

I. Reading tasks

1 Reading

(task type: True / False)
(topic areas: Job life, Culture)

Read the article about British craftsmanship.

First decide whether the statements (1–6) are true (T) or false (F) and put a cross (☒) in the correct box. Then identify the sentence in the text which supports your decision. Write the first four words of this sentence in the spaces provided. There may be more than one correct answer; write down only one. The first one (0) has been done for you.

Why William Asprey is investing in British craft to keep it alive BE

Bespoke handcrafted goods are at the heart of the luxury British brand *William & Son*. The firm's founder, William Asprey, explains how he is investing in the craft industry to prevent traditional skills from dying out. "You only get one chance to make a first impression," says William Asprey, founder of *William & Son*. That's particularly true in the world of luxury goods.

William felt this keenly when moving the brand's flagship boutique to Bruton Street in Mayfair from a smaller premises two years ago. His vision was to create something "really rather special" and he certainly succeeded; the grand, welcoming, two-storey space is an elegant home to *William & Son's* varied inventory, showcasing its clothing collections for men and women alongside watches and jewellery, silverware, leather accessories and a range of guns.

But the selection on display is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what the brand can offer. *William & Son's* founder prides himself on an ability to provide a unique shopping experience. Part of the Mayfair boutique's role is to broaden the client's horizons as to what can be achieved, when finishes and sizes are customised to create utterly bespoke pieces. "There's almost an incredulity when they realise what the options are," he says.

Being able to offer such a highly customisable service is a rarity, and is possible only thanks to the close relationships with the craftspeople who manufacture for *William & Son*. But even better than boasting a good supply network is the fact that the firm owns three specialist factories across the UK, employing a workforce of more than 80 artisans who use traditional techniques handed down through several generations.

It's in the workshops at Simpson, located in the East End of the capital, that the brand's leather goods are created. There, more than 20 deft hands are responsible for bringing luggage, small accessories and board games to life in exotic skins and unique finishes. In Corby, Northamptonshire, the *Chrysalis* factory produces *William & Son's* quintessentially English take on town and country outerwear. Each piece is hand cut and made from natural fibres woven in the British Isles. And over in the Scottish borders, a team of 30 makers in the *Scott & Charters* headquarters weaves quality knitwear. The factory was established more than 60 years ago in Hawick, a town famed internationally for its fine knitwear production.

William admits that keeping British craft alive is a "challenge", partly because certain traditions are declining, but his investment in this sphere shows his undisputable commitment to maintaining such unique levels of workmanship. He hopes that education around craftsmanship, through door-opening initiatives such as *London Craft Week*, will widen the appeal of fine, handmade items intended as keepsakes over short-term purchases, thus welcoming a new breed of consumer.

William believes people perhaps undervalue craft, and over-value price. "When people come into a store and think that something is expensive, it's important for them to pick it up and feel the weight, the quality, the colour – that it's something that has been hand-crafted."

What is the key to ensuring that craft remains a field that future generations aspire to work in?
"Hopefully when people see beautiful things, they will want to try and go into the manufacturing side,"

William says. “Apprenticeships at specialist colleges will encourage people to go into the design element, the manufacturing element, or the craft.”

Innovation may not be a term greatly associated with the British luxury goods industry, and William admits that the manufacturing processes of fine goods won’t dramatically change. But he says: “What can you do to bring a traditional look or design up to date? It’s about knowing how things are manufactured and taking a design, and interpreting it in a modern way.”

0	William & Son’s flagship store is now in Bruton Street in Mayfair.
1	All products offered by William & Son are on display in the flagship store in Mayfair.
2	The workers in production use long-proven methods learned from their ancestors.
3	In Simpson outdoor clothing is produced.
4	William hopes that raising people’s awareness of the uniqueness of craftsmanship will lead to an increase in potential customers.
5	According to William, it is not necessary for customers to touch the products they are going to buy.
6	Having the possibility to go into design makes working in the field of crafts professions more interesting.

	T	F	Justification (First four words)
0	X		<i>William felt this keenly</i>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			