able to examine the new garments and to discuss strategies for displaying the new range on the shop floor.

2. In a brief essay of between 6 and 12 complete sentences, discuss some of the features of a good oral presentation.

Marks & Spencer

All latest updates

Not quite there yet

In spite of better-than-expected results, M&S's turnaround still has far to go

Nov 6th 2014 | Business and finance



IN THE mid-20th century almost every large town in Britain had a range of chain stores for customers to choose from: a Lyons tea shop; a Woolworths store; and a branch of Marks & Spencer (M&S). Although high streets today are just as dominated by large firms as they were 60 years ago, most of the names have changed. Lyons and Woolworths are long gone, but branches of M&S still sit proudly in high streets across the country. Yet the chain has not been immune from the rapid changes that Britain's retail market has experienced. Profits have fallen from around £1 billion (\$1.6 billion) before the recession to just £600m in the year to the end of March 2014. And its market share in clothing, especially in its once highly profitable women's fashion division, has been steadily declining.

But M&S's half-yearly results, released on November 5th, delivered some good news for its beleaguered shareholders. Although its clothing sales continued to slide, underlying profits rose 2.3% from last year—a much better performance than analysts had expected. Better still was the news that M&S's profit margins have been rising this year, in contrast to the trend seen at Tesco, a supermarket, and some other fashion retailers, whose earnings are being squeezed.

This has left analysts scratching their heads. The rising profit margins, in a market generally heading the other way, are not the only oddity. One of M&S's successes has been to increase its food sales—up 1.7% over the past six months—when Britain's overall grocery market is stagnating. On the other hand its clothing and homeware sales have fallen for 13 consecutive quarters. Rival retailers have reported strong growth in this area, as consumers spend the proceeds of the economic recovery on updating their wardrobes.

M&S's success in food is partly due to changes in the way most Britons shop, as they shun hypermarkets for smaller convenience stores. That has benefited M&S's Simply Food stores, which have held their market share over the past few years. Meanwhile mid-market supermarkets, such as Tesco and Morrisons (which announced a 6.3% fall in like-for-like sales over the last three months on November 6th), face stiff competition from budget supermarkets such as Aldi and Lidl, topped up with occasional treats from M&S.

Although food sales have been a surprise success story, the firm's clothing lines have performed less well. A quick perusal of the shop floor may suggest why. While M&S's food halls attract both young and old shoppers to their aisles, the retailer's clothing department only appeals to a narrower cross-section of its potential market. This year's clothing range has disappointed both youngsters (for not



being hip enough) as well as wrinklies (for being too fashionable). Occupying the middle ground, it seems, has done the firm few favours. One normally loyal shopper in a north London branch complained to your correspondent that “you can't even tell what sort of people these clothes are aimed at”.

Although M&S's womenswear sales are no longer falling in absolute terms, Marc Bolland, the firm's boss, still has much to do to turn the retailer around. There has been scant evidence that M&S can retake market share from clothing rivals such as BHS, Debenhams or Next—whose ranges have broader demographic appeal. And analysts generally agree that the launch of M&S's new website is more likely to cannibalise its high-street sales in the future and depress its profit margins than help them grow. This week's results may suggest that Mr Bolland has plugged the hole in the bottom of the M&S ship. But bailing out the water may prove to be a far harder task.