***IMPROVING your WRITING SKILLS: problem-solution essays***

***I CRITICAL THINKING***

**For each PROBLEM and SOLUTION listed below, write a short evaluation, providing a context for the problem. The first one has been done for you:**

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| **PROBLEM** | **SOLUTION** |
| 1. Overuse of or addiction to technology | Limit access to technology |

**Example for Problem/solution1:**

*When children overuse technology, e.g. using mobile phones and playing video games, it is possible to limit access, but this approach might be relatively ineffective. This is because parents cannot control children when they are away from home. At school, technology may be used all the time.*

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| **PROBLEM** | **SOLUTION** |
| 2. Digital divide: some groups of people have technology or access to it, but others do not | Give out free computers; make internet access easier |
| 3. Computer/phone waste | Buy back computers; recycle |
| 4. Health issues due to incorrect use or overuse | Better training; limit or ban access |
| 5. Lack of social cohesion | Ban use of social networking sites |

***II RECOGNIZING EVALUATION***

1. Read the essay title and the first two paragraphs of the essay below and identify:

- the problems

- the solutions

- the evaluation

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| **Title**: The occurrence of the ‘digital divide’ is not just a local concern, but it has international implications. Suggest and evaluate the most effective solutions to address this issue. |

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| The digital divide is a phenomenon that has been growing particularly since the arrival of the internet in the 1990s, which has led to this new form of inequality. The digital divide can be defined as the gap between those who have technology, or access to technology of any kind, and those who do not. The divide does not always occur along geographical lines, urban and rural, but also relates to wealth, age and employment. There is considerable interest in this area, especially as the technological ‘have nots’ now appear to be further left behind. In this essay, I will outline the problems arising from the digital divide in the world today along the aforementioned lines at a national and international level, and I will evaluate the efficacy of a range of solutions.  Let us take the digital divide between urban dwellers and rural dwellers in many countries throughout the world. We can see that, economic considerations apart, there seems to be a growing gap between access to the internet in urban areas compared to rural areas, irrespective of wealth. The latter may, depending on economic status, have restricted access or slower connection to the internet, despite having the appropriate technology. This applies not just to developing countries, but also to areas within mature economies such as the UK. One solution is to make high-speed connections to the internet and computers available to every household, regardless of locality. This would certainly work. It is a clearly viable proposition and has huge implications for the future provided the financing of such a vast project has both private and public funding. It is also possible for urban users to subsidize part of the cost of expanding rural networks. This might be unpopular in urban areas. Nevertheless, it would be an effective way of raising revenue and could be made popular, if it is a short-term venture. |

2. Read the essay again, then identify and comment on:

- the use of linkwords and articulations

- the structure of the second paragraph

- the use of modals to express evaluation

3. Evaluate the solutions described in the second paragraph. Comment on them using as many adjectives as possible.

4. Write a paragraph (50-100 words) developing another possible solution.

***III RECOGNIZING HEDGING LANGUAGE***

1. Make sure you understand what ‘hedging’ means.

2. Read the paragraph below looking at the digital divide from the perspective of age.

Underline the hedging language used by the writer.

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| There is, perhaps, even greater disparity in the availability of and access to technology between the young and the elderly, a gap that is difficult to bridge. However, despite the public image of being technophobes and technologically illiterate, the elderly seem to be able to use technology more than is realized, so a simple solution would be to harness what already exists. For example there seems to be great potential for using older teachers to teach their peers in clubs at their own pace, which would, in fact, be an ideal solution. Looking at the situation from another educational perspective, it is likely that both older people and young people would benefit from the former being involved in the school process, exchanging their life knowledge for computer skills especially with pupils at primary and early secondary schools. There is also the possibility that pupils at primary and secondary schools could be encouraged to teaching grandparent how to use technology and share the skills they learn. This practice would help both groups enormously. It is also even possible for special computer/internet clubs targeted specifically at the elderly to be set up with the aim of connecting them to the world, keeping their minds active, and saving them money. This would be highly effective, benefiting all elderly people but especially those who are less mobile.  So it may seem initially impossible for the problems faced in this area to be overcome, but they are not insurmountable. They just need time. |

3. Consider the whole essay and say if there are improvements/changes that could be made.