



2023 年第一季度口语机经库
1-4 月

学雅思
就上新东方在线」

◆ Topic Pool——Part One (2023.01-04)

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◆ 注：红色为必备话题；蓝色为本季新题；黑色为保留旧题。

Study

1. Do you work or are you a student?

I'm a student at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

I'm a student, and I'm a freshman in Tsinghua University.

I'm a student, a high school student.

2. What subject are you studying?

I'm studying for a Master's degree in Tsinghua University, specializing in the field of Math Studies.

3. Why did you choose that subject?

I chose math because I liked it in high school. I was always strong in math and science, so it seemed like a natural progression. Also, I did some research on career opportunities, and it seemed to be a subject with a promising future.

4. What would you like to do in the future?

I would love to be a teacher. Most of the women in my family are teachers, they have a huge impact on my life. I think it is wonderful to get to change people's lives by what I say or do on the stage. It requires a person to be responsible and caring, and I want to be such a person.

5. What are the most popular subjects in China?

It's hard to say nowadays. You know, due to the globalization, our country is much more developed than ever. Every subject has something to offer to the society. Students just choose their subjects based on what they are interested in, which then, in

turn, can become a trend.

6. Do you think it's important to choose a subject you like?

Definitely! I think interest is the best motivator, if I choose something I'm keen on, I will be willing to sacrifice my leisure time because it is a worthwhile sacrifice to me. In addition, when I face some difficulties, I will do my best to overcome the problems. Quitting in the middle will never be an option. We should consider carefully our choice from the start, rather than carelessly choosing the wrong path, then regretting it.

7. Are you looking forward to working?

I have been wanting to work full time, that's for sure. I can now imagine myself waking up early in the morning, getting my business attire on and sitting behind my office desk. I wonder how it feels to work with other professionals and with the boss always around... It could be stressful but interesting, I guess. The best part I would say would be to finally receive a salary and spend my own money. I would not have to bother my parents then. But, like most things in life, it really depends on what the job is and whether the environment is positive or not.

8. Do you like your subject? (Why? / Why not?)

Honestly, I don't. I am halfway through my college career. But reality struck me when the material we learned in class was much more difficult and the assignments weren't fun. I'm thinking about changing my own major now.

9. Do you prefer to study in the mornings or in the afternoons?

I am not a morning person, I'm afraid. But to be honest, studying in the afternoon is even worse. I get really sleepy from one to four in the afternoon. So, actually, my brain is at its best in the evening. It works better then. I can stay sharp even until very late at night.

10. Is your subject interesting to you?

Absolutely. I find computer science really stimulating. Imagine creating something useful just using codes and numbers. It requires a good level of imagination and quite a good level of number skills, critical thinking and logic skills as well as a keen ability to solve problems.

11. Is there any kind of technology you can use in study?

For studying I use a computer and my phone. I often download research papers and read them on my phone and make notes onto the notes section of my phone too. I use my computer to actually write essays and do other homework tasks.

Work

1. What work do you do?

I am a teacher at a high school. I started working there in Jan 2015 after graduating

from college. I would say it is a pretty challenging job.

2. Why did you choose to do that type of job?

Teaching is my passion. I don't view my career as a "job" per say. I see it more as my calling in life. It is my life's purpose.

3. Do you like your job?

Definitely! I enjoy the variety and special projects where I can take ownership of the final product. My job provides me with both, so yes, it is a good job and I find it very rewarding.

I'm not interested in my job... because it is so mundane and repetitive, two traits I despise and try to stay away from. I hope to find a better job that challenges me to aspire to new heights.

4. Do you miss being a student?

I definitely do! Sometimes I just wonder what would have happened if I had studied harder when I was in university. I just miss the days when I had nothing to worry about but the exams. Now, all the pressure from work and family is difficult to deal with.

5. Is it very interesting?

Most of the time, yes! The daily challenges from new projects provide constant opportunities to learn new things and to some extent re-invent myself. Every day is unique. My colleagues provide me with support but also healthy competition. I find my job most interesting when I am challenged to reach outside of my comfort zone.

6. Is there any kind of technology you use at work?

I use mainly a laptop computer and my phone at work. Sometimes I also use a photocopier scanner, and a video camera if I'm making short promotional videos with my company. But mainly, I just use a computer.

7. Can you manage your time well when you work?

Yes, I am a project manager in my office, so I am quite good at managing my time and the other people's time on the team. I've worked as an IT manager for several years now.

8. Who helps you most at work?

My team members – I have a great team and they are all hardworking, supportive, smart and attentive to the needs of others and the project goals.

Hometown

1. Has your hometown changed much these years?

Absolutely! Take traffic as an example, the most common transport facility used to be

buses, it could be really crowded sometimes since people didn't have any other options. However, today, BRT and subway systems have made people's lives easier than ever.

2. Is that a big city or a small place?

This city is so huge. I often get lost here. Like the other day, I travelled to a new neighborhood that had this restaurant people were raving about. I made a wrong turn and it took me 20 minutes to figure out where I was.

3. How long have you been living here?

For about half my life, so that is about 10 years. I went to school here, and now I'm working in the same city. In fact, time has gone by really quickly because so there's so much to do here and I've been so active.

4. For you, what benefits are there living in a big city?

Well, first of all, there are a great number of opportunities for both education and job-hunting in big cities, which explains why people from small cities, towns and villages are flooding to big cities nowadays. Plus, the fact that cities offer more modern facilities and conveniences makes them even more attractive to people.

5. Is there anything you dislike about it?

Unfortunately, this city has a huge problem with pollution, especially air pollution. The air is so contaminated that we all have to wear masks every time we go out of the house. This problem has escalated to a serious level that it's been catching the attention of the international community. I hope that the government will be able to save this city before the problem gets worse.

6. What do you like most about your hometown?

What I love the most about it is the mystery. I mean there are so many places inside this city that I have yet to explore. I could spend years checking out every restaurant and attraction Beijing has to offer.

7. Where in your country do you live?

I live in Beijing. However, since the city is so big, it would take hours to even scratch the surface, but to sum it up, Beijing is the political and cultural heart, and one of the major economic centers of the world today.

Accommodation

1. Are the transport facilities in your city very good?

Honestly, I wish they were better. I have to walk 20 minutes to the bus stop, and the subway takes another 30 minutes when I get to work. My dream home is a house located right next to a bus stop or subway terminal.

2. Which room does your family spend most of the time in?

My family loves to stay in the living room as this is the only place in the flat where we can do a lot of things together. We play board games, watch films and TV programs. We play cards sometimes and we spend time working on huge puzzles together.

3. Do you live in a house or a flat?

I live in a flat, and my flat is situated in a quiet little neighborhood on the north side of city. My parents first moved there in 2000 when they wanted to start a new life and raise a family.

4. Do you plan to live here for a long time?

Not really! I want to blaze my own trail and live in a place that forces me to reach out and meet new people. I was thinking about moving to Shanghai for a few days to gain a bit more cultural experience of the world.

5. Do you live alone or with your family?

I'm a student at the moment, and I live with my parents. Actually I quite like it, because my mother is the best cook that I know - it's always wonderful to have a tasty meal after a day of school work. We also talk about our days with each other while we're enjoying dinner, it just feels good.

6. How long have you lived there?

I've lived there for three years and I really love my place. Since it's on the 11th floor, it's well ventilated and there is plenty of sunshine. I love to sink into the soft sofa to watch TV and eat snacks. There's a large shopping centre within 5 minutes' walk so it's very convenient for me to go shopping, watch movies and eat out. I wish it was my apartment.

7. What do you usually do in your house/flat/room?

At weekends, I spend most of my time studying and sleeping in my room. On weekdays, I spend time in the kitchen, baking some cakes or sweet stuff for my mother. Sometimes, we watch films in the living room. On Sundays, we usually clean the house and do some laundry.

8. Which is your favourite room in your home?

I think it must be my bedroom. My bedroom is not that big but quite neat. There are some posters of Kobe Bryant on the wall because he is my favorite basketball player. My room is kind of a private space for me - I usually play some video games, do my homework and play the guitar in it.

9. What's the difference between where you are living now and where you lived in the past? (If you want to say you have not lived elsewhere)

I have not moved home at all. I have lived in the same flat since I was born. I love our small place. I have a lot of good memories here, and I treasure them. I'd happily stay

here for many more years?

10. What can you see when you look out the window of your room?

I can see the whole community from my window. In the morning, people are going to school or work, everyone is in a hurry. However, in the evening, it is not that fast-paced anymore. I can see parents taking a walk after dinner and children playing games in the neighborhood.

11. Would you be willing to live in the countryside in the future?

In the future, probably. There is a peacefulness I enjoy when visiting the countryside. People there are friendly and always willing to start a conversation. I think when I retire, living in the countryside is a nice option to me.

The area you live in

1. Do you like the area that you live in now?

Yes, I like the area where I live. Since I have lived there for a long time it makes me feel comfortable. There is a saying: "Home is where the heart is". My family lives there and we enjoy each other's company so my heart is there. I like the phrase from one old movie: "There's no place like home."

2. Do you think the area you live in now is suitable for people of all ages?

Yes, most certainly. I think that I am very lucky to be living in a very central area of my city, close to great public transport facilities, and quite a few entertainment and leisure options too. There are a few malls nearby, with fantastic restaurants in, lots of shops, a gym, which I go to every day almost, a swimming centre which I attend with my family on weekends, and there's quite a few nice parks within a short walking distance too. So, yeah, it's a great area. In addition, the community I live in has a nice garden too.

3. Are people in your area friendly?

I wouldn't say people in my area are especially friendly, or unfriendly, really. They are alright, I suppose. I thought they were relatively friendly, before I went to Spain on holiday and found how friendly and happy people seemed to be in service interactions, in the streets, on public transport, and so on, there in Spain. When I came back to my city and my area, I started to think that people were a bit rude, grumpy and not so helpful when you need them to be. So, I have a sort of neutral stance on this – I guess it depends on what you compare my area, my city or my culture with, as to whether you assess that the people are friendly or not.

4. How has your area changed in recent years?

Some positive changes are that the pollution is getting better. It was a lot worse a few years ago. Recently, the government has made some changes to the factories nearby you see. This has had a positive effect on the air quality. Some negative changes are: first, there are too many public bikes such as OFO and Mobike. They clog the sidewalks and there isn't enough room for pedestrians to walk sometimes. Secondly,

there are not enough taxis. It is very difficult to get a taxi if you are in a hurry or it is raining.

5. Do you know any famous people in your area?

In my district of my city, I don't know any famous people. I think famous people tend to live away from the crowds in China, in places where they will be left alone and not bothered by people or the press.

6. Where do you like to go in your area?

I like to go shopping and hang out with my friends. When the weather is nice, I like to go to the park and enjoy the nature. It makes me feel refreshed. When my friends go with me it is even better.

T-shirts

1. Do you usually wear T-shirts?

I wear T-shirts very often, in fact. Especially in summer when the weather is warm. I enjoy the freedom of wearing a t-shirt and I have quite a few different ones with all sorts of designs on them in fact – from sporty-style T-shirts with the classic sports logos, to more amusing T-shirts with funky designs and patterns on them.

2. Do you like T-shirts with pictures or prints?

Absolutely yes. I love all sorts of different T-shirts, and I also enjoy buying them as souvenirs when I go on holiday or visit other countries. There are also quite a few designer T-shirts out now which are pretty interesting in terms of modern unique designs.

3. Do you think older people are fashionable if they wear T-shirts?

Well... I'm not sure but yes, I guess so. Although most older people don't seem to wear T-shirts as much as younger people, I'd say that they might look fashionable in certain t-shirts, yes, maybe. In a way it's a strange question because I think that looking fashionable also really depends on what suits a person and how they carry it off, regardless of age.

4. Have you ever bought T-shirts as souvenirs?

Yes, I certainly have. I always buy a T-shirt for a souvenir, usually for myself, when I am on holiday somewhere interesting. For example, I went to Thailand a few months ago, and in the central market areas of Bangkok there are lots of tourist stalls in the markets which sell interesting, entertaining and artistic t-shirts. I bought a few there.

Weekends

1. What do you usually do on weekends?

On weekends I do a variety of things. I rest, I read, I go out with friends to a park or go to the cinema. Occasionally I go have dinner in a restaurant – there are lots of new restaurants opening up in my city so I often go with a group of friends to a restaurant, usually a hotpot restaurant. I like eating out with friends and family – it's a popular

communal activity in my country, actually.

2. Would you say weekends are important to us?

I think they're very important. It's when we get time to spend with family and friends and kick back and relax and forget about work or the hassles of daily life. Weekends are when we can wind down, recharge our batteries and relax a bit after a working week. I think everyone should have free weekends.

3. What do you plan to do for next weekend?

Next weekend I have no real plans to be honest. I think I will relax at home, try to motivate myself to study a little bit, maybe watch a TV series I'm enjoying at the moment (a detective thriller) and go out for dinner with my family. I'll try to rest too – I've had a busy week.

4. Do you make plans for weekends?

It really depends. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. It totally depends on my workload and whether I have made any arrangements to meet friends, or go out and see a movie or something like that. Sometimes my friends and I plan a basketball game, but recently we've been a bit lazy about that.

5. What did you do on last weekend?

Last weekend I celebrated the birthday of a good friend of mine, with a group of old classmates and some of our new friends. We went to a hot pot restaurant, and then we went to a bowling alley – you know, ten pin bowling – that was fun.

Stay up late

1. Do you often stay up late?

Yes. I often stay up quite late at night. Usually after midnight – either because I am studying or because I am lying in bed reading on my phone, chatting or watching TV series.

2. What do you do when you stay up late?

I sometimes just stay awake chatting to friends on my phone, reading novels, or following my favourite TV shows. Occasionally I stay up late because I'm out with friends on the weekend – you know, at a bar, or club or KTV or something like that.

3. How do you feel when you have stayed up late the night before?

I usually feel okay if I've had a good lie in bed in the morning. But if I have to get up early the following day I feel over-tired, bleary-eyed and not mentally sharp enough. It can take me too long to properly wake up. I don't like this feeling, so I tend to only stay up late if I know I can have a long lie in bed the following day.

Happiness

1. What made you happy when you were little?

When I was a kid, lots of simple little things made me happy. Playing outside in the summer with my friends, drawing, having a laugh with my father playing imaginary games. All sorts of things like this were sources of great happiness for me.

2. Is there anything that makes you feel happy lately?

Recently, I've been feeling a bit down and stressed to be honest. Not much has made me feel particularly happy. I suppose I feel happy to be healthy, to feel I have a good supportive family and friends. General appreciation about life. But I haven't had any specific moments that made me feel elated, no!

3. What do you think will make you feel happy in the future?

The one thing that will make me happy is if I can get a good enough score in my IELTS tests, and if I pass the interview and get a place in the university of my choice for next September. That will make me really happy!

4. Do you think happiness is important?

Of course, happiness is important, because if you are happy you are motivated, and if you are motivated you achieve things, and you become a positive person who spreads positivity to other people around you. Positive, happy people are great to be around and make us feel life is really worth living, even in hard times.

5. Are you happy when you buy new things?

Not especially. Well... maybe momentarily. I think buying things does make people happy for a short time, but isn't a huge source of happiness for me. I get more joy from human communication and fun with family and friends.

6. When do you feel happy at work?

I feel happy when a project is coming to an end and I see that it's really rather good and has the potential of being successful, and my colleagues and managers sharing this same feeling.

Jewellery

1. How often do you wear jewellery?

I'm not a big fan of jewellery to be honest. I wear earrings pretty much every day but they are quite simple earrings. They're not a very ostentatious or prominent style. They're quite simple but tasteful, and good quality. I sometimes wear a thin silver necklace, a simple chain, with a little heart shaped stone on the end. That's about it really.

2. What type of jewellery do you like best?

I like earrings, a nice watch, and a simple silver chain necklace, mainly. If I go to a fancy party or a company dinner then I wear something that stands out more and that's more eye-catching.

3. Have you ever given jewellery to someone as a gift?

I have on several occasions, to my friends. I went on holiday to the USA a few years ago and bought some nice items of jewellery for my friends from a factory outlet. I think that was the last time I gave jewellery to someone as a gift.

4. Why do you think some people wear a piece of jewellery for a long time?

I think that a good piece of jewellery can be worn for many years, and even passed down through the generations – ideally, anyway. So, yes, I believe that some jewellery can at least be kept for many decades, and worn from time to time on special occasions. Some people wear the same piece of jewellery all the time, I guess – like a fancy watch or a ring.

Outer space and stars

1. Have you ever learnt about outer space and stars?

Yes, in school we learnt the basic things about space and the solar system. Also, I've seen a number of documentaries about the universe on television. I find the topic quite inspiring.

2. Are you interested in films about outer space and stars?

Yes, I'd say so, yes. I enjoy sci-fi films, although I don't think there are many really good ones. I also have seen a few TV series set in space which I've enjoyed.

3. Do you want to go into outer space in the future?

Haha, no I don't think so. I've heard that some millionaires have actually signed up to go into the lower regions of space in space crafts, or orbit the earth, but I don't really have much of a fascination with this. To be honest, I think I'd be scared! I don't like heights!

Music

1. Do you like music?

Yeah of course I do, I'm a huge music fan, in fact I think I can say I've loved music all my life, ever since I was a kid, for as long as I can remember. Music is an important part of my life and I listen to it every day, even when I'm at work, I've always got my headphones on.

2. What kinds of music do you like to listen to?

I'm not sure that I have one specific 'favourite type' of music to be honest, I'm quite into a variety of styles and genres, but generally speaking I think I tend to prefer songs without lyrics or vocals, you know like instrumental music, I listen to quite a lot of classical, film tracks, ambient or even electronic music... As long as it's relaxing, atmospheric music, it doesn't really matter what genre it is.

3. Do you enjoy the same kind of music with your friend?

Pretty much, yes, I listen to a lot of the same music as my friends – at least some of

them. There are a few friends I have that have quite eclectic music tastes, like myself. We tend to recommend bands and tunes to each other, share them and discuss them.

4. Which singer or musician would you like to see in the concert that is going to be held in your city?

I'd love to see Ed Sheeran in concert, live. I hope he can come to my country to do a concert. Although I like a variety of different genres of music, his kind of pop music I find is really dynamic and inspiring when you see him live on stage performing.

Small businesses

1. Are there any famous small businesses in the area you live in?

Oh, let me think... There are a couple, yes. The two that spring to mind are two little restaurants, actually. They are famous in my area – one is a roast lamb leg eatery, which is a family place that's been there for generations. The other is a dumpling place – again, a family business that's stood the test of time!

2. Do you prefer buying things from small or big companies?

In an ideal world I'd purchase things from small businesses to support families and the local economy. But, big companies usually have better prices and a wider range of products.

3. Have you ever worked in small businesses?

I have worked in a few small businesses actually. I did a lot of summer work in a family-run restaurant in my home town, for example, and I also have done two internships at graphic design companies.

4. Have you ever thought about starting your own business?

I most certainly have – and I still want to – in fact, a friend and I were discussing this the other day. About getting together and starting an online platform to sell designer sportswear sourced from Vietnam. So, yes, very recently I've been thinking about this.

Art

1. Do you like art?

Yes, I love art. I like many different types of art, actually. I love traditional Chinese paintings and calligraphy, but I also really enjoy looking at western art, art from different periods in history, as well as abstract art, sculpture and even performance art. I'm a big fan of all types of culture and so I enjoy visiting museums and art galleries when I go to another country or when I visit another city in China. Art is an important part of life and children who learn about art usually end up being thoughtful, creative and innovative people when they get older.

2. Have you ever visited an art gallery?

I've visited lots of art galleries, in my city, Beijing, as well as in other cities. I enjoy

modern art galleries the most, but I also like to see painting and artwork from history as well. There are quite a few different art galleries in my city and I sometimes go to the temporary exhibitions at one gallery in particular that is in the famous art district, 798. I know the manager of that gallery too, so I enjoy going there, chatting to her and perhaps taking a coffee at one of the boutique arty coffee shops nearby.

3. Do you want to be an artist?

No, I don't want to be an artist. I'm not good enough at art, to be honest, and I think you've got to be either excellent at art, or have deep connections in the art world to really succeed in the field. So, no, although I enjoy art, I see it more as an interest or hobby and not something as a life vocation.

4. Do you like modern art or traditional art?

Both. I appreciate all types of art. I don't have a specific type that I like, really. If something is beautiful, at least in my view, I can appreciate it, whether it is old-fashioned or traditional, or modern and abstract.

Keys

1. Do you always bring a lot of keys with you?

Not these days, no. Today so much is electronic, whether it's the office door or the door of my home – codes and finger prints and stuff like that. We hardly use physical metal keys for anything these days.

2. Have you ever lost your keys?

Yes, I once lost the keys for a locker at work, and it had a laptop in it. It was a real pain getting a new set from the building management office. I had to fill in lots of forms and complete all sorts of ID procedures and get signatures from my line manager. It was a pain.

3. How can we avoid losing keys?

Many people avoid losing keys by keeping them on a key ring on their belt. However, that's not so easy for girls or people who don't wear traditional trousers with belt loops. So, I guess it's a case of keeping your keys in a safe place or a pocket or purse you can zip up.

Library

1. Do you often go to library?

Rarely these days. I used to go in my first year at uni – mainly to study and do bits of research. This past two years I've not really been to the library – I rely on a lot of online resources for my studies now, and I have my own study room, so I work there.

2. What do you usually do in the library?

Well, I don't go to the library these days, but when I did, I usually just took out a couple of books and sat in a quiet corner and read them and made notes in preparation

for essays.

3. Did you go to library when you were a kid?

Not really, no. There were not really any libraries with kids books in my town when I grew up. So, I almost never went to the library. Apart from the school library, of course.

4. Do children in your country often go to library?

Not very often these days. They go to book corners and libraries in their schools, but that's about it really. People buy kids books now, online or from bookshops. They don't really go to libraries.

Chocolate

1. Do you like eating chocolate?

I love it! I absolutely love eating chocolate, although I know it's not really good for the teeth or the physical health really... I don't care – I enjoy it. And I don't have many vices, so I don't feel too guilty about it. Cakes and chocolates – I love them!

2. Did you often eat chocolate when you were a child?

I didn't often eat chocolate. In fact, where I grew up, which was a fairly small town outside Taiyuan, there wasn't really any chocolate available. Mainly because it just wasn't in demand. People ate other kinds of sweets and confectionary, not really chocolate. I do enjoy chocolate now, though, I've developed the habit since moving to the city, and also it has become marketed more in my country and more popular all-round since I was young.

3. What's your favorite flavour?

I like milk chocolate and white chocolate. I don't really like chocolate that has nuts or fruit in it. Except a certain type of chocolate that has a strawberry cream filling – I love that!

4. Do you think it is good to give others chocolate as gifts?

Yes, chocolates are a nice gift, and you can buy lovely boxes of chocolates presented really well with a variety of different flavours of chocolates in them. Those make great gifts.

5. Why do you think chocolate is popular around the world?

I think chocolate is popular for two main reasons. Firstly, because it is universally a taste that people like – it's neither very strong or very sweet, or very distinct in flavor in a way that would turn people off. But it's also nice, easy to eat and not that expensive (depending on the type you buy). Secondly, it's marketing. Big companies realized they could make money by advertising and marketing chocolate all over the world, and they did so, and it seemed to work!

Schools

1. Where is your school?

I've been to several schools in my life! The one I remember the most is by the Confucius temple in Beijing. That was a lovely little school. It's a famous area in the hutongs not far from the Lama temple.

2. Do you like your school?

I liked this school at the time yes. I had quite a few friends and most of the teachers were pretty friendly and kind. I quite liked it.

3. Are you content with the learning atmosphere in your school?

Again, I have to emphasise that I haven't been to school for many years – but the school I went to that I remember the most, the one by the Confucius temple in Beijing, I really did feel content with the learning atmosphere there.

4. Is there anything you want to change about your school?

If I could go back in time and change anything, then I suppose I'd change the sports facilities and sports classes – I think these classes were regimental and old-fashioned and we had bad facilities. I'd definitely upgrade them. Maybe they've done so already for the pupils, since I left 20 years ago!

Singing

1. Do you like singing?

I love singing. I thoroughly enjoy going to KTVs and singing on my own at home to music, too.

2. Have you ever learnt how to sing?

No, not really. To be honest, I'm not very good at singing – I think I might be tone deaf, even. In school plays and performances I was never chosen to be one of the leading singers, and in KTV with friends, I usually try to keep a low profile and mouth the words – I really can't sing well.

3. If you sing, who would you sing in front of?

I wouldn't want to sing for anyone – I'd be way too embarrassed and self-conscious. As I said, I'm a terrible singer! I would find it uncomfortable, so no, I would not sing for, or in front of anyone, if I could avoid it.

4. Do you think singing can bring happiness to people?

I understand that singing, if you're good enough at it, can make people feel very happy. The person singing as well as those listening. Singing is a great form of musical expression, and there's nothing more lovely than the human voice. So, yes, it can bring happiness for sure.

Writing

1. Do you write a lot?

I don't write much at all, actually. Now that I've graduated I no longer have to write endless essays and assignments, like I've been used to for the past three or four years. So, I don't write much – I write job application letters, and emails, but I don't have to write a lot at the moment.

2. What do you like to write?

I don't really like to write much these days. I write emails to my family, and text messages to friends, and that's about it at the moment. Like I said, I'm enjoying having a break from years of having to write assignments.

3. Do you prefer typing or handwriting when you are writing something?

Most definitely typing, I think - to be honest, my handwriting now is awful – I'm just not used to writing by hand anymore.

Taking photos

1. Do you like to take photographs?

I love to take photographs. Sometimes I will take up to 30 photos of exactly the same item, but in different modes, angles and settings. The real fun starts when I manipulate, crop, edit and Photoshop them. After many hours, I upload my selected ones to my Wechat moments.

2. Do you ever take photos of yourself?

Well, call me a narcissist but, I'm kind of obsessed with taking selfies. It is just the quickest way to show where I am, who I am with, what I am doing and how I am feeling. It would take a lot more time to describe that in texts.

3. What is your favorite family photo?

My favourite family photo is one with my whole family, my parents, grandparents from both sides, cousins and their neighbours, at my auntie and uncle's house in Ankang, in the countryside in Shanxi Province. The photo brings back great memories of the Spring Festival that we spent there on my uncle's farm outside the town. It was a fantastic occasion, and the last photo that we took featuring my 98-year-old grandmother before she died.

4. Do you want to improve your picture-taking skills?

I think I already take pretty good photos. I've always been into photos, and care a lot about portraits and getting a photo to look good and balanced. So, I don't think I need or want to improve really – I'm not aiming to be a professional photographer – I think I'm more than good enough for my needs!

Birthday

1. What do you usually do on your birthday?

On my birthday I usually have a dinner with my parents, usually at a nice restaurant in

the city. Then I might go out for drinks with my friends, or to the cinema or something like that. That's been the habit, anyway, for the past few years.

2. What did you do on your birthday when you were young?

When I was younger... a child... we would just have a dinner at home, and I would receive some presents. And in school the class would sing a birthday song and I'd have a cake. That's about it really. I found my birthday quite exciting as a child, as most kids do, I think.

3. Do you think it is important for you to celebrate your birthday?

I think it's fairly important. It's a milestone... a turning point in the year, and in life, and it is symbolic of the years passing, us getting older and more mature, so yeah, I think it's important.

Geography

1. Have you ever studied geography at school?

I did study geography, yes. Physical geography, like plate tectonics – volcanoes and things like that, as well as land formation, and farming and the water cycle, and all of that type of stuff. We also studied human geography as well – population, demographics and things like that.

2. Do you like geography?

I do, actually. I find it quite interesting – especially physical geography. I'm interested in things related to the natural environment and the planet. And I am concerned about climate change and environmental issues facing us today, so I find geography relevant as well as interesting.

3. Do you want to travel to a country because of its geographical conditions?

Yes, I think so. At least it is one of the reasons I would choose to travel to a country, yes. For example, I am interested in lakes – I would like to spend some time in Sweden at the lakes – I heard they have a lot of lakes and it's common to spend holidays at the lakes, go in boats and things like that. So, yes, I would choose a country with lots of lakes and water.

Puzzles

1. Did you like doing puzzles when you were a kid?

Yes, when I was a kid there were lots of puzzles we could do – with string, and wood, and jigsaws and all sorts of little stuff like that. Now, there isn't so much – there's a lot of puzzle games, and games involving cryptic thinking on apps on phones and tablets, though. Those are popular today.

2. When do you do puzzles, during trips or when you feel bored?

I usually play such puzzle games on my phone when I'm on the train or on a bus, or something like that. I also fiddle with my phone in bed too, like a lot of people, and

yes, sometimes I play games which you could call ‘puzzles’ I guess.

3. Do you like doing word puzzles or number puzzles?

I prefer number puzzles – I am really good at math, and I like solving little math problems. There are plenty of games which involving solving number puzzles and I enjoy doing these. I get a great sense of satisfaction from getting the answers right.

4. Do you think it is good for old people to do puzzles?

Yes, most certainly. I think old people should do these things to keep their minds active – a lot of research shows that older people remain mentally sharp for longer if they keep engaging their brains in puzzles and activities that involving thinking and solving things.

Names

1. Does your name have a special meaning?

Not really. I am named after my grandfather who was from Gansu, and apparently I have a name that goes back many generations in my family. I also share a character of my Grandmother’s name as well. Apart from that, no there is no special meaning to my name.

2. How do people choose names for their children?

Some people seek the advice of a fortune teller or a wise person! Most people discuss it with their family and think about it for quite a long time, and choose something that means something to them, sounds lucky or is simply nice-sounding.

3. Does anyone in your family have the same name with you?

Yes, several people have the same two characters in their name as mine. I have three characters in my name. One of them is specific to me. The others are related to my grandparents and parents. I think this is pretty much the same for many people I know.

4. Are there any differences between how Chinese name their children now and in the past?

I am not sure to be honest. I think people are a bit less traditional in their choices of names than before, and young people try to think of more original and special character combinations. But, pretty much, in general, I don’t think there have been big changes in naming customs and habits.

Public Transport

1. What kind of public transport do you usually take?

I usually take the subway and a bus on a daily basis, to go to work, and on the weekends I grab a taxi, to go out to meet friends in town – to go to a restaurant or a bar or so. So, I take a few different modes of transport usually – I don’t own my own car, so I rely on public transport most of the time unless a friend gives me a lift

somewhere.

2. Did you take public transport when you were a kid?

I took public transport with my parents yes. We always used to go on the bus in those days, because there weren't many subway lines in our city, and none near to where we lived. Now, however, there's a lot more public transport.

3. Do most people prefer public transport?

Well... not really. I think most people find public transport in Chinese cities a bit overcrowded. Everyone would prefer to have their own car, in an ideal world. Though, public transport is very cheap, it's not always convenient.

4. When do you usually take public transport?

I usually take public transport each morning and evening on weekdays, to go to the office to work. And, on weekends I take public transport if I need to go somewhere to meet family and friends – I'll take a taxi if it's not convenient to get a bus or subway. Occasionally I take a hire-bike from the street if the distance isn't too far.

Technology

1. What technological products do you often use, computers or mobile phones?

I use both - computers, mobile phones, and I have a tablet. I use all of them for both work and social communications. Today, pretty much everyone needs a phone, at least, and most people who work in my field will have a tablet and a computer too.

2. What electronic devices have you bought lately?

I haven't bought any electronic devices this year. Last year I bought a new tablet, because my old one was several years old and the memory was full, which meant it had slowed down to the point where it was no longer efficient to use. But since then, I've not bought anything else electronic.

3. Are there any technological devices you want to buy?

I'd like to buy a really good pair of noise cancelling headphones. I have a small pair of headphones that come with my mobile phone, but they don't block out the noise of people and traffic when I'm commuting to work. So, I want to buy a nice quality pair of headphones that are great for sound, but block out the outside noises really effectively.

4. What benefits does technology bring to us?

Technology brings us a host of benefits. It would take too long to list them all! But, in short, the main things technology offers to society is fast, effective communication which enables us to streamline business and personal interactions and communications and get things done quickly.

Social media

1. Do you like social media?

Yes, I most certainly see and enjoy the benefits of social media. Although I can also see the downsides of it too – there's a lot of gossip, misinformation and nonsense on social media, as well as informative discussion and communication. So, like most things, it's a double-edged sword. But I like it yes – it's predominantly great for communicating with work, friends and family.

2. Do you think your friends spend too much time on social media?

YES! Some are really obsessed with social media – constantly posting on their weibo pictures of their dinner, or parties, or days out. It's a bit excessive to be honest. I think a lot of my friends are a bit over the top about it. I am not so passionate about such things, personally. I use it mainly for practical communication.

3. Do you want to work in a social media company?

No, I don't. Today there are too many rules and regulations governing social media and it's a minefield. I'd prefer to work in a more relaxing field that is not so connected to public information sharing, gossip and stuff like this. I am not a very public-facing kind of person really!

Snacks

1. What snacks did you eat when you were young?

When I was a kid I used to love all kinds of street snacks – there were lots of little stalls selling pancakes and all sorts in my road. When I was a little older, fast food joints started to open and become popular, and I loved those, and thought they were a real novelty. There we ate burgers and fried chicken and things like that.

2. Do you often eat snacks now?

I still eat local snacks actually, and there is quite a strong street-snack culture still existing in China, and occasionally I go to fast food outlets with friends – which are more expensive, but more comfortable and convenient.

3. Do you think eating snacks is healthy?

Certain snacks are healthy, yes, indeed. Fried street snacks and fast food are not so healthy though; at least if you eat them often. One has to be careful what one chooses in the way of snacking – a lot of sweets, chocolates, fries and burgers and deep-fried food is definitely not healthy. Everything in moderation, as they say!

Housekeeping and cooking

1. Do you like cooking?

I love cooking. Well, if I have time. Cooking well can sometimes take quite a bit of time and energy, so I mainly enjoy cooking on the weekends, when I don't have to go to work. Especially in winter, I like to cook in winter because we spend less time going outside and more time focusing on things to do in the home.

2. Would you like to learn how to cook?

I already know how to cook! I love cooking. I learnt to cook from my grandmother. She is a really excellent cook and she can cook anything from traditional Chinese dishes to western cakes and pastries. I enjoy cooking all sorts of different foods, and today you can find a lot of recipes online. So, I'd say I am already a pretty decent cook, and I constantly try to learn new dishes.

3. Who normally does the cooking in your family?

My mother does most of the daily cooking, but my father cooks on occasions or helps out in the kitchen. Both my mother and father are good cooks, and both enjoy cooking, but my father is the one who likes to experiment with different recipes a bit more.

4. Do you think your home is clean and tidy?

I'm not sure. It depends on who you ask! I think I am quite tidy to be honest, but my mother thinks I'm really messy! She's very fastidious, I must say...perhaps way too clean and tidy, actually. My friend, in my view, is completely messy and I've no idea how she can study in her room. I'd say I'm in the middle!

5. Did you do some house cleaning when you were young?

I did a little, but not very much really. I cleaned the house a bit, and my mother encouraged me to help, but I must say that I didn't do a lot and wasn't expected to do much. My mother said she didn't want me to grow up to be a housewife just like her!

6. What housework do you like or dislike?

I dislike washing dirty dishes. That's one thing I hate. I love cooking, and preparing meals for people, but I hate washing up afterwards. I don't mind doing clothes washing, hanging the clothes up to dry in the balcony, or even cleaning the floors. But I hate washing the dishes.

Morning Routine

1. Do you like to get up early in the mornings?

Not really. I'm not a morning person... but I'm not a night person either. I guess you could say I'm an afternoon person? Or more precisely, a person who "loves to sleep" kind of person!? Either way, it's a daily struggle to peel myself out of bed, so I need all the help I can get.

2. What is your morning routine?

I wake up around 6:00am when my alarm goes off, and snooze for a few minutes. When I finally roll out of bed, I take a shower, quickly put on my makeup, blend my daily smoothies, then I am out of the door. If it's a non-working day, I'll hit the gym, or I'll just chat with my boyfriend for a bit, before taking a shower.

3. Which one is your favorite morning in the whole week?

My favourite morning is Saturday morning because I don't have to get up for work

and I can lie in bed for hours reading or watching TV series. Saturday morning is most certainly my favourite morning and it always has been.

4. Do you want to change your daily routines in the future?

If there's one thing I could change it would be having a lie-in in the morning. I always wake up really early and get out of bed as soon as I wake up which means I never really have a lie-in. Sometimes I get a bit tired in the afternoon and I think it's because I get up too early. So yeah I'd like to be able to have a lie-in sometimes.

Weather

1. Do you prefer hot or cold weather?

I much prefer it when the weather is nice and hot. Obviously, I don't like it when it's extremely hot, but I like it pretty hot. Perhaps around 35 is a good temperature for me. However, I prefer it when it's a dry heat and not a really humid heat.

2. Do you prefer dry or wet weather?

I prefer dry weather, but it's nice to have a shower of rain from time to time. It clears the air and is good for the plants – I don't like it when it's months of hot dry weather with no rain. So, ideally, I like pretty hot weather, with a good shower of rain once a week or so.

3. What is the weather like in your hometown?

In my hometown it is hot and very humid for about 6 months of the year. It's unbearable when it's too hot and humid to be honest – it's hard to breathe and you sweat profusely as soon as you leave the house. Like I mentioned before, hot and dry weather is my favourite, with the occasional rain shower.

4. Do you have the habit of checking the weather forecast?

I check it fairly often actually. For no particular reason really, just because it pops up on my phone every morning when I wake up, so I look at it. Where I live in China the weather is highly predictable all year round, so we don't really need to be checking the weather forecast all the time, like people do in the UK, for example.

Sports

1. What kind of sport did you do when you were young?

I did quite a lot of sports, actually. I'm a pretty sporty person and always have been. When I was young I mainly played football and basketball, and took part in school physical education – like ball control games and things like this. I love sport, especially team sports and competitive sports, more so than running or jogging and individual sports, I'd say.

2. What's the most common sport in your country?

For most Chinese, I would say football. People both watch it and play it. For one thing, it's pretty easy to do since all you need is a few players, a ball and a field. Also,

the rules are simple, even little kids can handle this. In addition, football really brings people together for fun, and so it is a great way to make friends in a relaxing social atmosphere.

3. Do you like outdoor activities?

Well, if I'm completely honest, no not really, I don't actually enjoy doing things outside, I'm quite a homely person so I tend to prefer staying in, but I know it's important and healthy to be active and get involved in some outdoor activities, so I do actually do some. I just wouldn't really say I like doing them.

◆ Topic Pool——Part Two (2023.01-04)

(蓝色为本季新题, 黑色为保留旧题)

◆ People: (9)

Describe a person you met at a party who you enjoyed talking with.

Describe an interesting old person you met.

Describe a person you have met who you want to work/study with.

Describe an actor you admire.

Describe a person you know who is from a different culture.

Describe a person who is fashionable.

Describe a person you know who loves to grow plants (e.g. vegetables/fruits/flowers etc.).

Describe your favorite childhood friend.

Describe a person who inspired you to do something interesting.

◆ Object:

(具体 3)

Describe a piece of technology you own that you feel difficult to use.

Describe a photo you took and you are proud of.

Describe an object that you think is beautiful.

(抽象 13)

Describe a website you often visit.

Describe a piece of good news that you heard about someone you know well.

Describe an advertisement you don't like.

Describe a historical period you want to know more about.

Describe something you would like to learn in the future.

Describe a movie you watched recently and would like to watch again.

Describe a program you like to watch.

Describe an important thing you learned (not at school or university).

Describe a story or a novel that you have read and you found interesting.

Describe something you do to keep fit and healthy.

Describe something that surprised you and made you happy.

Describe something that helps you to focus on study/work.

Describe a story someone told you and you remember.

◆ Place: (9)

Describe a city you would like to stay in for a short time.

Describe a new development (e.g. shopping mall, park, road...) that appeared in your town or city.

Describe a place you visited where the air was polluted.

Describe a noisy place you have been to.

Describe your favourite place in your home where you can relax.

Describe a popular place for doing sports (e.g. stadium).
Describe the home of someone you know well and you often visit.
Describe a place in your country that you would like to recommend to travelers.
Describe a city you would recommend as a nice place to live in (not your hometown).

◆ **Event: (23)**

Describe an activity you enjoyed in your free time when you were young.
Describe a time when you taught a friend/relative.
Describe the first day at school that you remember.
Describe time when you had an unusual meal.
Describe a time when you made a complaint and you were satisfied with the result.
Describe something you did with one person/a group of people.
Describe something you did that made you feel proud.
Describe a time when you were late for an important event.
Describe a daily routine that you enjoy.
Describe a time when someone gave you something that you really wanted.
Describe a problem you had while shopping online or in a store.
Describe a time when you made a decision to wait for something.
Describe a time when you received money as a gift.
Describe a disagreement you had with someone.
Describe an outdoor activity you did in a new place recently.
Describe a time when you forgot an appointment.
Describe a time when you shared something with others.
Describe a time when you needed to search for some information.
Describe a time when you saw a lot of plastic waste (e.g. in a park, on the beach etc.)
Describe a time when you enjoyed an impressive English lesson.
Describe a difficult thing you did and succeeded.
Describe a time when someone asked for your opinion.
Describe a time when someone gave you positive advice on your work.

◆ 注：二、三部分具体题卡如下

◆ Topic Pool——Part Two & Part Three

People:

- ◆ Describe a person you met at a party who you enjoyed talking with.
- ◆ Describe an interesting old person you met.
- ◆ Describe a person you have met who you want to work/study with.
- ◆ Describe an actor you admire.
- ◆ Describe a person you know who is from a different culture.
- ◆ Describe a person who is fashionable.
- ◆ Describe a person you know who loves to grow plants (e.g. vegetables/fruits/flowers etc.).
- ◆ Describe your favorite childhood friend.
- ◆ Describe a person who inspired you to do something interesting.

Describe a person you met at a party who you enjoyed talking with.

You should say:

What party it was

How you met this person

What you talked about

And explain why you enjoyed talking with him/her

There is a person I met at a party that really sticks in my mind. That was at a huge wedding party I went to when a friend of mine got married in Shanghai. It was a really big wedding – and both families were quite wealthy and popular, so they held a really fancy wedding. It wasn't pretentious or showy, actually, it was just huge. It was very tastefully done, in a lovely hotel, with a very beautiful garden – just outside the city. Anyway, after the wedding ceremony, the party began and went on for many many hours – with loads of great food and champagne and all sorts. I was especially animated on this occasion, and felt very social, and also a little drunk. I talked to loads of people. But the one person that I spoke too that left a very strong impression on me was an older man, perhaps in his early 50s, in a wonderful purple suit and very interestingly patterned shirt, who was a designer. He was an interior designer for hotels and galleries all over Asia. He complimented my dress, and we got talking, and ended up chatting for hours. We talked about art, design, music and thoughts about life and all sorts of stuff. He invited me to the opening of one of his art galleries in Pudong, Shanghai, for the following week, and we ended up getting to know each other, and we still stay in touch today. I help him with promotions for some of his private exhibitions and translations for art gallery brochures and so forth. I enjoy talking to interesting, older people who have some curious life experience and a different work and lifestyle to most of the other people I know. So, it was a stimulating encounter. Sometimes weddings can be good for that.

Part 3

1. On what occasions do people want to make new friends?

People usually like to make new friends when they start at university for the first time, like at the very beginning of year one. In the UK they call it “Fresher’s Week”. People also like to make new friends when they move to a new city, or start a new job. But, also, remember that not everyone wants to make new friends or believes in making an effort to do so. There are people who find it tiring and just can’t be bothered or simply don’t feel the need. So, not everyone always feels they need or want to make new friends. Some people are innately more social than others.

2. Where can people make new friends?

The places that people tend to make new friends at today in cities in my country, are places like sports clubs, bars.... I can’t think of other places really. I tend to think that people often make friends through other friends. What I mean is, people have a small circle of friends who hang out with each other, then one friend brings along a few friends of his or hers, and then they become part of the social group, then they become friends, and it sort of all branches out in that way. People end up connecting each other to other people – and it happens in a sort of natural way like that. That’s how it often works from my experience anyway.

3. Do you think it is difficult for foreigners to talk with Chinese?

Haha, that’s a bit of a generalization. I’m not sure. It depends on the individuals in question and the topics that one might wish to talk about. I don’t really think that human communication is related so much to nationality – it’s more about sharing common interests and views on things. So, yeah I think it’s easy enough for people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds to talk to each other, sure.

Describe an interesting old person you met.

You should say:

Who this person is

When/where you met this person

What you did

And explain why you think this old person is interesting

An old person I met that I really find rather inspiring is the grandfather of one of my friends in my hometown. He’s about 90 something years old now, but still is in pretty good health and his mind is incredibly sharp. I see him fairly often, well, every time I go back to my hometown, which is multiple times a year. What’s interesting about him is that he used to be an actor. A stage actor for theatrical performances. Then he was a director, and since then he has retired. You don’t meet many people like this usually. It’s wonderful to go have tea with him and listen to the stories of his life. He also keeps birds in a huge aviary in his garden. He’s a wealthy man, and lives a

comfortable life, in a wonderful house full of all sorts of antique furniture, paintings, sculptures and things like this. Because he lives literally just next to where my parents live, I go to visit him almost every day when I'm back home. He has always made my family really welcome, and we also help him out with all sorts of practical stuff like shopping or repairs that might need to be made to the home and so on. I can't recall when I met this person first, because basically we've known him all our lives – I mean he knew my family since I was born. So, yeah, I guess I'd say I find this person interesting because they have great stories, different things to say than most older people I know, a keen ear for listening to other people and understanding human psychology, and a real knowledge of the arts, which is something I find really interesting and inspiring.

Part 3

1. Is it easy for old people and young people to make friends with each other?

I believe so yes. It all depends on personality. Some older people and younger people are not so compatible, mainly due to their personalities, not necessarily their ages. Some people of age are set in their ways, and some young people are overly dismissive of older people. So, it's really a question of how tolerant, patient and curious a person is. I believe people can communicate and learn from people of all ages, and it makes life more colourful and inspiring, but not everyone thinks like this. Some old people are simply stuck in their ways, and younger people simply uninterested in reaching out to communicate with them, too.

2. Do you think old people and young people can have common interests?

I certainly think they can. Again, it totally depends on the personality and the background of the individuals in question, not necessarily their age. I know plenty of people who connect and share common interests with older people – but, at the same time, I also know quite a few young people who feel they cannot communicate with older people. I think teenagers, especially, can be quite dismissive or uninterested in communicating with older people. I think this is because teenager years tend to be very selfish and self-absorbed times for young people, where they are more concerned with modern trends and peers than connecting with their family or older people in the community.

3. What can old people teach young people?

Older people can teach younger people all sorts of things – from practical little things related to doing stuff around the house, or homework, to more emotional things – you know, like insights and advice about human nature, how to deal with conflict, how to deal with one's own emotions and stuff like this. I know quite a few friends of mine who seek advice from their grandparents about conflicts in school or at work – as times change, and technology and trends change, people's fundamental sensitivities and personalities do not change so much throughout history – so the wisdom of older people is valuable.

Describe a person you have met who you want to work/study with.

You should say:

Who this person is

How you met this person

How long you have known him/her

And explain why you want to work/study with him/her

A person I would like to work with in the future is my friend, Andy. Andy is a programmer, and has been into computers for as long as I can remember. He's from my home town, but also, he went to the same university as me, in fact, in the same year. We both graduated at the start of this summer. Andy has always been keen on starting his own business – he has a very strong entrepreneurial streak, and most certainly a good way of thinking about business and future trends. He seems always on the ball, always aware of key market trends across different industries and has a keen interest in innovation. So, as well as being a programmer, he's actually a person who I am sure would make a fantastic business person, especially in the developing field of IT. I studied international business management in university and I, too, feel I have an entrepreneurial tendency, so I would love to get together with Andy and create a small company. I've always wanted to work for myself, rather than be just a cog in the machine of a big established company. And if you want to start and grow your own company you've really got to find a partner to work with, to share the burden and also to pool your skills and resources. And Andy, quite honestly, would be the ideal person in my opinion. Because we've known each other for at least 20 years we are also very familiar with how best to communicate with each other, resolve conflicts that might arise and basically work hard to make a project or enterprise a real success. I'd love to work with Andy.

Part 3

1. How can we get good colleagues?

Well, it depends on the situation. Maybe you mean, how do we end up working alongside colleagues who are great to work with? If so, then often it's a question of luck! I mean, unless we are the managers and we are responsible for hiring new people! The key to a good working environment is having a good manager who chooses good people that we have to work with. If I were the hiring manager, then I would make sure I conducted authentic and sincere interviews where I really get to know the recruits, and I would also focus on motivating them, not just using their skills, but really embracing them as part of the team. Team and company culture is key to everything, including getting good colleagues to work with and keeping the motivated.

2. Are good colleagues necessary at work?

Absolutely. I think that having peers to work with who we get along with can be the make or break of a good company or a good project team to be honest. I think people

are the most important factor, from the management down to the team on the ground. So I believe the personality, dedication, attitude and the way that colleagues get along and are managed, is absolutely key to having an enjoyable and productive working environment.

3. What kinds of people are popular at work?

Usually, in most work places, the people who are popular tend to be the most confident and positive people. Not really the people who show off, but the people who exude a certain confidence and charisma, as well as those who are positive, motivating and encouraging of the other people that we work with.

4. Why should children be kind to their classmates?

Children should learn to be kind to all people they have to work with – in fact, they should, in an ideal world, be kind to almost everyone they interact with really. But, yeah, when it comes to classmates, children need to learn the basic skills of cooperation and collaboration. These are important life skills, and being kind and listening to others and respecting others is a big part of this. Especially as in the future when they start to work, they will have to cooperate with others and work in teams, most likely. So, why not start at school with classmates? Teachers need to foster these soft skills in schools, not just parents in the home.

Describe an actor you admire.

You should say:

Who this person is

Where you saw him/her (in the movie)

What character he/she played in this movie

And explain why you admire this actor

An actor I really admire is not really that famous actually. I'm not sure if you would have heard of her. But anyway, she has been in loads of TV series in my country and a few films in more recent years. She is probably about 40 something years old now... I'm not sure. Anyway, she is a great actress, and she has a versatile ability to play all sorts of different roles – pretty innocent young women, evil, cunning villains, and she even has been known to play male characters in comedy sketches on entertainment shows. I last saw her in a film in the cinema only a year or so ago. She played the role of a female detective and she was amazing. She also has quite a dry sense of humour which comes through in a number of her roles – especially in her role as the detective. She's a very fit, healthy and ambitious person I think. I don't hear much about her private life – she's one of those actresses that keeps their private lives out of the public eye – she keeps her private life private! I admire her because of her sincere way of acting really... and her versatility like I mentioned earlier. Despite playing a host of diverse characters, she actually seems to play all of them in a really natural and convincingly genuine way – as if she really is channeling the personality of her

characters and their feelings. This is a great skill that I think only few actors really master. So, I admire her for this. She comes across as sincere and down-to-earth in interviews too, which is another thing I respect.

Part 3

1. Why do children love dressing up in costumes?

Haha, I'm not sure. I think children have a strong imagination and so doing anything that involves using that imagination, and play-acting, is something they are really drawn to. I think that dressing up and pretending to be different characters is really good for children, as they learn basic drama skills. I do believe that learning a bit of dramatic arts in school is good for children to develop creative expression and critical thinking through the active use of the imagination and cooperating with others – you know, that's what happens when you have to prepare to put on a performance.

2. Do you think it benefits children when they play a role in drama?

I think that children can learn a lot from theatre and drama. They can learn about developing their imagination, they can learn about empathizing with others (when you play different characters you have to imagine how they feel in their individual life situations, and act out that feeling in a convincing way – that takes empathy – relating to the feelings of others). I also believe that taking part in plays involves learning about structure, collaboration and working with others. So, yes, I think there are a host of benefits.

3. What are the differences between acting in a movie and in the theatre?

There are very significant differences. For one, a theatre performance is on stage at one time, with a specific audience and is usually performed live, whereas a movie, is filmed in a studio and in multiple locations, and can be edited – because it's recorded on film then post-produced. So, this means that the acting as well as the planning and organization, is very different between a movie and a theatre performance.

Describe a person you know who is from a different culture.

You should say:

Who he/she is

Where he/she is from

How you knew him/her

And explain how you feel about this person

The person I'd like to talk about who is from a different culture is a co-worker of mine called Jez. Jez is from America. We have a lot of exposure to Americans and the key symbols of American culture, from the world of music, cinema and popular culture. One could argue that American world domination has come in the form of commercialism, big business, and a drive for free markets and entrepreneurship. Whatever we may think of America and Americans, the good things and the bad

things – the point is: Jez really is from a different culture to me, and the more we work together the more I realise what some of these differences are. I'll talk here very concisely about a couple of positive and negative aspects of his culture, the way I see it. Americans seem to be quite open, direct, and generally motivated and positive on the surface. They aren't very reserved really – at least not about superficial things, and at least not in public. They exude a certain confidence, and that can be inspiring and welcoming, too, because they can also be quite positive about others. I've had a lot of encouragement from him at work, for example. On the other hand, I can't help thinking that sometimes he's a bit simple-minded. At times, it seems that they are too open and outspoken and put on too much of a 'positive face' with everything, and at the same time are too critical of other people's cultures, and don't make that much effort to really deeply understand them. So, with Jez, I have experienced both positive and not-so-positive aspects of American culture. I feel good about him, though, he's a colleague and friend and after all, we have to accept people have different ways in the global world we live in today.

Part 3

1. How can we get to know people from different cultures better?

Well, one of the most important things is to try to listen to them, ask them questions about their lives, their experiences, their families and their views, and adopt a less judgemental stance. Usually people understand each other better through talking about things, entering into discussion, and even agreeing to disagree – having discussions where we do not share the same viewpoints and being open to this. These are all ways to understand people from other cultural backgrounds.

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity?

The advantages are that a country can leverage more talent and more varied talent. When a place is highly multicultural there will be a greater sharing of different ways of doing things, and different ways of thinking. And, of course, the downside is that there will inevitably arise more conflict, as well. When people with different views mix together, there will be both greater sharing and at the same time greater conflict, as well.

3. How can traditional culture and other cultures coexist?

Well, they certainly can co-exist because they have been co-existing in many countries for thousands of years. People are highly adaptable if they are given the right contexts and environments to live in – a society that encourages diversity and diverse different views and perspectives will enable different cultural elements to co-exist – and though there will be clashes between traditional cultures, modern cultures and different cultures, there will also be a rich co-existence at the same time.

Describe a person who is fashionable.

You should say:

Who he/she is

What he/she does

What kind of clothes he/she wears

And explain why you think this person is fashionable

A person I know who is really fashionable is my friend, James. Actually, I'd say he was a fashion victim. Although he's a good friend of mine, I must say that we don't always see eye to eye about everything. And the one thing that I don't really like that much about him is his obsession with following the latest trends and fashion brands. He's a student, actually. He studies physics in my university. He mainly wears sporty clothes – and recently there are loads of new styles in the 'sports genre' that keep coming out. He seems to always be buying new sneakers, new tops, new hoodies, new plastic-rubber slip-on sporty sandals... you name it! He also buys bags, bracelets or wrist bands, water bottles and all the kinds of accessories they sell in these stores or online. It's as if he's a huge victim of their advertising campaigns. I mean, it does make him one of the most fashionable people I know – there's no doubt about that – but, personally I think it's quite over the top and I don't see the attraction at all. I've never really worried too much about following fashions; I like to wear what I think looks nice and is comfortable, and I think I have good eye for coordinating clothes, but when it comes to following fashion trends or buying the latest stuff, I'm not that bothered. Anyway, my friend is a cool guy and a nice kind person... so, hey, I guess we all have different interests.

Part 3

1. Are older people as fashionable as young people?

Usually they are not. As a general rule most younger people are more conscious about fashion than older people. Largely this is because of peer pressure and the youthful desire to embrace what they think is attractive and flaunt it. When people get older, they are not so interested in this kind of thing – they are more settled, less competitive about looks and image, and less bothered about what others think about whether they are “trendy” or “with the times” or not. Young people, however, can even get quite obsessed with image – to the point when I think it sometimes gets a little bit over the top.

2. Are women more fashionable than men?

I wouldn't say so. Though, I must say that many women are indeed more concerned about the way they look. Some of this is more certainly social pressure and the nature of society expecting women to be representative of beauty. For these reasons there are also loads more fashion items and accessories aimed at women, than men. Men's fashions are rather limited, boring and uniform really, whereas women's fashions tend to be much more interesting and highly varied.

3. Why is fashion more important to some people?

Some people are more concerned about looks than others really. City people, often, are more concerned about the way they look, and people who hang around in fashionable areas where there is greater pressure to keep up with trends and fashions. So, in general it's a combination of personality and social context – that is what makes some people more concerned about being fashionable than others. As well, of course, as how much income a person has to indulge in spending money on clothes and accessories.

Describe a person you know who loves to grow plants (e.g. vegetables/fruits/flowers etc.)

You should say:

Who this person is

What he/she grows

Where he/she grows those vegetable/fruits

And explain why he/she enjoys this activity

A person I know who loves to grow plants is a lady I met in Scotland when I was in university. In fact she was my neighbour. I was living in a shared house in Bruford Road in Edinburgh, and next door lived a fairly old, but very energetic lady, called Nan. Nan was always changing her hair style, always wore long flowing dresses, and was quite moody, but a lovely lady, nevertheless. She had a small front garden and a quite long back garden. In the front garden she had wonderful flower beds of brightly coloured flowers, and a small lawn with a stone bird bath on it. And in the back garden she had bushes and a vegetable patch and some more leafy plants. I don't remember the names of all these plants in English, to be honest! Anyway, she spent quite a bit of time in her garden carefully looking after her plants, tilling the soil around the vegetables, watering them during the dry summer months and pruning the rose bushes. Because that summer I stayed there and spent a lot of time reading in the garden I would talk to her over the low fence which divided our gardens and we became quite good friends. She told me a lot about her love for plants and flowers and it seemed like this was a hobby that really kept her positive and happy in life. She wasn't so into people, or doing social things, but she did enjoy her garden. We chatted a lot that summer, and I think I learned a thing or two from her about how to appreciate nature and the simpler things in life. I think tending to her garden was really good for her mental and physical health, actually.

Part 3

1. What do you think of being a farmer?

What do I think of that job? I'm not sure what I think really... A farmer is an important job in society and there is great worth in working with the land and growing produce and rearing animals for the good of society. I think farmers are very well paid

in some countries, and incredibly rich – like in the USA or the UK, and in other countries farmers are the poor ones in society. I don't really know why, exactly... So, it depends where you're a farmer as to whether it's a really fulfilling and respected job or not!

2. Are there many people growing their own vegetables now?

There are more people than in the past yes, I think so. There is a current trend for people in cities to take more interest in the land – and some even have allotments and mini “vegetable farms” outside of the cities – I think they rent a spot of land – I'm unsure how it works. But I have noticed that an increasing amount of young people are interested in this, and I think that's a good thing.

3. Do you think it is good to let kids know how to plant?

Yes, I think that in school they learn these kinds of things. At least I did when I was in school. I also believe that if a family have a balcony or even some kind of garden, then it's important to give the kids an opportunity to grow vegetables, plants and flowers. Things like tomatoes are quite easy to grow in a warm balcony, and children can see a tomato plant growing quite quickly and learn how to take care of it, water it etc. So, yes, I think it's definitely good to give kids the chance to grow and tend to plants or vegetables in the home.

4. What are the differences between traditional and modern agriculture?

I don't know much about the development of the agricultural industry to be quite honest. All I know is that in the past there were less machines doing the work, and a lot more manual labour involved in farming. There are now a host of modern highly advanced tractors and specialist farming equipment that make all aspects of farming faster and more efficient – obviously, traditionally, these things all had to be done by hand.

Describe your favorite childhood friend.

You should say:

Who he/she is

Where you met each other

What you often did together

And explain what made you like him/her

A childhood friend who I had a lot of fun with was a guy called Matthew. We met in school in the very first year. He lived in the street nearby, and we used to have great times together. You see, we lived in a small town then, by a really nice woodland – we would both go off and play in the woods almost every day, at least in the holidays. We'd make dens, play hide and seek, climb trees, and play imaginary fantasy games. We were the kind of kids who were not so into sports like football and basketball – we were more excited by riding bikes and having adventures in the countryside. Plus,

when you grow up in a small town there are less entertainment options than in cities, so you end up using your imagination more, and bonding with your friends a lot more – because there are less distractions, and a lot of nature around. There was also a river, and Matthew had a small wooden boat his uncle had made him, sort of a raft really – and we used to go down the river on that and try to catch fish. Things like that. I enjoyed his company because he was funny, too. He had a very mischievous sense of humour and loved playing practical jokes – we enjoyed playing pranks on our parents. That was quite funny actually. So, yeah, I liked Matthew a lot, and we still keep in touch, from time to time on social media. He is in Shenzhen studying business in university. Occasionally, at Spring Festival we see each other in our home town, if we both are visiting at the same time.

Part 3

1. Why do people lose contact with their friends after graduation?

People lose contact with some friends for a variety of reasons. One reason is that their paths in life diverge and their lives go in different directions. They lose common interests and goals, and life moves on, their ambitions change and their priorities differ. This is not always the case, but sometimes is what happens, often gradually over time. It's a common reason anyway. Another reason might be that you end up losing your friends' contact details, though today this is less common because people are often connected quite extensively with many friends and friends of friends via various online social media accounts.

2. How does modern technology influence friendship?

Modern technology influences friendships by enabling people to keep in touch all the time with friends and families, enabling people to see each other's daily updates on things like WeChat Moments and other social utilities and platforms, and also enabling people to make new friends through online friends and dating sites. Also, there are a lot of online forums where people can post comments, opinions, ideas and share their experiences around specific or general topics and themes – often those that get along or share similar views on these forums, can make friends with each other and then develop those friendships. So, modern technology, mostly internet-based technology and software, has a huge impact on friendships and relationships. From enabling people to nurture existing friendships, to helping people make new friends.

3. Do you think people's relationship with friends will change when they get older?

I think that friendships do evolve and change over time, and as we get older we have slightly different relationships with our friends, yes. It really depends. One example might be that as people get older maybe they have less time to spend with friends, and more responsibilities, so they might stay in touch with less friends, or be more selective about the friends they do spend time with. Children tend to play with a wider variety of friends, also because they are less discerning and have less prejudices. As we get older we take stronger likes and dislikes to people and also have less time for people who we might not immediately get along with or share common ground with.

Evolving friendships are different too – adults who really want to maintain friendships will make efforts to develop them and be emotionally supportive of friends, and as the years go by, that can make friendships stronger, and last into old age. These are arguably the most valuable friendships.

Describe a person who inspired you to do something interesting.

You should say:

Who he/she is

How you knew him/her

What interesting thing you did

And explain how he/she inspired you to do something interesting

Someone who inspired me to do something that I think is really interesting, is a friend of mine who I met at a local café that I go to to study. She is called Banyan, and she is always in the same café with friends or studying, herself. We became friends one afternoon when she came over to me and just introduced herself. After that day, we talked together almost every time I went there to study, and we ended up doing all sorts of things together – going for walks, going out to bars, parties, all sorts of fun occasions in the city. She was so inspiring and so much fun – she seemed to be afraid of nothing, and up for anything. Meeting Banyan was a real turning point in my life really. Anyway, one day she introduced me to her yoga teacher – one of her hobbies was a kind of Indian yoga – she does it every Sundays at a local club with a professional teacher. Anyway, she introduced me to the yoga club and I joined. It was great! I loved it. It involves manipulation of the body, which is brilliant exercise, and meditation – which is so good for the mind and the mood. I became really into this yoga and I still do it now, every Sunday. In fact, I've become quite good at it. It takes quite a while at first to get good, and be able to feel comfortable in all the different positions, but when you finally get to grips with that, you end up feeling incredibly elevated by the meditations. So, yes, this is something really interesting I did, and still do, which I think was very inspiring. And that's thanks to my friend, Banyan.

Part 3

1. What qualities make someone a role model?

A good role model should have a number of key qualities, in my opinion. They should be sincere and a person of integrity – that means they should be genuine and not fake. Some famous people are just fake and put on a façade, and care about looks and image and not really connect to people on a deeper, genuine, inner level. I believe that a role model should connect to people in a natural way, set a good example and be a person of some moral standing. These are the most important qualities of a role model in my view.

2. Who can influence children more, parents or teachers?

It depends – parents can be a very strong influence on children, of course, as they live

with their parents usually, bring them up, and spend their lives with them. However, teachers also have some influence on kids – teachers can be highly influential, and they are authority figures that children are taught to respect and follow – so teachers have a responsibility to be sincere and help direct children in the right direction in terms of studies and in terms of social behaviour.

3. Why should children learn from role models?

Children will always instinctively look up to people they believe are authority figures or people that are in the limelight – you know, in the news or on TV, or famous people. It's not that children should look up to them, it's the fact that they are likely to, or at least they are likely to be influenced by them. That's really what I think you mean. So, role models, in turn, have a responsibility to behave sincerely and genuinely and with a sense of moral rectitude – so that their influence on younger people can be a positive rather than a negative one. However, I don't believe that they should be fake, or even reveal everything about their private lives, no. I just believe they should present a sincere attitude in public.

Object: (具体)

- ◆ Describe a piece of technology you own that you feel difficult to use.
- ◆ Describe a photo you took and you are proud of.
- ◆ Describe an object that you think is beautiful.

Describe a piece of technology you own that you feel difficult to use.

You should say:

What it is

When you got it

How often you use it

And explain how you feel about it

A piece of technology that I own that might be difficult to use is probably my desktop computer. I know that in some ways a computer is easy to use, but I'll explain why mine is quite difficult at first, at least for most people. You see, I bought a special set-up from the computer market because I am a huge fan of gaming – and the games I play require a lot of fast memory and a lot of power – so the computer has some top of the range graphics cards in it, and needs to be set up in a certain way. In fact, depending on what game I need to play, I need to make some hardware changes – change certain boards inside for others, and rig up a cooling system. See... it's sounding complicated already! So, you see, at first I found this quite hard to get to grips with and I had to watch a few online videos and ask for some advice along the way. Then I had to do some very basic programming stuff to set it up – so the whole thing worked properly. I'm not sure how to explain that process, but anyway. I use the computer almost daily. When I've finished my studies and other things I need to do, I get going and start playing. I sometimes play games with people from all over the world and I play these open-world huge fantasy games. My characters are a wizard and a warrior. I love this one particular game so much – it's also quite complex to get used to, but when you know how to play, it's fantastic – I can spend literally hours on end playing it. Sometimes my parents get annoyed because I spend so long on my computer, but to be honest, I'm quite disciplined with my studies, and don't have much of an outside social life, so I manage my time pretty well. So, generally my hobby doesn't interfere with other important aspects of my life.

Part 3

1. What technological products do people currently use?

People today use tablets and phones as the main tech products, really, more so than computers, actually. This is mainly because these technologies have advanced so much that we can get a lot of work done as well as basic communications through these tools. When they first came out they were more of a consuming medium – I mean, you could play games but not really produce anything on them – but now people write essays, emails, and even use complex graphics and illustration

programmes on their tablets and phones. So, things have advanced a lot in the past ten years or so.

2. Why do big companies introduce new products frequently?

Big companies need to stay competitive, so they are constantly investing huge amounts of money in research to stay ahead of the game in their field. So, it's essential for competitive reasons to be constantly working on releasing new products to the market. Secondly, I think it's a human urge and desire, to be creating new things, breaking new boundaries, doing new stuff and innovating. I think it's in our blood. It's part of the human spirit – to grow, develop, actualize.

3. Why are people so keen on buying iPhones even though they haven't changed much?

People are fashion victims basically. You know, people always want the latest gimmicks, and advertising has an incredible power over people – phones are always being made to look cooler and slicker and faster and more cutting-edge, and a lot of this is image and presentation. Some companies really know how to make their products look new and appealing and exciting, even though the hardware and software hasn't changed that dramatically really. One thing is the constant upgrading of the phone cameras – people love taking photos with their phones, and every year a new phone camera is introduced that claims to take sharper, better and more attractive photos. People are suckers for this kind of thing.

4. Does the development of technology affect the way we study?

Yes, most certainly. The way we study has become way more efficient with the use of technology, both in terms of reading and research and writing and producing presentations, essays or reports. So, in general I'd say that our study and work habits are transformed and improved by technology, and that process keeps on going as technology advances, computers get faster and more capable. AI is probably the next horizon in tech developments and advancements which will influence our studies. I'm not quite sure how yet, but it's sure to present new developments that make study life a lot easier and more efficient.

Describe a photo you took and you are proud of.

You should say:

When you took it

Where you took it

What is in this photo

And explain why you are proud of it

A photo I took that I am really proud of is a picture of an ex-girlfriend of mine from university. You see, in my first year at university I had a bit of a photography phase – I got quite into taking photos, and created albums based on a number of different

themes. I had a period of taking photos of trees, for example, another period of taking photos of old buildings, another of taking photos of markets – you could say that photography is a form of art, in this sense. Anyway, I had a phase of taking portraits of people, and the whole project was in black and white. People look quite striking in black and white, and I think it's a lovely way to photograph people. Anyway, one of the best, and most meaningful photos I took was of my girlfriend at the time. We took a series of photos around campus – our campus was an old and very attractive place with lots of curious plants, trees and gardens within it. The photo I liked the most, and still like, was perhaps the most natural of them all – she was not posing at all, or trying to look attractive or conscious of the camera – she was bending down to stroke a small dog that an old man was walking. The morning sunlight was just perfect, casting a long shadow across the path – shadows of her, the dog and the man and a tree behind, all extending beautifully and sharply. Her face was a perfect, natural smile of joy and the old man also had a pleasant look of contentment on his face. It's hard to describe art or photography in my own language, let alone in English, but this is the best way I can describe it anyway – it was a perfect configuration of elements, wonderful lighting and lovely genuine expressions on the faces of the old man and my girlfriend. So, I'm very proud of it, and I got it framed, too, and it's on the wall at my parent's house back in Guizhou.

Part 3

1. Why do some people like to record important things by photos?

Photos are nice ways to store memories. As much as our brains can remember a lot of things, there's something really special about taking out an old photo album, or looking at one online, and going through memories of the past. I think history and memories are what keep us alive and keep life meaningful. I think that's why people like to keep photos, and why they are special. History makes us who we are today, and the past dictates the people we are in the present. Photos capture an aspect of our past.

2. What can people learn from historical photographs?

People can learn all sorts from historical photos. Firstly, we see what a place actually looked like in the past – and then can compare it to the present. Secondly, written documentation of history can only go so far, especially when it comes to capturing what places and people look like. Secondly, the written word can be more easily be censored and distorted compared to a photograph. Some say that photos never lie – and that's what they mean – a photo can't be distorted so easily to cover up the truth. However, with today's digital advances, maybe that isn't true anymore!

3. Is taking photo the best way to remember something?

No, I don't think so. I think a photo is a means to jog our memories and share memories with others, but it isn't the best means of actually remembering something. Our own minds, and our ability to share and communicate with others in a sincere and authentic manner, are the real things that help us remember things – and our sense of

respect for our, and other's past, and our sentimentality and our sense of nostalgia. These are more powerful than any photograph can be.

Describe an object that you think is beautiful.

You should say:

What it is

Where you saw it

What it looks like

And explain why you think it is beautiful

An object that instantly comes to mind that strikes me as really beautiful is a painting my friend Jayne has in her house on the staircase wall. It's a painting of a field of tulips – I think it's in Holland. It's a huge field of pink and red tulips stretching out into the distance, with a cobalt blue sky above it. It's a particularly beautiful painting because of the way the painter has captured the light. I think that he must have been painting the field in the morning, as the morning sunlight, cast its light across the field and onto the flowers – the light casts shadows and brings out the brightness of the flowers – they almost come alive in the painting. Almost as if they are moving or about to move in an incredibly light breeze. I think the painting is especially beautiful for two reasons – firstly because, as I've described above, it's a fantastic painting by an excellent oil painter, and secondly because I am especially drawn to nature and paintings of the natural world. They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and this is very much true in my opinion – I am never attracted to abstract or even impressionist works of art, I find immense beauty in the simple natural, still lives and pictures of landscapes, mountains, fields, lakes and trees. So, it is true that beauty, and the perception of beauty, really is decided by personal opinion and personality. I think that paintings are more beautiful than photographs, because we know they have been created with the care, dedication and talent from a skilled painter, who has patience, calm and diligence. I think this also adds to the beauty of art – thinking about how much talent and effort went into creating the piece.

Part 3

1. Do you think there are more beautiful things now than in the past? Why?

I don't think so. There are simply different beautiful things, or different developments in the world of creating beautiful things. There is less natural beauty than in the past because humans have destroyed a lot of natural environments. On the other hand there is more beautiful art and architecture because we have developed richer traditions from more globalized societies.

2. What beautiful scenic spots are there in your country?

There are lots of scenic spots of great beauty in China. It's a vast country so there is beauty in mountains, valleys, even desserts and lakes and places of icy cold – to jungles and rainforests, tea plantations and even quaint ancient towns, set amongst

rivers and hills. There's a lot of scenic spots. The list is almost endless!

3. Where do you think people usually come into contact with beautiful things?

Usually in countryside locations or in places where there are mountains and lakes. These are the most picturesque places. Some people see beauty in the modern world as well as the natural world – people who love to enjoy city architecture, both modern and old-style might be drawn to places like Shanghai, which have curious mix of both traditional, modern and international architecture. Some find great beauty in those kinds of things too. Others prefer temples, landscaped gardens, parks, or places of simply pure natural, untouched beauty.

4. Why do you think people create beautiful things?

Human beings are always drawn to things of beauty. It's a natural instinct for humans to want to see and be in places that are beautiful. I have no idea why people are drawn to these things, but because of this, they are attracted to create things of beauty as well. Artists, architects and everyday people, all in their own different ways, enjoy creating beautiful and attractive things. I think it makes people feel positive and look on the bright side of life.

Object: (抽象)

- ◆ Describe a website you often visit.
- ◆ Describe a piece of good news that you heard about someone you know well.
- ◆ Describe an advertisement you don't like.
- ◆ Describe a historical period you want to know more about.
- ◆ Describe something you would like to learn in the future.
- ◆ Describe a movie you watched recently and would like to watch again.
- ◆ Describe a program you like to watch.
- ◆ Describe an important thing you learned (not at school or university).
- ◆ Describe a story or a novel that you have read and you found interesting.
- ◆ Describe something you do to keep fit and healthy.
- ◆ Describe something that surprised you and made you happy.
- ◆ Describe something that helps you to focus on study/work.
- ◆ Describe a story someone told you and you remember.

Describe a website you often visit.

You should say:

What it is about

How you found it

How often you visit it

And explain why you often visit it

A website I visit a lot is basically a sports news website. I'm a big fan of sports, and I follow football, basketball, athletics, all sorts of sports, so I always check a specific sports news website to find out the latest information about what games and matches are on, which new players have been taken on by which teams, who is playing against who, and what the scores are. I've always been interested in a range of national and international sports since I was young, and I'm an active sportsman myself, but I must say I am perhaps more obsessed with sports than anyone else I know. I follow almost every mainstream sport and a few other kinds of sports that are a bit less well-known. So, in fact, I follow a few different sports websites, in truth, not just one particular one. I visit them every day, multiple times, I must admit. On my phone, on my laptop and at work sometimes. I always keep up to date with what is going on and I'm also a member of some of the chat forums on the websites. You know, where you can chat with other fans and share insights and ideas and thoughts about the games, your favourite players' performance and stuff like this. I found out about these websites years ago, from a friend at university, I think. I can't quite remember now, it was a long time ago anyway. I think they are the main websites that any huge sports fan in my country knows about, they've been around for decades now.

Part 3

1. Why do some people prefer to read news online instead of watching news on TV? News online is really the best, fastest and most frequently updated means of getting

hold of information today. The TV and newspaper news is always a bit behind the time really. I mean, it's not updated as quickly as the news we see on apps on our phones. I think that in the not so distant future we will see TV news and newspapers disappearing totally in favour of news apps and online news, to be honest. I only know that older people watch TV news today and not so many young people.

2. What kinds of people would still go to library to read and study?

A lot of people still use libraries to read and study. The reason is not just because they can access the books they need, but mainly because the libraries on university campuses are really good places to study – they are quiet, they are well-heated (well, the one's on my campus are, some are freezing), and they enable you to get out of your busy dormitory or accommodation with other students, and sit in a quiet study-zone where you can get into the mood of studying – something which isn't easy to do elsewhere on campus to be honest.

3. Do you think kids should be allowed to browse video websites like bilibili and tiktok?

I think kids should be allowed to browse such websites, yes. But I think they should be controlled or restricted to some extent by their parents. I think it's their parents' job to give them a certain amount of time on such websites. I also think there should be some parental guidance so children cannot see content which is kinda too above their age range.

Describe a piece of good news that you heard about someone you know well.

You should say:

What it was

When you heard it

How you knew it

And explain how you felt about it

Some good news I heard about last week, about a person I know well, is that my sister recovered really quickly from an illness she had, just in time to do her ballet exam. She has been taking ballet really seriously since she was a child, and every six months she takes an exam, which enables her to get to the next level, and then enter into a new session at her ballet school. She came down with a terrible flu just a few weeks ago, which meant she missed quite a few practice sessions, and also she just felt awful and pretty much had to stay in bed. She was very worried, on top of being sick, that she would miss her ballet exam, which would set her back quite a bit – you see the external examiners only come around the country every six months on a fairly tight schedule. Anyway, fortunately, she seemed to recover really quickly and actually not only made the exam, but performed really well in it. Much to her own surprise! Maybe the rest did her good after all! You see, she is actually almost a professional dancer – well, she wants to be – and will attend a performing arts school in London

next year if she gets the right results in various tests and exams, so this is a very important thing in her life. She's not a very academic person, so she isn't great at the usual studies most of us have to do, but she's got an innate talent for dance, and my parents have really encouraged and supported that. I knew about her illness and everything else because I talk to my parents and her on text and phone fairly often. Also, she was sick in bed for two weeks so she was bored and messaged me a lot!

Part 3

1. Is it good to share something on social media?

I think it's a double-edged sword. You know, social media has its good points and bad points. I think some people are way too obsessed with sharing photos of their meals, their selfies, their days out and things like this – and it becomes a sort of show-off thing that people do. I don't like this. However, it can also be a good way of staying informed with what friends are up to, where they are, what they're doing and so on. Like everything, I think there is a fine line between something advantageous and something that can be abused and become a negative influence.

2. Should the media only publish good news?

Well... No, the media, in my view, should publish a range of news that is useful for people to hear and helpful to society. Sometimes this could be good news, to motivate people and make them feel aware of the good things that are going on. And sometimes it might be bad news – stuff that we don't want to hear but is important that we are aware of. So, it really depends to be honest. I don't think about this so much, as I don't avidly follow the news really. But, yes, news should try to be objective and informative, whether it is reporting good or bad news.

3. What kind of good news do people often share in the community?

People in the local community usually share news about the things going on in their area I think – if I understand your question correctly. You know, developments like the opening of a new leisure centre, or a supermarket, or new rules and regulations that have come into place. Especially in these changing times, people tend to follow what new policies are out, and talk about whether they are good or bad, or both, for their lives and those around them. People tend to talk and share news about things that directly affect their lives, mostly.

Describe an advertisement you don't like.

You should say:

What it is about

Where you saw it

What it was like

And explain why you don't like this advertisement

There are a lot of advertisements I dislike. In fact, I'm really not a fan of adverts. I see

them everywhere – in the streets, on the sides of buses, in the subway, and even in elevators in my office building. But the one advert that has become popular recently which I really dislike is one for a restaurant chain in my city. It's quite a big restaurant chain – a hotpot franchise, actually – and it's just a really awful advert. I think what annoys me about it is that it shows families and friends being absolutely delighted sitting around eating hotpot – which is fine, but it's so cheesy, you know... it's really corny and unrealistic and the acting is terrible. I think that's what really bothers me, the acting is truly awful so instead of it making me attracted to the restaurant it makes me actually not want to go there at all. I'm not sure if any of my colleagues feel the same as I do about it. Every single morning as I'm going to work in the elevator I see it on those screens they have in there, and every time I cringe at the sight of it. I try not to watch it, ignore it, turn my back, but I can't help it! It really winds me up. I think it's because I am a person who doesn't like things which are insincere or inauthentic, and I feel that this advert is just so fake and unrealistic (again, like I say, mainly because of the acting) that I simply have a massive aversion to it every time it comes on. So, yeah, I don't mind some adverts if I think they're at least a little bit sincere, but I absolutely detest things that come across as fake for the sake of attempting to convince people to buy something or spend their money on something.

Part 3

1. Do you think it is useful to use celebrities in commercials?

For big companies, yes, it's useful, because celebrities always stick in people's minds. Also, when people see famous people indulging in something, enjoying something on TV or in an advert they automatically think that that thing must be worthwhile spending money on, or good quality or something like that. It's a way of convincing people about the popularity and quality of something – to get a famous person to endorse it. I can see why companies use this technique, but, personally, I find it really fake and annoying.

2. Do you think the adverts online are directed at young people, while those on TV and newspaper are directed at old people?

Not exclusively, but perhaps to some extent, yes. This is mainly because older people watch TV and read newspapers, and younger people spend more time online. But, I think in recent years this is changing a little as more and more older people are using the online medium to do lots of things – on their phones for example. So, yes, generally speaking TV and newspapers tend to advertise things like insurance, medical insurance, vitamins and things that older people might be attracted to, and the online medium seem to advertise products that appeal to younger people – in general anyway.

3. What kinds of products are commonly advertised?

All sorts of things are advertised today – from electronic goods, to medicines and insurance services, to restaurants, to clothing outlets – big brands of clothing and accessories. Also new developments like housing developments, malls, things like this.

Basically, as you can imagine, anything is advertised really, but mainly brands that are famous, as these are the companies that can afford the high marketing costs involved in having such high profile adverts in public view. You see, advertising is really expensive, and it costs a fortune to have adverts in the subway and on billboards in the streets etc., so usually we see named brands, famous brands etc advertised more than anything else – you know, more than the smaller mom-and-pop businesses, for example.

Describe a historical period you want to know more about.

You should say:

What it is

How you know about this period of history

What you are interested in

And explain why you want to know more about this period

A period in history that I am especially interested in is the time of the pyramids in Egypt. The ancient Egyptian period, maybe it's called. I've always been fascinated by that time, and the mysteries that surround it. For example, we don't really know how they built the pyramids and the tombs – there are various theories and speculations as to how they achieved this huge feat of engineering. Also, I love the art work, the hieroglyphics, the colours, everything about the designs and architecture of the period. It was quite a brutal period in history though, as are most periods in the past – and if you were rich and famous, or a king or something, you could live well, but if you were a slave or a very common man, I imagine life was quite hard, and you were permanently living with quite strict bosses and landlords. However, this was also a time when many artisans developed crafts and people started to learn to write and read. What is also interesting is that Egypt was the first country to record having cats as domestic animals. They felt that cats were sacred and holy and they also incorporated cats into their designs, statues and symbols. The famous Sphinx, in Giza, near the great pyramids, is a combination of a cat and other animals, and was believed to be a kind of God for the ancient Egyptians. So, yeah, there's lots of different things about this period in history that I find very interesting. I think it's the aesthetics of the era that interest me the most, and so I'd like to learn more about Egyptian design, architecture and art work. I think that learning more about art of the period, and the way they painted and carved images of the people, in that two dimensional way, marked a very interesting period in the development of art in history. So I'd like to learn more about that.

Part 3

1. How do children learn history?

Children usually learn about history in school, to be honest, or from programs on television. We mainly learn about the history of our own country, for the most part, but we sometimes have classes about world history too. Children should at least

develop a basic understanding of the history of their nation, and its relationships with others throughout time, and also we can learn from the past, so history is quite important.

2. Do you think everyone should know about history of their own country?

Yes, I think to some extent that is important yes. It depends on the objectives really. I mean, if it is to promote a greater understanding of life and help young people to contribute to making their country better in the future, then I think that's a very good reason, and we can also learn from the mistakes and failures as well as the victories that our country has experienced in the past.

3. Do you think it is hard to protect historical buildings?

It isn't that hard really, if there is money and funding resources directed to doing so. But that depends on the decisions of the local governments, I think, and also how important those buildings are and how expensive they might be to upkeep. I think that it's also a case of educating people about the importance of their own heritage. Protecting old buildings can also bring tourism to a place and inspire interest in places which maybe people have forgotten about. This, in turn, helps the economy of an area develop as well.

4. What are the differences between learning history from books and from videos?

Learning history from books, for most people, is quite a tedious and boring experience. I understand that people like professors and academics enjoy this and are mentally equipped to really understand what is written in history books. But for normal people like me, it's much easier to learn about history from videos and documentaries where we see bite-sized commentaries about people and places in history, and a lot of real visuals to go with it. This makes things more interesting and stimulating and therefore enables people to remember the details more – remembering is a key part of the learning process.

5. Who should be responsible for protecting historical buildings?

Everyone in different ways should be responsible for protecting historical buildings. The authorities need to be responsible in terms of providing laws, policies and funding. And the local community responsible for advocating for those causes and promoting awareness amongst the population. And everyday people should be responsible in terms of how they behave when they are in historical sites – like not damaging them, making donations, picking up litter and generally respecting them.

Describe something you would like to learn in the future.

You should say:

What it is

How you would like to learn it

Why you would like to learn it

And explain whether it's difficult to learn it

Something I would love to learn in the future is to speak Arabic. I think it's a fantastic language and sounds so strong and confident and guttural and romantic all at the same time. I'm not sure where my love for the Arabic language comes from, really. I just feel drawn to it. Also, I am good at languages and I'm already fairly fluent in Cantonese, Japanese and English. I'm also a huge fan of international films – it's always been my main hobby – I watch films from all corners of the world, and have a huge collection at home. The films in which they speak Arabic, or even Turkish, really appeal to me for some reason. I like the way the languages sound, as well as the attitude and personality of those that are speaking. I think it will be quite difficult to learn Arabic because the grammatical structures in the language are quite complex. A bit like Russian, maybe. I think that learning all the grammatical forms and changes will be challenging and a bit boring. Also, the script is very different, as well, which I think makes learning the language a bit more tricky. However, I'm used to Chinese, so learning another script, especially an alphabetical one, shouldn't be too hard, really. So, yes, I'd love to learn Arabic, and I think I would like to work as translator and interpreter for international relations in the future, so I believe that it would also be a good language to learn in terms of this career ambition, as well. I think I will likely achieve this ambition – I have the time, motivation and the talent, I believe. I would learn the language by getting a private teacher, by getting some of the best books for learning Arabic, and continue to watch Arabic-speaking movies, and also follow some video tutorials online.

Part 3

1. What's the most important skill to learn these days?

I think programming is something that a lot of people seek to learn these days alongside their other compulsory studies, to be honest. This skill is seen as being useful as the whole world is basically driven forward with the advancements in computer technology. So, I think that a lot of young people are thinking that they will learn programming and that will secure them a good career in the future – I'm not so sure if this is true, but it's an idea a lot of people have today.

2. What influences young people more when they choose a major, interest or future income?

I think that the advice and opinions of parents and peers have a strong influence on students' choices of their major or career ambitions. There are also strong trends that a lot of young people follow and are strongly influenced by. I think that these trends are sometimes dictated by market forces and sometimes they are pushed for economic factors by educational and governmental institutions. All in all, I think young people are highly influenced by their parents and the trends of the market. So, I think it's a combination of expectations and pressure from the family, personal interest and future income, to varying degrees.

3. Why do some people prefer to study alone?

Studying alone ensures an environment of peace in which one can concentrate. Some

people are sensitive to noise and can't really focus and think in crowded or noisy places. They need to be in a basically silent environment where there are no distractions. And being alone usually ensures that one is not going to be disturbed by someone speaking or moving around or distracting you in other ways.

Describe a movie you watched recently and would like to watch again.

You should say:

What it was about

Where you watched it

Why you like it

And explain why you would like to watch it again

I watched the movie *Prey*, which is the latest movie in the series of *Predator* movies – based on the idea of a strong and predatory evil alien coming from another planet and landing on earth, in the jungle or wilderness. It's kind of scary, though I wouldn't call it a horror film, as such. It's more of an intense action thriller, really. Basically, in *Prey* there is a north American Indian girl, who is out in the woodlands hunting rabbits and she suddenly sees this strange phenomenon in the sky – strange lights like an alien space craft above the clouds – something like this. Then, a few days later she sees huge footprints in the woodlands, and strange things start to happen. Eventually she actually sees the alien fighting with a bear and realizing that there is this awful creature out there... the creature notices her and chases her. She manages to hide but eventually it finds her, and the rest of the film is about how she tricks the alien and eventually kills it. It's a movie that really keeps you on the edge of your seat... it's thrilling, and the scenery is impressive too. I would like to watch it again because I was watching it online on my computer, and frankly, this kind of movie is much better on the big screen, so I'd like to see it in the cinema.

Part 3

1. What are the differences between watching movies at home and in the cinema?

Watching films at home is much less atmospheric than watching them in the cinema. The cinema gives you an all-round powerful experience, both in terms of audio and visuals, whereas watching a film at home is much less dramatic. Basically because you've got a smaller screen – a very small screen often – and a nothing like the kind of surround sound speaker systems they have in modern cinemas. So, yeah, a cinema is a much more powerful experience, and you can also eat snacks, like popcorn and make it feel like a much more special occasion too.

2. Do you think actors (or actresses) are important to the success of a movie?

Yes, I think that a director should choose good actors and actresses in order for a movie to be a success. But they not only should have the right kind of skills – and be good actors, of course – but they should also be passionate about acting in the movie itself. If they don't like the film, or the plot, or the role they are going to be acting in,

then they are less likely to do a good job and help make the film a success.

3. Why are there fewer people going to the cinema to watch movies?

Fewer people are going to the cinema to watch movies in my country because the movies are now quite poor. They have basically spent a lot of money advancing special effects, but the plots are terrible – well, in my opinion – the plots are weak compared to the Chinese films that were coming out in the early 1990s – those had feeling, sincerity and told the stories of the lives of normal, real people. This new slew of movies are more superficial, like Hollywood blockbuster-style films. Also, people are lazy and just watch films on their phones and tablets today – not as many people go to the cinema as before. It's a shame really.

Describe a program you like to watch.

You should say:

What it is

What it is about

Who you watch it with

And explain why you like to watch it

A program that I'd like to watch that I've heard about but not yet seen, as a TV series actually. I guess that counts as a program! The TV series is called The Sandman and is based on a cartoon character, who is the Lord of Dreams. It's obviously fantasy – but from what I've heard it's also quite philosophical and meaningful in the way it is done. It touches upon all sorts of aspects of our thoughts and lives – life, death, suffering, human ambitions, and so on. I would like to watch this with my friend Michael – he's really into these kind of TV series, and he loves to talk about them afterwards, too. I enjoy watching films and series and then having someone to discuss them with after – I think this is really interesting and makes them all the more exciting. The reason the Sandman is so interesting to me is because I'm really into fantasy stuff, but also I like things which involve meaningful reflections on life, have philosophical messages or insights into people and society and things that make you feel you've learned something afterwards, not simply watched something for fun. So, that's why I'd choose The Sandman – though, as I said, I've not seen it, I've read reviews about it online, and I've a few friends which have recommended it to me.

Part 3

1. What programs do people like to watch in your country?

People in my country are real fans of Korean soap operas. They love them! In fact, I think that some people are even crazy about them. I have a colleague called Nan, and she's really into this one Korean boy star – she's crazy about him – I can't remember his name but he's some young, handsome guy. Anyway, Korean soap operas and their actors are really popular with people of all generations. Other people like nature documentaries and cartoons – people watch a whole range of different types of

programs really, depending on their age and personality.

2. Do people in your country like to watch foreign TV programs?

Yes, a lot of American TV series were popular a few years ago. I'm not sure if they are so popular today amongst the new generation of youngsters, but certainly my generation really enjoyed a lot of TV from there – especially family comedies and dramas. These days I think they are losing popularity, though. But yes, Korean soap operas and Japanese anime and cartoon series are still the most popular I'd say, all round. They appeal to the cultural tendencies of Chinese people more, in general I'd say.

3. Do students watch programs in class in China?

Students sometimes watch programs in class. It depends on the school, the subject and the teacher. There are programs which are beneficial for learning, and some teachers who have multimedia equipment in the classroom will use certain programs or snippets from programs to help reinforce learning in the classroom. It tends to engage student's interest more than a teacher just standing there talking the whole time. Some teachers even advocate the playing of movies in class, and set assignments based on those films. That can be interesting and stimulating for learners. I don't think that is so common, though.

Describe an important thing you learned (not at school or university) .

You should say:

What it is

When you learned it

How you learned it

And explain why it was important

An important thing I learned – which was not at school or uni – was from my parents, more specifically my mother. That was the value of being honest. This may sound a bit strange, but it is what comes to mind first, so I chose to talk about it. You see, I was predominantly brought up by my mother, as my father was always away working far from home. She's a kind of sensitive person, but also a dedicated and committed person – if she decides to do something, for herself or for others, she approaches it with an attitude of honesty, sincerity and commitment, until the task is complete. She talked to me a lot as a child – about a whole range of topics, both everyday things and deeper, more philosophical things – and I listened a lot to the things she had to say. She taught me that it was important, from a moral perspective, to be an honest and kind person. Although, in fact, especially in Asian society, this isn't always the best way of achieving success in career, it is, according to my mother, the best way of being true to yourself and developing and growing self respect. She always believed that this was more valuable and important than career success or money or other more material achievements. I also saw her demonstrate this quality of honesty and

sincerity in her daily actions, as well as in her stories and explanations to me. She put ‘theory into practice’ you might say – she practiced what she preached – she acted in accordance with her beliefs – they weren’t just things she talked about, lectured about or taught; she actually lived according to her own principles. I think this is a valuable lesson – in conclusion – that you live sincerely and honestly in accordance with your principles. And that way you can grow to be a whole person, who will always attract good people, and develop strong friendships and relationships. I have seen this come true in my daily life as well. And so, I believe what she taught me is true – even though it isn’t always the way to get ahead in the material world of work!

Part 3

1. What can children learn from parents? What about grandparents?

Children can learn values from parents, and grandparents. This is the most important thing that we learn from our family as we grow up, before we even go to kindergarten or school – basic human social values. We learn these from both parents and grandparents – depending how much time we spend with either. We learn the basics of good behaviour, moral values and virtues, and how to conduct ourselves in society – in the outside world. Of course, we learn many other things as well, but this is the most significant I believe.

2. Do you think some children are well-behaved because they are influenced by their parents?

Yes, I most certainly do. I think that the primary influence for children is their parents and their upbringing at home. And whilst school does have a strong influence on their social education as they grow up, the fundamental basis of their personality and behaviour does come from what they learn at home with their parents and family members, and the values they instill in them from a very young age.

3. Is it necessary for adults to learn new things?

It is important that adults always are aware that learning new things is important – as adults need to continually grow and develop to become better people, too, not just children. There are plenty of ways in which adults can self-improve, and not just in terms of career skills, but also in social behaviour and how they treat others. If we want the world to be a better place, then these things are important for adults too – absolutely necessary, I’d say.

Describe a story or a novel that you have read and you found interesting.

You should say:

When you read it

What the story or novel was about

Who wrote it

And explain why you found it interesting

A story I found really interesting that I read to my little sister yesterday, was a kid's story called "My Secret Unicorn". It's a book about a girl called Lauren who lives on a farm with her parents and brother. She has a horse called Twilight. One day Lauren visits an old bookshop in town, run by an old lady called Mrs. Fontana. Mrs. Fontana gives Lauren a beautiful book about unicorns, and hints to Lauren that unicorns are, indeed, real and live in the world amongst us, if we look carefully enough and open our minds. Lauren goes home and gradually begins to realise that her pony, Twilight, might be a unicorn. She finds a spell in the back of the book and one night when her parents are asleep she casts the spell, and Twilight changes into a unicorn! Lauren is amazed, but she must keep this secret – if anyone finds out, she could be putting Twilight in danger. The rest of the story spans over 3 volumes, and is a series of adventures that Lauren and Twilight have together. They save people from danger, solve all sorts of problems, flying around at night – always at night – and keeping their secret closely guarded. I won't spoil the story by going into any more details – but it's really a fantastic story, especially for young girls – and has some powerful and positive messages for children too. It's written by a woman called Linda 'something'. To be honest I forget her full name. It slips my mind right now. She isn't especially famous, as far as I know, and neither is the story, but I think it's a fantastic story and often myself or my mother read the stories from these three volumes to my little sister before bed.

Part 3

1. How does technology help people tell stories?

Technology basically helps people gain more access to stories – we can access stories online, on our phones, on computers, in digital book form, and we can also listen to audiobooks with the same technology. This means that technology gives authors the opportunity to reach out to wider audiences and tell stories that more and more people can see and hear. This inspires more innovation and motivates writers and storytellers to create more stories – as there are more ways of sharing them than in the past – thanks to technological developments and advancements.

2. Why are mystery novels so popular these days?

Mystery novels are not just popular nowadays. I think they always have been popular! People are drawn to the mysterious, the unknown, the thrills of potential danger, and the idea of solving puzzles. All of these things are captured in mystery and detective novels. Humans need escapes from the boredom of everyday life and the humdrum nature of the daily grind – and mystery novels fill this gap!

3. What kinds of stories do children like?

Children love all sorts of stories, but predominantly I'd say that they like stories involving magic and fantasy. Children have strong imaginations, and they enjoy engaging in stories that are highly imaginative. So, things like Harry Potter, The Hobbit, fantasy stories that feature anime characters, cartoon characters, talking animals and imaginary creatures in strange and curious imaginary worlds, are all

popular themes in kids stories.

Describe something you do to keep fit and healthy.

You should say:

What it is

When you do it

Who you do it with

And explain why you think this method is important

I run every day. I don't go to the gym – I dislike gyms – I run. I run for about 40 minutes every morning, and I choose a different route each morning. Well, I have about 4 or 5 routes programmed into a special app on my phone and I choose one of those each morning. I love this way of taking exercise, and it's not only good for keeping physically fit, but it keeps the mind healthy and alert too. The morning is the best time of day for me to do this, because I always get up early anyway, so I can take a run for about an hour and a half, then come back home, shower, get changed, and go into work. This is my usual routine. It's great, and by the time I arrive at the office I feel energized and refreshed and ready to start the day productively and positively.

My routine, my method of keeping fit, is effective, because it's ideal for my lifestyle and my personality. I like a certain amount of freedom and I'm a fan of nature. Where I live is pretty close to two parks and a very scenic area of the city, so when I run I usually take routes through the parks and areas where there are lots of trees and flowers and plants. This, to me, is much better than going to a gym and being surrounded by machines and technology and depressing walls. So, in my mind combining a love for nature and a morning run, is the best way to get fit physically and mentally, and is a fantastic start to a day. I usually run alone, almost all of the time, actually. But occasionally, a friend joins me. He's also passionate about running, but usually can't coincide with my routine because of his job. He joins me in the holidays and sometimes on weekends. But, frankly, it's fine for me to train alone. I like my own company, especially when running.

Part 3

1. How do old people keep fit?

Older people keep fit in all sorts of way. One typical way that you may have seen is old people exercising in local community gardens and parks on those kind of exercise machines. These exercise machines are fixed to the floor and are good for moving your legs, arms and swinging and cycling on the spot. Other ways they keep fit might be to walk in parks, do square dancing in groups with friends, or play badminton. Some old people still enjoy tai ji.

2. How can parents help their children to keep fit?

Parents usually don't have to do much, because children usually love running around, playing games and getting involved in sports and activities. Also, in schools, kids

have to do a certain amount of sports, anyway, so this also contributes significantly to them getting fit and keeping fit.

3. Do you think it is useful for governments to use celebrities to help people raise health awareness?

I'm not sure. I think that celebrities already get involved in helping raise people's fitness and health awareness, especially sporting heroes. But perhaps, if the government want to encourage people to keep fit more, and not lounge around, especially teenagers who spend a lot of time on computer games and mobile phones, then it would be helpful if famous stars helped to promote fitness, sure

Describe something that surprised you and made you happy.

You should say:

What it is

How you found out about it

What you did

And explain whether it made you happy

There is one thing that really surprised me that I would like to talk about. That's the time when I won a singing competition in university. I love singing, and I am a pretty good singer – in fact, I think I am a really good singer and it's been my main hobby for years. I'm not a sporty person and I'm not that social either but I love singing. So, I spend a lot of time listening to, and singing along with, and practicing my favourite songs. I go to KTV at every opportunity I have with friends, and I often go to a little bar near to campus where they have a KTV set-up. So, I'd say I get quite a bit of practice in.

Anyway, the second-year students on campus arranged a singing competition just before the summer holidays. I, of course, put my name down as one of the contestants, and I have to say, I was really quite confident about winning. However, after registering, I discovered that loads of really talented students had also registered. I saw them at some of the meetings and saw the rehearsals in the sports hall... I couldn't believe how good they were – they were amazing. I then started to really worry – I mean – I am quite a competitive person to be honest, and this is my only real talent, so I for some reason I cannot explain fully, I was really thinking I could win easily. After seeing some of these other guys practicing, I felt really demoralized – they were brilliant.

So, I put in a special effort to practice and drove my dorm-mates crazy in the process. I practiced as much as I possibly good. The same song, an Adele song, over and over again. Although my dorm-mates were sick of it, they were also very supportive of my efforts and really were gunning for me to win.

Anyway, on the day of the contest, everyone performed really really well. I honestly thought that if I was lucky I might get third place. You see, I still felt I couldn't properly hit the vocal range of Adele and get to and sustain those high notes while singing.

Well, the surprise was – when the votes came in from the judges, I won! I came first! I couldn't believe it! Everyone, including the other contestants, were actually really praising of me and thought that I deserved to come first. Of course, I was super-happy and also I felt that my hard work, efforts and determination had paid off in the end!

Part 3

1. Is it good for people to be happy?

Of course, it's good for people to be happy! Happiness is a very important thing in life, and also from a biological point of view if someone is happy then it is good for their body as well as their mind. It improves general health, motivation, all sorts. So, yes, happiness is incredibly important, and also I've heard that studies show that having good friends and family is very important for health too – being happy with an active social life is also a key to longevity, they say.

2. How do people express happiness in your culture?

Some cultures are more expressive than others, but I think that all cultures have some common ways of expressing happiness. We laugh, we smile, we tell jokes, we talk about the positive things that are happening, and we feel more active. People behave in a more lively and vibrant manner when they are happy and this is expressed in their everyday behaviour and attitude.

3. Do you think happiness has any effect on people?

So, yes, all in all, I believe happiness has a very positive effect on our mental and physical health and enables us to improve our self-esteem, achieve more in life, and become even more happy. So happiness is something that effects people strongly – it compounds.

Describe something that helps you to focus on study/work.

You should say:

What it is

How often you do it

When you start doing it

And explain how it helps you concentrate

What really helps me focus on my studies is classical music – light classical music. I always put violin or cello music on when I am studying, or clarinet music. I don't put it on loudly. I just put it on in the background, and I choose really calm concertos and pieces of music that are not too fast or too erratic. This helps my mind detach from the

stresses and strains of daily life, and helps to make my thoughts calm and focused. It's a habit I've had for many years, which started, I think, when I was in high school, and a teacher recommended it. I began doing it in my dorm at university almost every time I had to study and I found it worked wonderfully. In those days I used to listen to music on headphones, because I shared the dorm with others, but now I have my own room. I play it on speakers from my computer. I am a person who needs to be in a quiet place when I am studying – a place where I cannot hear the sound of traffic on the roads or anything like this – so putting on calming, relaxing classical music can also help to drown out any of the sound of the city that might come in through the window. So, yeah, this is my main method of concentrating and relaxing when I really need to focus on studies and shut out the outside world.

Part 3

1. Why do children nowadays find it hard to concentrate on study?

Children always have short attention spans so they find it more difficult to focus on one thing for any length of time. Today, there are more distractions because there is more they can do – playing online games on phones, watching TV or tablets, and getting involved in all sorts of different activities with friends or family. Because there are just so many options today children are a bit spoilt and have higher expectations and want to constantly have fun! This means that today their concentration spans can be even worse than before!

2. What kinds of distractions are common in your life?

In my life common distractions are usually centred around my cellphone. The cellphone really is a dominant factor in our lives – way too much – and it's quite unhealthy to be honest. I'm constantly receiving messages, or waiting to receive messages or curious about what friends are doing, so I'm sending messages! It's crazy when I think about it – just how much mobile phones have come to dominate our lives. I'd say some people are even addicted to them.

3. Why do children need to learn to focus?

Children need to learn to focus because as they get older it's a skill that is necessary for studies and work and getting on in life. Focusing on something calmly is also related to patience – and we must develop patience to survive! Especially in cities where we are always having to wait for things and grapple with all sorts of practical issues to get things done. Being able to maintain calm and patience and focus on something without stressing out is even more essential today than ever!

4. What kinds of jobs require higher concentration?

I believe that jobs that require high levels of concentration are things that require attention to detail – like being a surgeon, or a programmer or something like this. You know, professions that are high stakes, but require the person to really concentrate so that they do not make a mistake. So, I'd say that any job which is potentially dangerous, or requires a high level of attention to detail, is something that requires a

person who can concentrate well.

Describe a story someone told you and you remember.

You should say:

What the story was about

Who told you this story

Why you remember it

And explain how you feel about it

A story I remember is one that my uncle told me when I was a child. It was a magical story about a secret door to another world that was located in the back of an old wardrobe in a huge, old manor house in England. I think it was called The Chronicles of Narnia... and was originally written by C.S. Lewis. My uncle did not have the book, but he remembered most of the story and so he would tell it to me at bedtime every time we stayed in his house.

The story starts with a group of children that move to live with their great uncle in a large country home. They are very much left to their own devices to entertain themselves in this huge, rambling mansion. They spend the days exploring all the different rooms, playing in the gardens and enjoying the novelty and freedom of being away from the confines of city life. It really is an exciting experience for all of them... One day they are playing hide and seek in the massive house, when one of the girls decides to hide in a big wooden wardrobe in the corner of one of the darkest, dustiest rooms. As she pushes her way through the coats hanging in the wardrobe she realizes that she seems to be going on and on and on, and there is no back to the wardrobe. Suddenly she ends up in a snowy woodland of pine trees... And it is there that the adventure begins. She meets a fawn, a kind of mythical half-man-half-goat, called Mister Tumnus, and she gets involved in an adventure with talking animals, and a snow queen who casts evil magic!

Anyway, my uncle told me this story many times as a child, and then I realized much later in life that they had even made a TV series from the original novel. It's a great story and has always remained fondly in my memory.

Part 3

1. Do young children like the same stories as older children?

Young kids tend to like similar stories to older children, but simpler versions. Because younger children have less life experience they cannot really grasp more complex stories so they tend to be attracted to a lot more basic and simplistic interactions between people. They enjoy animals, colourful images, and simple exchanges. They are also very attracted to things that are bright and cute, and get scared a little by darker stories. Older children are much more sophisticated and can grasp a lot more nuanced aspects of human interactions and darker tales. This is evidenced by how Harry Potter stories have developed. The early Harry Potter stories, for younger kids,

are more innocent, and the later Harry Potter stories are much darker and more scary.

2. How has technology changed the way of storytelling?

Technology has basically enabled us to watch more films, listen to more stories through audio books and apps, and access a wider variety of stories online. However, because children have ipads and tablets and lots of electronic devices, parents are less likely to read children bedtime stories at night, and so in a way, technology has reduced the amount of traditional bedtime stories that parents might read to children. So, it really depends on people's attitudes to parenting more than technology itself.

3. Why do children like stories?

Children have very colourful imaginations, and they are in a stage in life where they are more free than adults – they can allow their imaginations to run wild, fantasize and let their thoughts explore magical and adventurous lands. So, they are particularly drawn to stories... to fiction and fantasy.

Place:

- ◆ Describe a city you would like to stay in for a short time.
- ◆ Describe a new development (e.g. shopping mall, park, road...) that appeared in your town or city.
- ◆ Describe a place you visited where the air was polluted.
- ◆ Describe a noisy place you have been to.
- ◆ Describe your favourite place in your home where you can relax.
- ◆ Describe a popular place for doing sports (e.g. stadium).
- ◆ Describe the home of someone you know well and you often visit.
- ◆ Describe a place in your country that you would like to recommend to travelers.
- ◆ Describe a city you would recommend as a nice place to live in (not your hometown).

Describe a city you would like to stay in for a short time.

You should say:

Where it is

Who you will go there with

What you will do in the city

And explain why you stay there for a short time

I would like to spend time in Paris. Paris is the capital city of France and I've heard that it is quite romantic and has quite a curious and interesting history. Paris is famous for a few key things, like the Notre Dame cathedral, which sadly burnt down in a fire a few years ago – well, the spire and a big section of the roof caught fire and burnt down. There are also a lot of amazing old streets and districts in Paris that are apparently full of cafes, artists and musicians. There is a great sense of culture in Paris, as far as I've heard, and a lot of art galleries and museums. I am studying art, so I am especially interested in going around the famous art galleries and seeing the works of Picasso and other greats. Paris is also famous for Jazz music, although not so many people know this. I've been playing the piano for years now, so I am especially interested in exploring the musical side of the city, visiting some jazz clubs and seeing live performances. I would arrange to stay in Paris about a week, I think, so I could really get into the place and soak up the atmosphere, visit the most famous museums and galleries, and explore the less well-known aspects of the city and the musical venues hidden away in San Michel and other districts. I'm not sure if a week sounds like a short time, but I'm used to long holidays, so... I'm a student, I have long holidays in the summer, so for me, a week is a short time, but certainly enough to time to really get to know a city.

Part 3

1. Why do people sometimes go to other cities?

People generally enjoy seeing new things and visiting new places. That's one reason why people might visit other cities – basically for tourism. Other reasons include visiting friends and family, or combining the two – tourism and family visits. Usually cities are where the most famous historical sites are, and the galleries and museums and places of interest, so very often if someone plans a holiday it will include a visit to the major city of the region. For example, there are some fantastic sites around Chengdu in the countryside, but on such a visit, people would usually choose to spend at least a day or two in the capital city itself, to get a real taste of the culture, the food, and the museums and places of interest in the city.

2. Why are historical cities popular?

People like history, and generally speaking historical cities are more aesthetically pleasing – at least the historical areas of major cities. Take Xi'an for example – the main area in the centre around the bell tower, and the wall and the muslim quarter, are the most beautiful areas of the city where you get to experience the flavor of ancient China. And this has also created a tourist industry where there are restaurants, souvenir markets and all sorts of other things that make a visit interesting and stimulating. So, historical cities are by far the most popular for tourism, for sure.

3. Do you think tourists may come across bad things in other cities?

Of course, sometimes. I don't think it's common that people have bad experiences in cities in my country – except the usual hassle of transport and crowds. But some cities can be dangerous if you're in the wrong areas, maybe. There are rougher areas in every city in the world, and it's best to know where these areas are and avoid them. However, generally, the main tourist areas of cities are well policed and protected, and the most hassle you are likely to get is arguing with sellers when you want to buy souvenirs! They can be quite intense and you have to haggle hard sometimes to get a good price – and you can get ripped off if you're not careful. I guess that could be regarded as a 'bad thing' maybe.

Describe a new development (e.g. shopping mall, park, road...) that appeared in your town or city.

You should say:

What the development is

When/where you noticed it

How long it took to complete it

And explain how you feel about it

A new development that has been constructed not far from my neighbourhood is a giant shopping mall. It's a really super modern place, built by some quite famous western and Chinese architects. It has a 100 trees on the roof and is designed in such a way to be eco-friendly in terms of energy and heating. It's a really modern, slightly abstract cubic sort of design. Anyway, it has also got loads of really interesting and

useful facilities all under one roof. There are, of course, a couple of international supermarkets, and a whole array of different restaurants, serving everything from Asian, Western to fusion cuisine. I think it took about a year or so to build this mall. I saw it through the window of my apartment under construction, so I could see them adding to it over a period of time. I think it was about 18 months it took to build maybe. I find it quite interesting – I mean, my area of the city is pretty boring so it's nice to have something different around to do. Although I'm not hugely into malls and things like this, and although it's quite expensive there, it's something different to do on the weekend I suppose, and it's a big place and in the winter it's quite warm inside and you can try different foods and see exhibitions from time to time – there's a sort of gallery exhibition space, you see. Sometimes they have promotional events which are entertaining. It's alright. Personally, I prefer other things, but in recent years I've not travelled much or done that much and found life a bit boring, so I've been happy that this mall opened nearby where I live.

Part 3

1. Is public transportation popular in China?

Public transportation is very popular. In fact, in general, it's quite affordable as it's subsidized by the government. So, a lot of people take public transport. There is a subway in my city, a good bus system, and plenty of taxis, so it's quite easy to get around. The only really bad thing is the traffic – traffic is terrible, and public transport is very crowded. This means that people who can afford it often prefer to drive their own cars if they can – even though that is a hassle, in another way.

2. What can be improved in public transport services in your country?

What can be improved is basically the traffic on the roads. If the traffic could be reduced and the public transport system made more comfortable then I think less people would take private cars and more people would use the transport system. There's also the fact that many people feel that driving a private car is a symbol of status, and that means wealthy people do not want to lower themselves by taking public transport. This means that the authorities should act to change how people think about social status and the transport system and make more efforts to encourage everyone to take public transport – also for the sake of the environment.

3. What leisure facilities can be used by people of all ages?

People of all ages can use all sorts of leisure facilities. Older people and younger people today engage in sports. There are plenty of older people I know who enjoy playing tennis and going to the gym. It's not like it was years ago when these things were only for young people. Admittedly, the really old people prefer to just use exercise machines in their local parks and communities, but others enjoy the same kinds of facilities as younger people – they swim, they play table tennis at local clubs and leisure centres, and so on. I must say, they tend to prefer sports that are less 'aggressive' let's say – you know, older people are not so into football or basketball for example, as a general rule.

Describe a place you visited where the air was polluted.

You should say:

Where the place is

When you visited there

Why the air was polluted

And explain how you felt about the place

Sadly, I've visited many places where the air was polluted. But the one that really sticks in my mind is a city in the north east when I went to visit an uncle of mine. It's an industrial city and is famous for car factories and a steel plant. This means that the main source of industry in the city is quite a polluting industry really. Also, because of the climatic conditions – it's a cold place and surrounded by hills that trap the air inside the city basin – the air doesn't move out of the city much and there are no real winds to blow it. So, when the pollution gets bad, and the cloud cover is extensive, then the bad air just sits there over the city and doesn't really move. It's horrible, actually. So, it's a combination of the industry in the city and the geography and climate of the area. I feel depressed when I'm in a place with bad air, to be honest. It's not only unhealthy to breathe, but it's just depressing to see and experience. It's so unnatural, and it can even smell bad too. I last visited this place, as I was saying earlier, to visit my uncle, and it was perhaps at the start of winter, which made it even worse because that is when the coal-fired power stations are all turned on to provide heat to the houses and buildings for the cold winter months. In terms of air conditions, this is the worst time of year to visit because you get the power plant fumes and the factory fumes and traffic fumes all accumulating at the same time. I really hope they can improve this situation in the future.

Part 3

1. In what ways can air quality be improved effectively?

There are a few key ways of improving the air quality in a place. Firstly, imposing stricter regulations on factories and industries that pollute – and actually punishing them for not installing the correct filter systems or complying with the regulations. Secondly, reducing the amount of cars on the roads, and replacing the use of private cars with an increased use of public transportation. This is something that takes time and investments, but is most certainly worth it, for the benefit of the health of the coming generations, too.

2. Do you think cities are cleaner than the countryside?

No, not in terms of air not really. Because cities have a lot of traffic, a lot of people and lot of industry surrounding them usually. The country towns usually just have a very agrarian economy which isn't so polluting. It's the industrial areas which cause the majority of the pollution in my country. So, no the countryside is generally less polluted, although there are some country towns that have factories on the outskirts,

and they pollute the water table and the rivers, and because they are out in the country they sometimes ignore the regulations and escape punishments, so this can lead them to being quite polluting, too.

3. Do you think many factories have been forced to reduce emission?

Many have indeed. In fact, there are laws against this kind of thing, which have been passed a long time ago. It's enforcing the laws and regulations which is the difficult thing, to be honest. The country is huge, and there are many cities and towns that have factories and heavy industry, and checking them all regularly and ensuring they consistently comply with the regulations is easier said than done! Sometimes the factory owners will say they are complying and get everything in shape for the environmental health checks. Then as soon as the inspectors have left, they go back to their same polluting ways – mainly because it's cheaper to pollute than the keep all the filtration systems up to date and in working order. But yes, they are forced to reduce emissions as much as they can be forced, most certainly.

Describe a noisy place you have been to.

You should say:

What it is

When you went there

What you did there

And explain why you feel it is a noisy place

An especially noisy place that I visited recently was a railway station. It's basically the biggest railway station in my city. Because recently, there has been a major holiday starting in my country, the station has been especially busy. It's usually pretty busy anyway, but at this time of year it's busier than usual. So, I went to this station, not to travel, in fact, but to collect a bunch of tickets for some people in my company. You still, on occasions, have to collect physical tickets at railway stations in my city. Anyway, I went on the subway and made the terrible mistake of going during one of the peak travel times, to collect these tickets. Really, to be honest, I should have waited till the late evening, but anyway, I went around rush hour, right after my day at the office had come to an end. It was just unbelievable – I have never ever seen the place so crowded. There were literally thousands of people, from all walks of life, with bags, backpacks, luggage, all sorts. On top of that, in my country there are lots of security checks to get in and out of railways stations, so this causes even more crowds and bottlenecks at certain points in the process. People were all talking at the same time, guards were shouting, car horns were beeping outside, there was a loud speaker, well, many loudspeakers, announcing train times and all sorts of other instructions and notices. It was horrible. I'm pretty sensitive to noise. I rarely travel, and I don't even go to busy restaurants or things like this, so for me it was unbearable. It took ages to get through the thick crowds to the ticket offices too. Anyway, so that was the last time I was in a really busy place. And I hated it, and do not want to repeat the

experience.

Part 3

1. Do you think it is good for children to make noise?

It depends when and where! There are times and places where noise is acceptable and understandable, and say, for example, if children are out in a playground playing together and having fun, then it's fine that there is noise, and we cannot expect otherwise. However, in a classroom where the teacher is trying to talk, or in a classical music concert or during some performance, then it's not good that children are noisy and disturb the peace for other people. So, like most things in life, it's all relative. It depends on the situation. And children should be educated to adapt their behaviour to different circumstances and respect those around them.

2. Should children not be allowed to make noise under any circumstances?

Well, in many ways I've already answered that question. I'd say that a key part of childhood education is getting children to be adaptable and flexible to different situations. Children need to learn rules, but they need to learn when and where those rules apply. Because in life different behaviour is acceptable in different situations. Nothing is absolute and applies to all situations, at least most things anyway. So, a key element of good parenting and good schooling, is getting children to learn to really understand the situations in which certain behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable and being able to make those judgements themselves as they grow older.

3. Which do you think makes louder noise, cities or the countryside?

Cities are most definitely louder for the most part. Traffic and public transport are noisy. Also you've got a lot of people in cities and wherever there are lots of people, crowds of people, you get a lot of noise. People in my country are also quite loud and noisy to be honest – they don't really keep their voices down in public much, so when there's a lot of people in one place, whether it be a subway station or a crowded supermarket, then there is bound to be a lot of noise. So, yeah, I'd say that cities are definitely much noisier than country places.

4. What types of noise do you come across in daily life?

In daily life the main types of noise around where I live are traffic noises, cars, horns beeping, and the sound of the general babble of people and voices. It's a busy area near where I live and work so you can never escape the noise. It's a noisy place. Even at night you can hear the traffic on the roads, the beeping of horns and the sound of people shouting in the street.

5. How do people respond to noises in your country?

Most people get used to noise and even seem to be quite oblivious to it to be honest. Like I've mentioned before, I am less tolerant to noise than most people in my country. I find that the majority of people just get on with life and don't seem so affected by the noise around them. I suppose it's a sort of immunity or a lack of sensitivity or the

amazing ability to block out the things they don't want to hear. I wish I had this ability! It's useful if you live in a bustling busy city, in a place which is quite noisy.

Describe your favourite place in your home where you can relax.

You should say:

Where it is

What it is like

What you enjoy doing there

And explain why you feel relaxed at this place

My favourite place in my home where I like to relax is actually the living room. I know that most young people say their bedroom, but in fact, my bedroom is quite small and not amazingly comfortable or interesting. The living room is by far the most cozy room in the house – it's warm, has a lovely sofa and armchairs. It has a great TV, rugs, little tables, amazing pictures on the walls. There's something about the room that makes everyone who spends time in it feel comfortable. My friends or family friends come round and all feel comfortable in our living room. This is also because my mother is a great host – she's always very relaxed and welcoming of guests. She doesn't stand on ceremony like a lot of traditional parents, but she warmly welcomes visitors and makes them feel at home. The living room is laid out and decorated in such a way that people seem to feel especially comfortable. I do a lot there... I study on my lap there on the sofa... I watch TV there, I play with the pet cat we have there, I nap in the armchair... We even have dinner there sometimes. So, I do pretty much everything there really... The atmosphere is relaxing, the lighting is comfortable and tasteful and it's big enough to feel there is enough space, but also small enough to feel warm and cozy, especially in winter when it's bitterly cold outside. The view from the window is also really pleasant too.

Part 3

1. Why is it difficult for someone to relax?

Some people are of a more nervous disposition than others, really. That's one reason. Some people just get more anxious and let things get to them, and others let life's troubles go over their heads more. It's a question of attitude and personality. Of course, there are other reasons too: some people have a more stressful life and more to worry about than others – financial stresses, health issues or trouble with work or family members. So, there are social reasons and personality reasons that determine whether a person finds it hard to relax or not.

2. Do people in your country exercise after work?

A lot of people do yes. I'd say quite a few people I know go to the gym or do some form of sports in the evenings or on weekends. There are also a lot of people who do not do any physical exercise – they should, but they don't – perhaps because it's easier just to finish work and then collapse on the sofa and rest, or perhaps because

they have family responsibilities and duties outside of work. So, it's a question of time, as well as inclination and interest.

3. What is the place where people spend most of their time in their home?

The main place where most people spend time in their own homes must be the living room really, I guess. But, many people have a living room and dining room combined, so I guess it's that room! It's the place with the comfortable seating and sofas, the place where the family eat, the place where people watch television. Though, there are some people who are more likely to spend time in their bedrooms, I suppose – younger people who are studying or prefer to have privacy from the rest of the family in the evenings – they might spend more time in their bedrooms.

4. Do you think there should be classes for training young people and children to relax?

Haha, well... I'm not sure, but I think that teaching young people and children to relax should be incorporated into the curriculum, let's say. It should be encouraged or at least taught about so that people understand the importance of self-care, maintaining balance between work and rest times, and how important recharging one's batteries is, if you're going to be successful in work or studies. All of these things can be woven into the curriculum in schools, not necessarily taught as subjects in their own right.

5. Which is more important, mental relaxation or physical relaxation?

Both are of equal importance as far as I'm concerned. You need to be able to do both if you are going to maintain a healthy body and a calm, balanced and sharp mind. Some people think that one is more important than the other, but I think they need to go hand in hand. This is why in a lot of meditations there are physical exercises and postures, which go alongside mental relaxation and breathing exercises, because the two are really part of the same equation.

Describe a popular place for doing sports (e.g. stadium).

You should say:

Where it is

When you went there

What you did there

And explain how you feel about this place

A popular place for doing sports, is actually a modern gym near my office in Haidian. It's a really cool gym and sports centre. In fact, it's really a lot more than that because it also has modern, slick working areas you can even go to and have team meetings or work alone with laptops; it has a café and healthy snack bar, it has a spa and massage center, as well as all the usual things a gym has – exercise machines, sports areas and personal trainers. There's also a swimming pool. It's described as a "360 degree leisure and health center" and I can see why! The membership is pretty expensive if

you want access to everything, but you can also just join selected things if you wish. I do a dance class there – modern hip hop dancing with a professional instructor, and my friend just subscribes to the gym and swimming pool. Another friend has a membership to the spa and massage center and goes there only once a month. So, as you can see there is some flexibility – and there’s a host of combined membership plans and “menus” you can choose from. The last time I went there I went for my dance class, but actually I also signed up for the swimming pool too – I bought a three month trial membership. You see, I am not totally sure yet if I have the time or dedication to go swimming as well as do the other activities I’m involved in, so the special discount trial offers are really handy – you can have a go for 3 months and if it suits you, you can sign up for the year. I feel great about this place, because usually I don’t like gyms and sports centres, but this place really feels great and is decorated really minimally and tastefully, and has friendly staff and a very professional approach to everything to do with leisure, health and exercise.

Part 3

1. What are the benefits of children doing sports?

Children should most certainly do sports regularly – at least once or twice a week in school. That’s because they need a certain amount of physical exercise to keep them healthy, as well as a break from the mental dimensions of study and learning in class. Everyone does, to be honest – a balance of mental and physical activity is important for us all.

2. Do young people like to do sports?

Young people mostly enjoy sports and games yes. Nearly all young people anyway. Some are not very sporty, admittedly, but usually these people are perhaps more into individual sports and activities like cycling or long distance running, or maybe even rock climbing, and not into team sports. It’s also down to personality.

3. Is it necessary to build sports venues?

Absolutely yes, it’s important to have sports centers in every district of a city so that everyone can go somewhere rain or shine, summer or winter, to get exercise or participate in sports and games. Also, cities need huge venues for hosting national and international competitions, to take part in global contests and also host events. So, yes, it’s absolutely necessary.

Describe the home of someone you know well and you often visit.

You should say:

Whose home it is

How often you go there

What it is like

And explain how you feel about the home

There is a home that really sticks in mind! It's the home of my friend, James, and his family, who live just in the community next to ours. The reason I find it particularly interesting is because it's in a much older community – and those old residential buildings are, in my opinion, much better, because the rooms are really big, and the ceilings are high, and they all have balconies. The modern residential buildings may look cooler, but they are often small, they don't have balconies and the ceilings are much lower. I visit there often because the family are really welcoming and kind and relaxed. And, also, there's plenty of space, so often we just hang out in the living room – well, one of them – they have two, in fact. I go there about 4 times a week, actually, and even more in the holidays. James' mother cooks really well... in fact, so does his father. They seem to enjoy it, and prepare meals quickly, that are really tasty. Often, I will stay there the whole day and we play on the Playstation, read books, play football in the community gardens. Stuff like that. The house is decorated in a very curious way – the father has travelled all over the world and filled the house with interesting paintings, and decorations from mainly African countries, and some South American countries. So, yeah, it sticks in mind as I spend a lot of time there.

Part 3

1. What are the differences between houses or buildings in the city and in the countryside?

Houses in the city, at least today, are usually smaller and...well...strictly speaking they are apartments in residential blocks, not 'houses' in the European sense of the word. I mean, everyone lives in high-rise apartments in cities, whereas in the countryside it is more common for people to live in either smaller apartment blocks or individual houses. Homes tend to be a bit bigger in the countryside, because there's more space – they, however, tend to be much older and have less modern amenities and facilities.

2. Do you prefer to live in the city or in the countryside?

Well, personally I love the countryside, as I love nature...But, it's not that easy to find work in the countryside in my country, and the facilities are a lot less than in cities, and the people are a lot more parochial and narrow-minded about the wider world – although they can be really friendly. So, for someone with a more international leaning, like myself, the countryside is a little stifling and boring and lacks opportunities for career development and cultural life.

3. What are the safety risks in residential buildings in cities?

There are a few safety risks, but to be honest, I don't think there are many in my country in cities. At least not that I know of. I guess fire safety can be an issue in poorer areas, as buildings might not be maintained well or comply with the latest fire safety standards. In terms of safety from burglars or intruders most communities that I know of in cities in my country are pretty safe and all have walls and guards and you can't easily get in unless you have ID or residential access permission.

4. Is it expensive to decorate a house or an apartment in the place where you live?
It really depends how you do it. Like most things in life you can do it cheaply, or you can spend more money and get a really professional job. It can certainly be expensive, though, especially if you want a good quality job that will last many years. These things can get quite expensive these days.

Describe a place in your country that you would like to recommend to travelers.

You should say:

Where it is

What it is

What people can do there

And explain why you would like to recommend it to travelers

There's a place in Fujian province called Xiamen – I'm sure you've heard of it. This is where I'd recommend to travelers to China. It's a great place, by the coast, with a fantastic climate and lovely, warm, friendly people, great food, and interesting cultural things to do and see. And, if you're into Chinese tea, there's a lot of really good Chinese tea shops that are still family-run, friendly, and interesting. The tourist sights I would recommend are the Gulangyu island of pianos – this is really interesting – it's an island, a small island, just a boat ride away, where there are literally pianos in every house, and a piano museum. It's fantastic and quite unique. Also, the island trip makes a nice little day out, and there are friendly restaurants and eateries on the island too, and great views out to sea. Secondly, I'd go to the see Hakka people's round houses just outside Xiamen in the countryside. They are called the Fujian Hakka Tulou, and they are quite large circular buildings, with a central courtyard and hundreds of living quarters inside. They date back centuries and were a traditional way to live in the days when you had to protect yourself from invaders – these roundhouses look fantastic and are incredibly interesting, and people still live in them today. It's a fascinating and unique aspect of the culture in that area of China. So, yes, these are the main places around Xiamen that I'd recommend – and make sure you go when it's a nice time of a year, not too hot – in summer it gets really hot and humid. I'd go around, or just before, spring to be honest.

Part 3

1. Is it important to take photos while traveling?

Yes, I believe so. I think that photos are memories stored that we can access in the future and that can remind us of good times, or at least interesting times, and interesting things that we have seen and experienced. Some people take photos of friends and family, and others are more into sights and things like that. Whatever we prefer to take photos of, they are now a permanent record of our experiences in life, and that in itself is a very valuable thing. I'd say it's important when travelling, most certainly.

2. Can we trust other people's travel journals on the Internet?

Haha, I've not really thought about it. Yes, and no, I guess. Some people's blogs and journals are likely to be accurate and trustworthy, and other people's are likely to be perhaps distorted. By distorted, what I mean is that some people might get money from travel agents from hotels and destinations to post great reviews of their places, so that will certainly influence their writing. This would be my biggest concern. I think it's important to read journals and reviews where you're fairly sure the person hasn't been paid a commission from a hotel or travel company to portray the place really favourably. Avoiding these kind of journals will ensure we get closer to the truth.

3. What factors affect how people feel about their journey?

The main things that influence how people feel about a journey are the transport and accommodation. If the transport and hotels are nice and comfortable, and offer smooth customer experiences, then that will have a huge influence on how we feel about a trip or journey somewhere. If the service is poor, or the places are not up to the expected standards, or perceived as good value for money, then we will be disconcerted and likely to have a bad feeling about our trip.

Describe a city you would recommend as a nice place to live in (not your hometown).

You should say:

What it is

Where it is

What you know about this place

And explain why you recommend it as a nice place to live

A city I would strongly recommend as a lovely place to live is Dali, in Yunnan Province. Dali is, in fact, more like a town, really, as it is not as big as most cities. But, I think of it as a city, anyway. A small one! Dali is really beautiful and has developed and grown in the past ten years into a cultural and touristic centre as well as a thriving agricultural community. It is set in the mountains and surrounded by the most picturesque scenery you can imagine. The people are warm and friendly and have a laid back attitude to life, despite being quite hardworking. The lifestyle there is very different to most cities in China, and there is a relaxed vibe in the air, and a genuine feeling of history. I am familiar with the place because a friend of mine, an artist, by the name of Liu Yang, lives there. I met him in university and one holiday he took me back to stay with his family there. I loved it. We rode horses in the hill, went looking for butterflies with his uncle, and I tagged along as he took photos for his latest art exhibition. You see, he is mainly a photographer and regularly holds exhibitions in Beijing, so every time he goes back he goes out taking photos, sometimes of the people of the town, and on other occasions purely of the natural views. There are

wonderful little family-run guest houses in the town and quaint restaurants, traditional Chinese medicine shops and regular performances of music and dance. It really is a place to soak up a bit of artistic atmosphere, and you feel you're being transported to another world. A world free from the commotion of the capital cities. I love it there, and think it's a great place for a holiday, for anyone who loves nature, culture and the arts and traditional customs of Yunnan, China.

Part 3

1. Which part of your country is the most populous?

The most populous area of my country... well.. to be honest, I don't actually know. I don't know a lot about demographics and things like this, but I'd have to say that most cities in China have massive populations, especially Chongqing and the surrounding area. That has a massive population and is most certainly the most populous city I know in China, although I don't know about regional demographic figures.

2. What are the advantages of living close to the workplace?

There are loads of obvious advantages to living close to one's workplace. Firstly, you don't have to get out of bed so early in the morning and you can just walk to work in a few minutes. This is a wonderful luxury, actually, because nobody enjoys commuting in cities here – the people, the traffic, the crammed subways and so forth. So, I'd most certainly say the key advantage is that you do not have to endure a horrible commute, and you can get up later.

3. What kinds of places do old people prefer to live in?

Old people generally prefer to live in quieter places, quieter areas of cities, and more peaceful communities, that's for sure. I think as we get older we start to go out less, enjoy the environment around our homes, and spend less time going about the city meeting people, eating out, and so on, and more time focused on the home and perhaps the gardens nearby. I, personally, would certainly like to retire in a quieter place, even a quieter town really, and avoid the city entirely. But, there are some old people who like being in the centre of big cities – it's what they are accustomed to, and so they like to stick with what they're familiar with.

Event:

- ◆ Describe an activity you enjoyed in your free time when you were young.
- ◆ Describe a time when you taught a friend/relative.
- ◆ Describe the first day at school that you remember.
- ◆ Describe time when you had an unusual meal.
- ◆ Describe a time when you made a complaint and you were satisfied with the result.
- ◆ Describe something you did with one person/a group of people.
- ◆ Describe something you did that made you feel proud.
- ◆ Describe a time when you were late for an important event.
- ◆ Describe a daily routine that you enjoy.
- ◆ Describe a time when someone gave you something that you really wanted.
- ◆ Describe a problem you had while shopping online or in a store.
- ◆ Describe a time when you made a decision to wait for something.
- ◆ Describe a time when you received money as a gift.
- ◆ Describe a disagreement you had with someone.
- ◆ Describe an outdoor activity you did in a new place recently.
- ◆ Describe a time when you forgot an appointment.
- ◆ Describe a time when you shared something with others.
- ◆ Describe a time when you needed to search for some information.
- ◆ Describe a time when you saw a lot of plastic waste (e.g. in a park, on the beach etc.)
- ◆ Describe a time when you enjoyed an impressive English lesson.
- ◆ Describe a difficult thing you did and succeeded.
- ◆ Describe a time when someone asked for your opinion.
- ◆ Describe a time when someone gave you positive advice on your work.

Describe an activity you enjoyed in your free time when you were young.

You should say:

What it was

Where you did it

Who you did it with

And explain why you enjoyed it

Well, I think I'm still young, to be fair! Haha. But anyway, an activity that I used to enjoy when I was younger, in my first year at university, was dancing. I used to attend a salsa dance class that was run by one of the South American teachers on campus – I think she was from Ecuador. I can't recall exactly. Anyway, I loved going to this salsa dance class. It took place two evenings a week, and was a great way to stay healthy and fit, enjoy great music, and get to know other people. Because a lot of these kind of dances are interactive – men and women dance together as partners, and change partners too – then it's a really good way to break the ice with people of the opposite

sex and become friends, or maybe more... We would often go out for drinks after the salsa evenings, and sometimes stay out late chatting, or even clubbing in the city. So, yeah, these evenings I particularly enjoyed, and for a while the dance society at university was one of the most important things in my life – apart from studying and all that. It was my social outlet as well as my form of regular exercise, and a nice chance to get involved in something more international. It's a shame that I don't seem to get time to do something like that now, really. Or at least I don't create the time and opportunity. Maybe I should make the effort – just thinking about it makes me feel a bit nostalgic actually. I had such a good time in those years! And became quite a really good dancer!

Part 3

1. Is it important to take a break during work or study?

It's very important yes! Anyone that says people should work like machines and that's a sign of dedication and diligence is talking nonsense! There was a phase a few years ago when several big bosses of tech companies in China were praising the "wolf" spirit of working and that started a ridiculous phase of some companies working a 996 working week – it was a perfect example of a totally unscientific and impractical idea becoming popular for the sake of basically companies getting staff who would work for them all the hours under the sun at the expense of the rest of their lives. Everybody knows that people perform better at work if they have a good work life balance... with the possible exception of a few individuals, geeks, or CEOs that stand to make more billions if they stay up longer!

2. Are there more activities for young people to do now than 20 years ago?

Yes, of course, there is a lot to do today. However, I'm not sure that people take the chances to use their free time productively. Sometimes I feel that when there are less options people appreciate and make the most of their free time more. Today we have so many options, and such a high level of digital connectivity, I think people get lazy – in fact, I think young people spend far too much time on the cellphones and not enough time doing other activities, with other people, in person.

3. Do adults and children have enough time for leisure activities nowadays?

Some do, some don't. I think that a lot of people don't to be honest. I think there is a trend in the past ten years in my country where children and adults are pushed far too hard to supposedly maintain a "higher" standard of living – but in reality, they are just working all hours to try to compete with others in order to maintain the same standard of living and not lose it, or not fall behind others. It's a shame really. I think this has driven people to lose sight of the value of free time and leisure, and frankly all the work and study efforts are not really worth it for many. Not anymore.

4. What types of exercise do people in your country often do?

It depends what types of people you're talking about. People exercise in different ways. Older people often go to the park, do some dancing or use these simple exercise

machines in their communities. Young people do all sorts – they go to the gym, they play basketball, football or other competitive sports... other people like to go jogging, or cycling or ... there are lots of popular activities that people do here – pretty much the same as anywhere in the world.

Describe a time when you taught a friend/relative.

You should say:

Who you taught

What you taught

How the result was

And explain how you felt about the experience

I once taught a friend how to do an origami unicorn. You see, I learned from a friend of mine how to make all sorts of real and fictional animals out of pieces of paper. And my favourite is the unicorn, perhaps because it's my sister's favourite animal. Anyway, I learned origami from a video online actually. I had seen a friend at a party make some different animals out of paper, and I went home that evening and I looked online to see whether I could find any tutorials, and I found one, in particular, that I liked. So, I sat there for several hours, quite a few times, and learned how to do a few that I liked – one after another. It took a lot of patience. Then... I ended up teaching a friend of mine how to do them – he didn't have the patience to watch the videos and wanted someone to show him directly. So, one afternoon when we were free and in the mood, we sat down in the library at university and I taught him how to do a swan, a dog, a horse and a unicorn. He was not so good at it at first, and a little impatient. I had to be really patient too... in fact, it was a test of my patience really, as he was quite difficult to teach, as he kept losing his focus and concentration, and I had to be a little bit strict with him, haha. Anyway, in the end he got really into it, and became good at it. Then he felt motivated and confident enough to practice doing it on his own – and, of course, he ended up showing off to all the girls in our class when he had mastered it! I felt happy and amused by the whole experience, in retrospect.

Part 3

1. What practical skills can young people teach old people?

Young people usually teach older people technical skills – basic tech skills like using features on a mobile phone or television or computer, to slightly more advanced things, depending on the person. Usually young people end up showing older people how to use the filters on mobile phone cameras, or organize the store photos or send them via wechat messages and things like this. I find that these more 'fun' aspects of using cellphones are what older people usually need to be shown how to do.

2. How can young people teach old people skills?

Young people can teach older people to do things with patience, like with any form of teaching, and an attitude of humility and respect. The best way of teaching people to

do anything, whether they are old or young, is to not patronize people, but accept that people learn things at different paces and adapt our teaching to the pace and knowledge of the learner. That means being empathetic and understanding the strengths and limitations of the learner and being really patient and considerate in how we teach them to do something new.

3. Why older people have problems in learning new things?

Older people sometimes have more trouble learning new things because they are simply not used to it. It's partially because they are not accustomed to adopting new ways of doing things and have become a bit more 'set in their ways' – less flexible mentally than younger people, and simply less keen and willing to embrace new things. I think it's more about attitude than ability to be fair – at least in most cases.

4. Do you think showing is a better way than telling in education?

I think a lot can be taught and learned by example, yes. Showing people how to do something by demonstration or modelling it is usually a very effective way of instructing people, yes. And often it can be more effective than just telling people what to do. However, there are times and skills which don't really have to be taught by demonstration – but can be learned by 'telling'. So, it depends on what we want to teach.

Describe the first day at school that you remember.

You should say:

When it was

Where the school is

What happened on that day

And explain why you still remember the experience

The first day in school I remember is going back a very long way! I actually remember my kindergarten, in fact. I was about 4 years old, and I really do remember it – sort of clearly – at least bits of it I recall clearly. I remember being taken to the door... by my parents... and feeling scared and nervous meeting the new teachers and seeing all the other children running around inside confidently. I felt so scared. It was a feeling that I didn't want to repeat. It was very scary actually. I am not sure if most children feel this way, I suppose a lot of kids do. The school was just a ten-minute walk from where we lived. It was a nice school near to a lake and a fairly well-known pai lao, or Chinese arch off the side road, near a big crossroads. I remember the walk to school, and not knowing what to expect, and feeling a bit lost... at that age you are led around by your family really, and you just do what you're told, but you still have sometimes strong feelings about the places you go, and you feel a sense of great anticipation about new experiences. And school is quite a big new experience. I remember it quite clearly because I sort of knew I was going to school – I understood the concept anyway, as I had attended a sort of playgroup beforehand on weekends,

and I got the idea that I would have to go every day to a place that was similar. And that made me scared, the idea of being without my parents for a whole day – I remember not knowing how I was going to deal with that, and just feeling frightened. But I also remember that after a short time in the school, I felt quite comfortable, I liked the teacher and the other pupils and my fear went away fairly quickly. Funny how you can sometimes remember things that happened a very long time ago!

Part 3

1. What would parents prepare for their kids when they first go to school?

Parents should ideally prepare children emotionally as well as practically. I mean, I think it's important that parents try as best as they can to explain to children what is going on. Sometimes parents don't give kids enough credit for intelligence. Children can understand things much better than we think – and they are very intuitive and insightful. So, we should explain carefully what lies ahead, and comfort our children and ensure they know they are not being abandoned. Of course, on a practical level there are lots of things that might need to be prepared like clothes and stuff like this. But that's the easier part!

2. How do children socialise with each other?

It depends on the age. Until about the age of 3 children rarely engage in very interactive play. They tend to play alongside each other in the same place, but not really with each other. At the age of 4 they start to interact with each other more directly – they basically learn to listen to each other and coordinate how they do things with others – and then when they reach the age of 5 to 6 they make friends, play games and really interact on a much more social level.

3. Should children learn how to socialize with others?

It's very important that children are socialized at a young age – that is, that they learn to interact, listen, be polite, answer, and engage with others. Firstly, with their family and secondly with their teachers and classmates and other people they meet via the family or school. This is a basic important skill in life. We live in the world with other people, and our entire lives depend on how we interact and get along with others, and that requires developing social skills. So, yes, it's very important that kids learn to socialize with others – most certainly.

Describe time when you had an unusual meal.

You should say:

When you had it

Where you had it

Who you had the meal with

And explain why it was unusual

I had an unusual meal which really sticks in my mind, once when I went to Vietnam

on holiday. It was a bee salad. Yeah, I know that sounds really strange! But indeed it was a bee salad. It was a salad made of some vegetables and salad leaves, and lots of bees – well, the flesh of bees. Obviously, they did not have their legs and wings and things. Those had been peeled off, I guess. In fact, if it had not been on the menu I would not have known it was a bee salad. At least I would not have known that all those little pieces were bees! Or parts of bees. The taste was, however, not as unusual as you might think. It had a hint of honey flavor, but mainly the dressing (vinegar and oils and spices) covered up any taste that might make one think of bees. It was actually very nice. I had chosen it from the menu mainly because it struck me as something that I may never get the chance to eat ever again. Even the idea seemed quite unusual. I was with a good friend of mine with whom I had been travelling, and we had had a long day in the sun, and I was not that hungry, so I did not want to order anything too big or substantial, but I certainly needed something to eat, and I was feeling in a slightly adventurous mood. I've also tried all sorts of different foods before in my travels around China and Asia, so nothing really surprises me much – but this, when I saw it on the menu, certainly did surprise me! So, I ordered it. I think it's important to try different things in life – it's a bit like challenging one's assumptions – you sometimes never know – what seems strange often isn't that strange when you experience it directly, first hand, yourself. And the bee salad was like that. It was a lot more 'normal' than anyone would imagine.

Part 3

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of eating in restaurants?

The great thing about eating in restaurants is that you get to try loads of foods that are really hard to make at home or made from ingredients that are difficult to come by yourself. Also, there is the added fact that you don't need to worry about any cleaning up or anything like that. Another great thing is the communal nature of eating out with friends or family. It's not really the same when you're at home. The downside is that most decent restaurants are expensive, noisy and a bit crowded.

2. Do people in China like to eat out?

Yes, people all over Asia love to eat out. I'd say it was one of the most important parts of our culture. People are basically addicted to eating out! When there is a work function, there's always a big meal involved. When there's a special family occasion, then often the whole family will go out to eat. It's the way we socialize. And we like to eat out in big groups of people, order a lot of dishes and make sure there is plenty for everyone to enjoy. I'd say it was one of the most important aspects of my culture, and certainly one that most people that I know enjoy.

3. Why do some people choose to eat out instead of ordering takeaways?

Ordering a takeaway is still very popular, as people do like to get things delivered to their homes where I live. However, eating out is a whole different experience, and all round much more of a social and entertaining thing to do. Ordering food to your home is simply more functional and you do that when you've not got the time or energy to

cook, and you can't be bothered to go out. But eating out at a restaurant is a completely different type of experience – it's a social event, and it's something that marks more of a special occasion, I'd say.

4. Do people in your country socialize in restaurants?

Most certainly, the main function of a restaurant, aside from providing food for people to eat, is most certainly the social dimension. Restaurants are meant to be entertainment venues as much as anything else, and that entertainment is usually provided by the guests themselves. People love to eat out and spend a lot of time chatting and drinking and laughing and bonding with friends, family or workmates over their meals.

Describe a time when you made a complaint and you were satisfied with the result.

You should say:

When it happened

Who you complained to

What you complained about

And explain why you were satisfied with the result

A time when I complained about something and I was very happy with the result was when I had purchased a vase, a very decorative and attractive vase from an art gallery shop in 798 in Beijing. This was an expensive vase, actually, and was designed by a local artist. It had an abstract design of merging colours and metallic overlays and the vase was a strange, almost organic seed-like shape. Oh, it's so hard to explain what it looked like, but anyway, you get the idea – it was beautiful, original strangely shaped and quite abstract in design and painting. Anyway, the lady in the gallery shop packed it all up for me, and when I got it home and opened it, I discovered there was a chip in the base. Admittedly, it was only in the base and not really visible to anyone, but still, it was expensive and it was a piece of art, so this can really affect its future value. So, anyway, I called the gallery, explained to the woman that there was this chip, and that it certainly did not happen in transit but must have been there before, and escaped us. She was really apologetic and kind, and she suggested that we change the vase – you see there were a few that were remarkably similar. So, I drove back to the gallery and they changed it there and then for me, and they also threw in a small photo album as a gift too – a photo album of the history of a certain type of pottery. So, yeah, I was very happy with the whole experience and certainly the result, sure! I was delighted that they dealt with it with such a polite attitude and manner and in such a way. It was a genuinely pleasant experience without any feeling of conflict or friction that usually occurs in customer services situations in my country and when something goes wrong.

Part 3

1. Which one is more effective to make a complaint, writing a letter or talking face

to face?

It totally depends on the situation, what you are complaining about and what the specific grievance is. In many cases if you speak face to face you are likely to get a more positive response as the person cannot ignore you as easily as they can if they receive an email of complaint or a phone call. But, there are situations when the customer service systems online are also very effective, they are monitored too, and the people responding to the queries make a lot of effort to please the customers and solve any issues they may have. So, it depends.

2. Who are more likely to make complaints, old people or young people?

Again, it depends. It's more of a personality thing than an age thing, I'm sure. Young people buy a lot more stuff online, so I guess they are more likely to complain for the simple fact that they are more likely to occasionally receive faulty goods or poor service. But, on the other hand, I'm not so sure... older people tend to buy things in shops, and therefore are more likely to complain face to face, directly with the staff or the vendors... I don't think this is related to age at all. Some people are just more likely to want to fight against a perceived injustice, and other people are more likely to just let it go.

3. On what occasions are people more likely to make complaints?

People are more likely to make complaints when they are in a restaurant or public situation where they feel the service has been bad and contributes to them perhaps losing face, too. For example, if you invite a bunch of people for a meal, and then the dishes don't come out correctly, or take too long to arrive, or there is some problem, then the host might feel this is a bit of a loss of face in front of all the guests, and feel responsible for solving the issue so everyone is satisfied. This is the kind of situation that often leads to the host making a very firm and assertive complaint, partially on behalf of the guests to demonstrate that he really cares about how he is treating them, and unhappy that the restaurant messed something up!

4. How should companies react to complaints?

Companies all need to have a very smooth and efficient customer service complaints service. This is very important today. If a company wants to be competitive it really must show to the customers that they are special, and not just disposable. In the online medium, complaints can all be traced and customers will leave reviews for different companies and products they use, so it's really important that companies make sure customers feel treated with respect and that their complaints are dealt with quickly and fairly. It's increasingly important these days or your company will end up with a poor reputation and in turn, lose customers.

Describe something you did with one person/a group of people.

You should say:

What it was

Where you did it

Who you were with

And explain how you feel about this

Something I often did with another person, or in a group, is play board games! Yes, I did, in fact, play board games. I know a lot of people don't really do this much nowadays, but actually board games have come back into fashion amongst a small niche group of enthusiasts. There are plenty of cool adult board games, and there are increasingly more coming out. I sort of started an informal club or society with a group of friends every weekend, and we met on Fridays and Saturdays in the evenings, and played games deep into the night. There were about 6 of us, but 4 of us would turn up regularly. Well, I wish I still did this really, but the group of us kind of split up as we all moved to different cities to find work. But during the few years when we got together to do this it was a lot of fun. I actually think that playing adult board games can be a very interesting and educational activity. It's also much more social than playing games online with mobile phones. I think I'd like to restart a group like this actually. I'm thinking that most people enjoy it when they get into it, but they just need someone to inspire others to actually get their act together and do something different. I feel great when playing games with groups of friends, especially long games that can take hours and require strategic thinking and planning. It's a great, underrated hobby.

Part 3

1. Do you have a good relationship with your neighbours?

Yes, we have a good relationship with most of our neighbours. But like a lot of people, I don't think we really have much to do with their neighbours. In modern society today, people are quite estranged from the people who live near them. Everyone keeps a distance and doesn't really associate with them much. It's a shame really. This sense of community has largely been lost, especially in cities.

2. How do neighbours help each other?

Neighbours usually help each other a lot in country towns and villages, and not so much in communities in cities. In my grandmother's town in Sichuan, everyone pretty much knows everyone else, and everyone usually helps their neighbours a lot – especially the elderly. People help each other with shopping, or at least carrying heavy shopping to their homes; they help others to repair things that might have broken and need fixing... things like this. Nowadays in cities, people are more socially distanced, though, and every time they need something done they usually expect to hire someone to do it, or get a specialist service, or do it themselves. We have lost this neighbourly helping attitude somewhat.

3. How do children learn to cooperate with each other?

Children learn cooperation and collaboration through group activities with other children at school, and through the values taught to them by their parents. Children, basically, before they reach the age of 5, should be taught the basic manners of sharing and cooperating with others. If they aren't taught these values at a young age, they can grow up to be quite selfish and rude individuals. So, early childhood is a time when parents need to teach by example, and teach children directly about cooperation, as well as teachers in school.

Describe something you did that made you feel proud.

You should say:

What it was

How you did it

How difficult it was

And explain why you felt proud of it

Something I did that I felt really proud of was succeeding in passing a finance examination for my masters degree. I studied international business management at postgraduate level, and I love the subject, and almost all aspects of it, but I am terrible at numbers, accounting and finance. And finance was one module that I had to pass to pass the degree. So, this was a real hurdle for me. The other modules: marketing, HR management, competitive strategy and so on, I found interesting and I was more than capable of doing without too much stress. But finance... oh my, this is something that does not come easily to me. It's as if I have a mental block when it comes to numbers and money and the concepts that surround them. So, I found a friend to help me out a bit, I consulted many online tutorials and sources, and I spent a lot of time really stretching my mind to try to get it to understand the concepts and the calculations involved. I never felt confident about it, and this, in itself, was quite a challenging thing to come to terms with. I was so used to doing things that I already knew I was good at, and this was something I knew that I was really not good at. Anyway, after some effort, like I said, with help from a friend and online readings, I managed to sort of get my head around enough to be able to pass the assignments and the module in the exam. And this was a massive relief. I think I did feel proud, really. Proud that I had achieved what I initially thought I was doomed with. I really thought that I was destined to fail this part of the course, and so I am kind of proud that I overcame this fear, and proved to myself that I can do it, after all, even if I will never really be the best in this field.

Part 3

1. Have you changed your life goals since childhood?

Yes, I would say so. Well, I have not changed them radically, but I would say that I have adjusted them and refined them somewhat, yes. I think it is common that as we

gain more knowledge and life experience, we start to look at our goals differently, and sometimes completely change them, or just adjust them along the way. I've always been quite clear of what I'd like to do in life since I was young, so I have not really experienced radical changes in my goals, but I have had to adjust them and adapt them to changing circumstances, indeed.

2. Does everyone set goals for themselves?

Nobody really exclusively sets their own goals. Either their goals are decided by others, or they are decided through a combination of living up to the expectations of others and our own ambitions. A combination of the two is perhaps ideal. It's not good if you exclusively try to follow the goals set by others, like parents or partners, but neither is it good if you ignore everyone who matters to you and aim selfishly for your own ambitions. It's important to combine advice, other people's expectations and your own ambitions, and come up with goals that are realistic.

3. What kinds of rewards are important at work?

I think that the most important rewards in the working world are the opportunities for career development and matching financial compensation for what you do in your job. I do not think that money can be the only reward – people burn out and get bored too, if money is the only goal. There needs to be a combination of financial reward, developmental rewards, and the company also need to value your time and work-life balance, too. Those rewards, combined, are the best and most important rewards one can usually hope for at work.

Describe a time when you were late for an important event.

You should say:

When it happened

Where it happened

What made you be late for that event

And explain how you felt about this experience

The time I remember the clearest when I was late for an important event was when I almost missed an exam. Can you believe it? Yes, I almost missed a really important examination. I had stayed up most of the night studying, because I'd left it till the last minute, which is a really bad habit, I know. I had been really stressed out about it, and just kept putting it off... you know, procrastinating a lot, and eventually it was just late, and I sat up most of the night trying to cram all this information into my head. Anyway, eventually, about 4am, I fell asleep through sheer exhaustion, and I woke up about 830am, and realized that I had slept through my alarm clock, and it was the time for the exam to start! I got dressed super-quickly and rushed out of the room, down to the bus stop, caught the bus and arrived on campus at least 20 minutes late for the start of the exam. I got to the exam hall and I pleaded with the invigilator on the door to let me in – which she actually did – although you are not meant to be allowed into

the exam hall if you're late. I sat down, feeling completely stupid, and they gave me the exam papers and I started – having already missed half an hour of the exam! I felt really embarrassed but also even more stressed than I had been before! I felt really terrible. The strange thing is, I actually found the exam quite easy – it was not that hard at all, and I ended up getting a really good grade in it! Can you believe it? I was so lucky that they asked all the questions I already felt confident about answering and knew the answers to. So, that was a huge relief. However, I did not take this experience for granted and vowed to be more intelligent in future about how I manage my time and my studies. So, I'd say I learned to from the experience, at least.

Part 3

1. Why do you think some people are often late for meetings or appointments?

Some people are notoriously late for things because they are badly organized and cannot manage their time well. That's one reason. Another reason is because they are taking on too many responsibilities and can't really fit all the things in that they need to in life, and this causes some things to slip by the wayside, and get left till last, and sometimes get forgotten. So, it can be one reason or another, or a mixture of the two, which cause people to be late frequently for things.

2. Do you think it's important to be on time?

Generally, yes, I do think it's important to be on time. Being punctual is a good habit and means that you can preempt things in life and manage your time and responsibilities well, both for yourself and for others. Being organized is a basic skill, actually. And life is always a lot easier if you can manage your time, autonomously, without someone always reminding you of your duties and obligations. It's especially important if you have a family, children, and work to all juggle and arrange. So, yes, it's important to get into the habit of being on time for everything.

3. Do you think people are born with time management skills or they can develop such skills?

I think that people need to develop these skills. For example, if a person is too spoiled by their parents and they have everything done for them, they are likely to grow up with poor management skills and time-management skills. This isn't going to be helpful for their life and future career. So, from childhood to schooling years to university years and beyond, it's vital that a person learn the importance of managing time well, and nurture the ability. I don't think it's something that comes naturally to people – though I would argue that some people are more likely to be born with the disposition to be organized or disorganized, to a point. But certainly awareness and training is key, too.

Describe a daily routine that you enjoy.

You should say:

What it is

Where and when you do it

Who you do it with

And explain why you enjoy it

A routine that I enjoy is breakfast. That may sound strange, because for many people this is a rushed meal, but for me it's not at all. I always go to bed early and wake up early, and this is a habit I have developed over many years. I tend to go for a run in the morning, and that means I get up early, run, have a shower, and then have breakfast. I have at least an hour for breakfast, so I'm never really in a rush, and I enjoy it, while listening to a podcast or watching a TV programme. It's a peaceful time of day for me because everything is quiet in my house. So, I do this almost every day, including in the holidays, and it makes me feel great. I think it is also very good for one's physical as well as mental health, to be honest, and I am very happy that I developed this habit. I've not always been like this – in my teenage years I was always going to bed late and getting up really late and running around and rushing to fit everything in, and it was simply really stressful. In retrospect, I don't really know how I did it. Then one day, I sort of had a serious talk to myself and realized that addressing these basic issues of routine and self-care were vital for maintaining good mental and physical health and developing well in studies and career ambitions, too. So, I made some active changes to my approaches to life and I found that this morning routine became a fantastic start to the day, which helped everything else fit into place in a positive way.

Part 3

1. What are the advantages of children following school routines?

Children basically need to learn to be organized at a fairly young age, and getting ready for school and following a timetable are key parts of this. This prepares them better for adult life as well as making sure that they have a stable and balanced childhood. Children need routine, just like anyone else, or they start to feel insecure and they also start to develop a lot of other bad habits and they become unreliable. Being reliable and having everything in order is vitally important for living a stable and balanced life.

2. How do people's routines differ weekdays and weekends?

Most people have a very strict and sensible routine during weekdays and let go a bit and relax more on weekends. This is the general pattern, anyway. Weekends can be the time when people don't have so many strict obligations and therefore they can lie in bed longer, do more things that they like and be a bit more spontaneous. Weekdays are usually for working or studying and involve following schedules and timetables.

3. What are the differences between people's daily routines now and those in the past?

I think today people's daily routines are more stressful. Life today is more intense than in the past. In families often both parents go out to work, and life is more expensive and there are more pressures on parents and on children. For this reason, people try to juggle both family obligations, work obligations, and desires to get ahead and develop personally and professionally for the sake of their career futures. This means people are juggling too many things at once. In the past things were simpler and more manageable for most people I think.

Describe a time when someone gave you something that you really wanted.

You should say:

When it happened

What it was

Who gave it to you

And explain why you wanted it so much

A time that comes to mind instantly when someone gave me something I really wanted was the time I was a kid and I got a bike. I always wanted a bike. My parents had moved to a new community that had a large garden with wide winding paths and places to play, and so there was plenty of room for cycling around on a bike, and also a few other kids who lived in the area, who did so. So, I was delighted when on my 10th birthday I got a bike. I didn't know how to ride a bike, so that was a learning curve too. My father presented it to me and it was a lovely sunny day, too, so I could instantly go outside and use it. We spent a few hours practicing how to actually cycle, along the paths in the community. It was great, and I picked it up rather quickly. I had wanted a bike so much because I liked the idea of zipping around fast and I've always been a big fan of these kind of things – you know, speed and excitement. A bike also offers a sort of practical element too – I ended up going to the community shop on the bike to pick up items my mother and father needed to buy and things like this. So, I enjoyed the fun and also the practicality of having a bike. This is something I had always dreamed I would do. I am actually a keen cyclist today, still, and I go on long bike rides into the mountains and countryside with friends on weekends sometimes. So, I think my love for cycling and bikes dates back to when I was a kid.

Part 3

1. Should employees have their own goals?

This is an interesting question... To some extent, yes, they should. In fact, I would say so definitely. Employees cannot simply live for work and do everything for the future of their company, they also, in parallel, let's say, need to consider their own future career development and life development goals. This is something that everyone should do – partially because if the company folds, or drops you, you have a plan to move on and continue to develop. Also, because if you care about career progress in

the same company, you will probably want to get promotions – and this involves considering your goals and how to reach them. But it depends on your personality and needs, some people are also content with just doing their jobs, enjoying work stability, and not really aiming for anything higher. I think this is fine too!

2. How should bosses reward employees?

Bosses need to consider rewarding employees in a number of ways, not simply financial. It is proven that people are not solely motivated by financial rewards. People need to feel respected, appreciated and encouraged. This is human nature. Also, people need to feel that they have enough free time as well as working time. A work life balance is key to employee happiness. Thirdly, I think promotions and career development opportunities, as well as task variety, will keep employees rewarded and encourage them to maintain loyalty and motivation in the company.

3. What kinds of gifts do young people like to receive as rewards?

Young people like to receive tech stuff really. Tablets, new phones, stuff like this. That's what motivates a lot of young people today. Also, because these items tend to also be fashion accessories. Some young people like other stuff though, like maybe prepaid shopping cards that they can use in superstores and online shopping outlets. I think those are common ways to motivate and incentivize young employees, too.

4. Do you think shopping is good for a country?

Shopping is most certainly good for a country – it's a consumer economy, so if people spend their money then it's important for a country's economy. It keeps things moving and growing and increases production. If people spend less and save a lot the money just sits in the banks and does not contribute to boosting the national economy, so shopping is indeed very important to a country – it's a key part of the economy.

5. What would be the influence on economy if everyone bought domestic goods?

People should really be encouraged to buy domestic goods for a few reasons. Firstly, it boost the local production and manufacturing economies and circulates money in the country of production. Secondly, I think that buying domestic goods also helps to contribute to a country maintaining its national pride and culture. If people want to buy everything from overseas, then it's not really good for a nation in the longer term. However, also governments can make a lot of tax from selling foreign goods, with almost no production costs – so this also can contribute to the economy of a country. It's a fine balance, and I'm not totally aware of all the economic implications of financial policy really, but I'm all for people spending more on domestic goods.

Describe a problem you had while shopping online or in a store.

You should say:

When it happened

What you bought

What problems you had while shopping online

And explain how you felt about it

I've had many experiences with online shopping, but the one I recall the most clearly is the time that I bought an item and had such trouble getting a refund from the seller. I can't remember the name of the store now, but anyway, I bought a thick coat for winter – it was quite expensive actually – and when it arrived, it had a rip in the back and the zip was faulty. I contacted the company through the online chat and they said they were happy to refund it, and I should just send it back. I arranged with a delivery service to send the package back and it went smoothly. They confirmed they had received it okay. Everything seemed to be fine. Then there was total silence for weeks.... Yes, weeks! I contacted the seller, nothing. I checked my bank account and shopping platform order and returns messages, nothing. I messaged them countless times, and they simply did not reply. I had no idea what they were playing at but I was pretty angry. I contacted the online platform and they said they would put in a case against the seller. I didn't really want it to get to this stage because that kind of process takes a long time sometimes, and is quite annoying. Anyway, they put in a case against the seller, and after all sorts of calls, steps, hurdles and disputes, I eventually got my refund. To be perfectly honest it kind of put me off online buying, at least online clothes buying. I like to just go to shops, try an item on, buy it or not buy and that's that. That, to be honest, is the simpler and more enjoyable way of shopping. I think this whole online shopping thing is massively overrated to be honest.

Part 3

1. What kind of service do you think is good?

I think that a smooth, efficient service where they deliver what you ordered or asked for, and get your items within the promised time frame – and the items arrive in good condition, or are good quality – is the best we can ask for when it comes to service. I have some of the worst customer service experiences in the world in Beijing, to be perfectly honest. So, I'm not the best man to ask... I would say that 100% of the time the waiters in restaurants get things wrong, are rude or stupid, or both, and don't seem to do their jobs very efficiently. However, the service is usually fast and the quality of the food is great! Well, mostly.

2. What would you do if you bought something disappointing from the internet?

I would send it back. Online shopping is really popular in my country. Actually, I would say that it is a national obsession. Chinese people are really good at two things: taking photos of their meals and putting them on WeChat moments, and buying things

online. They are the main national hobbies I think – we are probably more obsessed with these two hobbies than any other country's people I know on the planet. So, because of this, we have a quite efficient and developed online shopping culture – and most of the time you can successfully return an item and get it refunded or exchanged if you're disappointed with it with a high degree of efficiency.

3. Do you think online shopping will replace in-store shopping in the future?

Well... to be perfectly honest, if the current trend continues, I am sure it certainly will. There are more physical shops and stores closing down every day – including the huge food court right near my office, along with the electronics market near my office, and countless other places. This is probably due to two factors. Firstly, the current measures and economic policies, and secondly, the fact that we all stay at home all the time ordering everything online. So, yes, I believe given this trajectory, soon we will be living in our offices and ordering everything online, and possibly not even set foot in the outside world at all. Let's see!

Describe a time when you made a decision to wait for something.

You should say:

When it happened

What you waited for

Why you made the decision

And explain how you felt about the decision

There is one time that comes to mind very strongly, when I made a decision to wait for something. That was a time when I was absolutely desperate to go on holiday, and had it all planned with a friend of mine, and then she told me she had to delay it... I was actually really annoyed. I had a decision to make: do I go on holiday on my own now? Do I invite another friend to join me? Or do I exercise a bit of personal patience and wait? Well, let me explain the situation in a bit more detail, first: We had planned and bought refundable tickets to go to an island in Thailand together in the Spring Festival holidays. I had never been to South East Asia before and I was especially excited about going to this island with my friend – it was famous for white sandy beaches, and moon parties and all sorts of other exciting stuff in a wonderful exotic setting – and it was not even that expensive! Anyway, A couple of weeks before the holiday she announced that her grandmother had insisted that the family get together for Spring Festival and had convinced her not to miss it. She had basically been persuaded to cancel her trip with me, or delay it till the Summer holidays, to go see her family for Spring festival. Whilst I can understand this, I was obviously upset – it was going to be a big adventure for us, and most certainly a lot of fun. Anyway... another friend of mine said she would come with me and was quite enthusiastic about it... But.. in the end, as much as I wanted to go, I decided that I would delay the trip and wait until the summer to go with the friend who had cancelled. It was a difficult decision because I really wanted to go and I was really geared up for it, but I felt a

sense of loyalty to my friend, even though I was a bit annoyed she had cancelled on me. And, I was happy that I decided to delay the trip in the end. Sometimes you have to make decisions that you don't want to make, and sometimes they end up being good decisions, after all.

Part 3

1. Why do some people prefer slow-paced life?

Because a slower-paced life is less stressful and gives people more time for peaceful contentment. Sometimes the world of cities and businesses is a highly stressful one where a lot of time is wasted, and a lot of energy is expended in getting things done, and there is little time left to actually relax and enjoy more peaceful environments. A slower-paced life offers greater peace and tranquility and some people are attracted to this more than the hectic and ambitious lifestyles that can be popular today.

2. Is it necessary for people to learn to be patient?

Yes, absolutely. Developing the quality of patience is very important in life. We need to be patient in daily life, while waiting for things and waiting for others, and we also need to be patient with our own expectations in life too – we can't expect instant gratification or instant results from things we do or things we want to happen to us. That's just what life is like – we all have to learn to wait, and to wait without too much impatience or anxiety.

3. Are people less patient now than in the past?

Yes, I think a problem with younger generations today is that they expect everything fast and have a huge sense of their own entitlement. This means that they are way less patient than people in the past. And this is a shame really. I think a lot of this is due to the fast-paced nature of modern society, and the fact that we have more opportunities than in the past, and therefore we become more greedy and impatient when we don't get what we want when we want it.

Describe a time when you received money as a gift.

You should say:

When it happened

Who gave you the money

Why he/she gave you the money

And explain how you felt about it

The time that stands out the most when I received money was last year, in fact. You see last year was my first ever birthday away from home! Yes, honestly it was. You see I'm in my first year of university in Beijing, and all my other birthdays I was in my hometown with my family, with the exception of this last one in June. So, this last birthday I felt a little bit down to be honest. I have some good new university friends, admittedly, but I felt a little bit awkward celebrating my birthday with them. Anyway, I went out for a meal with them, and paid for a really nice Thai restaurant near to

campus – I thought it would be a nice change to have a Thai meal, and recently I’ve been thinking a lot about tropical places and beaches and these kind of “holiday dreams”, so I decided to invite my new group of friends to a Thai meal. It was lovely, and they even had a small traditional band that played music on a little stage as we ate. Anyway, during the meal I received a flurry of text messages on WeChat, from my mother, my auntie, my uncle and some cousins in my hometown, and each one sent me a ‘red packet’ of money and a really nice greeting for my birthday. I was so pleased because the meal was really expensive, for me anyway, and also it meant I could be a bit more generous and order some more wine, some interesting desserts, and take my friends out for drinks in a cool bar after the meal – as well, of course, as investing in some clothes and other useful things for my university life. So, I felt very touched by the generosity of my family and it really did help me, and enabled me to offer my new friends a special night out. It’s nice to be in a position to be generous like that. I felt really good on several levels, although I did miss my family, and it was my first birthday without them.

Part 3

1. Why do people rarely use cash now?

It has become increasingly popular over the past ten years to use digital forms of payment. I’d say it has really taken off in the past five years, really. The first I remember in my country was WeChat pay, where you connected your social media account to your bank card, and then you could pay in stores by scanning a code, or transfer money to a friend. Soon after came Alipay and some other international forms of payment. These got really popular very quickly in my country, and meant that people found it much more convenient and easier than using cash. Before that you could swipe or scan your bank card, but for some reason this was not nearly as popular as the phone app payment systems which seem to be the norm these days. It’s just so quick and easy.

2. Do you think it is useful to give money as gifts?

Well... yes, it’s useful I guess. I think it’s a lot less personal than actually giving a physical gift, but it’s certainly useful to the receiver because they can use the money to buy what they need rather than having a gift they may not want or need. It’s also easier for the buyer, because they don’t have to spend the time and energy thinking of a gift that is suitable for a person – this can be a real struggle for some people – some people are just not easy to buy for. So, all in all it’s useful, most certainly, but I think it’s rather impersonal and cold and takes the charm out of gift-giving.

3. When do children start to realize the value of money?

Children start to realise the value of money when their parents decide it’s a good time to teach them. And this depends on the family, and their attitude to money. It’s important for some people more than others. Some families believe in giving children everything, and therefore kids grow up without a real concept of how money is earned and how one works to make money. Other children, who perhaps grow up in less

affluent families, tend to be educated more about the value of money from a younger age, as they are less likely to be spoilt. It depends both on a family's economic situation and the family attitude towards money and teaching children about money.

Describe a disagreement you had with someone.

You should say:

Who you had the disagreement with

What the disagreement was

What happened

And explain how you felt about it

The last time I had a disagreement that really bothered me was with my mother, and it was about a boy I was dating, in fact. Perhaps that's a little personal, but I don't mind talking about it. I became really good friends with this guy who is studying physics in my university. We got closer and closer and found that we shared the same interests. We loved chatting to each other, and we were attracted to each other. After a few months he invited me on a date, in a more formal way, I mean – you know, almost suggesting we might be boyfriend and girlfriend. I was quite happy about this, as I had been waiting for him to make that move, anyway, to be honest. Anyway, we went out and spent more time together, I'd say, as boyfriend and girlfriend, though we hadn't really formalized it 'officially' by that point. During the winter holidays I talked to my mother about him, and actually she really disappointed me. She went on and on about how this would distract me from my studies, and that boys usually had bad intentions, and I should be careful not to be tricked into doing things I didn't want to do... and predominantly, like I said, she seemed really worried that this would distract me from studies and that I'd get all emotional and wrapped up in my romantic feelings and not focus on the practical aspects of life. Anyway, we argued furiously about this... And in the end I spent a few days feeling really angry with her about it and wondering what I should do. You see, I always want to respect her feelings and views, but at the same time, I feel she doesn't really even listen, let alone respect, mine. So, yeah, I felt bad about this. And to be honest, I still do. We have resolved things a little bit, but still she goes on about the topic too much and in a very dogmatic way. To be fair, actually, her attitude pushes me more towards him! So, it has the opposite effect. That can happen when parents push people too much – they go the opposite way.

Part 3

1. What do you do if you disagree with someone?

It totally depends on the situation and who I am disagreeing with! If I disagree about something with a friend, then I am likely to be direct, but diplomatic in voicing my disagreement. If I disagree with a boss or a teacher about something, I am much more likely to not say anything and keep my mouth shut. It also depends on how important the thing is that I disagree with someone on!

2. How do we stop an argument from escalating into a fight?

The best way to stop an argument escalating is to calm down, count to ten and not say anything for a while. It's best also to avoid sarcasm, avoid saying nasty words or making threatening accusations or blaming the other person – and the best way to avoid saying the kinds of things that pour fuel on the fire, is to not say anything for a while.

3. What disagreements do parents and children usually have?

Parents and kids disagree about a whole range of things, depending on the age of the kids and the disposition of the parents. Small children and parents usually disagree about things like food – parents always want kids to eat healthily, and kids always want to eat sweets or food that isn't so healthy – so you often see arguments, or parents pushing children to eat and children whining that they don't want to eat that particular type of food – things like this.

Describe an outdoor activity you did in a new place recently.

You should say:

What the activity is

Who invited you to participate in it

Whether you asked for help during the activity

And explain what change you had in the activity

An outdoor activity I did in a new place recently was on a company excursion in the countryside. It was really exciting – we learned a number of bush craft skills. I'm not sure if you know what those are! It's like a sort of survival thing – I mean, it's learning sets of skills that might be useful for survival in the wild – but it's made into a fun activity that both adults and young people can do on company excursions or school trips and so on. Bush craft skills are things like learning to cook on an open wood fire you build yourself in the woods, making simple animal traps, learning how to climb trees, make dens and learning which types of plants or wild mushrooms you can eat, and which you cannot. It can be a lot of fun actually – and when we did this with our company, we had a morning learning basic skills from a qualified instructor, then we were divided into teams in the afternoon, and had a series of tasks to complete in a given time. We were then scored points by the instructor on how well we did the task. At the very end there was a fairly humorous quiz, then a sort of assault course in the woods. It was a mixture of serious bush craft learning, and basically some fun teambuilding games, rolled into one. I thought it was brilliant, and I had never been to this place in the countryside before (it was a hilly location just outside Chengdu, in a woodland). I asked for help, of course, we had to all ask for help because we worked in teams, and it was part of the team spirit to be open and honest and help each other, and ask for help if we needed to. So, yes, I asked for help. However, during the actual contests in the afternoon, we could not ask for help from

the instructor – but we could ask for help from our team members. I learned a lot from it, and felt that it changed my attitude towards team work, and towards nature in general. It was fun and an educational experience.

Part 3

1. What outdoor activities are popular in China?

Outdoor activities that are popular in China today are mainly sports really like basketball, football and stuff like this. We don't particularly do that much else, at least not on a daily basis. You know, table tennis sometimes, tennis as well. The same kinds of sports that most people do really. Some people are getting more involved in things like rock wall climbing, and more adventurous sports like this, but this is not really common – at least not amongst people that I know.

2. What are the differences between after-class activities done by young and older children?

Younger children usually do very simple and fun after-class activities, whilst older kids do more serious athletics and sports on a more competitive level. Children just do stuff usually, that keeps them healthy and improves and maintains their coordination. Older children have to learn actual physical skills. I'd say this was the main difference, really.

3. Should young people try as many new activities as possible?

Yes, I believe young people should be encouraged to try out as many activities as they can, but I do think that they should not be forced to get involved in too many activities... After all, some parents really push their kids to be highly competitive and do a whole range of after-school classes in everything from music to dance to sports, to maths, to languages – this can be way too much – and there's already too much pressure on young kids. So, there's always a healthy balance parents need to achieve.

Describe a time when you forgot an appointment.

You should say:

What the appointment was for

Who you made it with

Why you forgot it

And explain how you felt about the experience

There are a few times I can recall when I missed an important appointment, believe it or not! However, the time that really sticks in mind is when I was scheduled to go for an interview to get into University! Yes, that's right – it was an interview to a really good university that I'd applied to study at. I actually completely missed the interview, and the reason was because I had written the day down wrongly in my online calendar on my phone. So, I got an 'alert' reminder about the interview 3 days after the interview itself – and, believe me, it gets worse than that! I actually had a train ticket

booked to Beijing- I went to Beijing, checked into my hotel... yes.... And got changed, prepared, and went to the university, only to find that I was 3 days late. The interview day had passed. But, you know, I was incredibly lucky, because they did actually re-schedule and give me another chance. However, as you might imagine, I did not perform well in the interview and I didn't get a place. I think they only agreed to interview me because the secretary of the department felt sorry for me when I arrived 3 days later and only then realized that I completely got the day wrong. Anyway, so, that's it really. I felt completely stupid, angry with myself and really annoyed in general. I felt guilty as well, and I had to explain to my family, who, to be honest, were not very sympathetic. So, yeah, you can imagine, this isn't one of my fondest of memories!

Part 3

1. How do people who are busy every day remember things they need to do?

Good question! Well, it depends on the person. Some people use their phones and computer calendars to keep track of all the things they need to do. Others, like my mother, who is more traditional, has a little diary, a small book she writes in to keep a record of all the things she has on in the coming weeks or months. Other people are just a bit more disorganized and rely on their memories – which I do not think is the best way to do things – I guess it depends how good your memory is really!

2. How do Chinese people know their family history?

Most Chinese people know about their family history through their parents, grandparents and other family members keeping good record of it. It's normal that families keep some kind of record of their history, both in their own memories and in the form of photograph albums and other documents which trace the history of the family. Most people hear about their family history from their parents and grandparents telling them stories about their lives and the lives of their family members. Some families, as you can imagine, are more nostalgic and sentimental than others when it comes to their history and their relationships with the wider family unit.

3. Is it important to know about family history?

I certainly do. Everyone should keep track of their family history, and remember their ancestors and all the things in the past. I think it's kind of quite important really, as we only have one family, really, and our family have survived for generations and generations, so it's important to give respect to the past and remember where we came from and the people that have come before us. I also think it's human nature to want to remember family history, and keep it alive to some extent. I do know that some people care more about this kind of thing than others, though.

Describe a time when you shared something with others.

You should say:

What you shared

Who you shared it with

Why you shared it

And explain how you felt about sharing it

There are lots of times I've shared things with others; I regard myself as a fairly generous person and I also enjoy sharing things with others. The last time I shared something with someone else... let me think... well, actually, the last time I shared something quite important and significant was with my friend, who is also studying the same subject, business management. I had managed to get hold of a number of seminal textbooks, in digital format, for one of our courses, and he had also managed to find a few books too. So, we both met up with USB memory sticks and we shared the materials we had found for these courses. We also had dinner together and shared our ideas about the courses, how we may approach studying them and doing the assignments, and the best online sites where we could find more of the materials, ideally for free. So, I think this is something that many students do, actually, share materials, share ideas, share perspectives on studies. I always feel good about sharing things, whatever they are, because it encourages a social culture where being helpful and kind is something that increasingly more people value. I think in a busy society, a competitive environment, and a quite stressful modern world, it's important that people do not forget the value of sharing and helping others. As a student you're usually under quite a lot of pressure, perhaps financially too, and so it's the kind of environment in which people really should share things with each other, help each other out and try to make life better for those around us. It's not just physical things that people share, like my example above, it's thoughts, ideas, opinions and values. It's worth remembering that these are equally as valuable as tangible physical things!

Part 3

1. What are the consequences if children don't know how to share?

If children are not taught to share, and do not enjoy sharing, they will inevitably grow up to be spoilt and boisterous and selfish people. I think that it's vital that children, from a very young age, are taught to share things, not snatch things from other children, and be considerate and respectful to others. I don't like to see high levels of competition and rivalry amongst people and I think that showing other people you are willing to share is part of promoting good values and reducing negative rivalrous habits.

2. How do people feel about sharing accommodation with others on campus?

Personally, I don't mind sharing a flat with others. I think if you're sharing with the right people it's okay. However, there are all sorts of problems that can arise when people share a living space with other people – some people can be messy and untidy,

other people can be argumentative and have strong personalities which clash – it's not easy living with other people and basically you've got to live with people that you can get along with. That's challenging for a lot of people, to be honest.

3. How can parents and teachers teach young children to share?

Parents and teachers have the responsibility of teaching children to be caring and sharing individuals. Basically, it's vital that parents instill good behavior and manners into children, and I am a firm believer in teaching children to be kind and supportive to each other. I think that society has become far too competitive these days and this can make children a bit unkind and so parents and educators need to promote values that will enable children to grow up to be good responsible members of society.

Describe a time when you needed to search for some information.

You should say:

What information it was

When you searched for it

How you searched for it

And explain why you needed to search the information

I have to search for information a lot. I am currently working on my dissertation for my master's degree so I seem to spend most of my life searching for information online, through university archives and academic journals and books! The most recent time was only yesterday. I needed to find a number of research papers to support a theory that I am writing about as part of my dissertation. Basically, I logged on to the university archives – they are all online now – and I spent several hours putting in different keywords and locating different research papers in peer-reviewed journals about the topic. I briefly skim-read them and selected the ones that were most relevant to what I want to write. It's a fairly long and arduous process, but also quite interesting and inspiring. Actually, when you get used to it, it is enjoyable and quite easy, as you learn to “join the dots” between different scholar's ideas and concepts and how they support their arguments. This is all part of the process of searching and analyzing information for master's degree studies. I usually use the computer in the library or access the archives from my laptop at home. It's something I enjoy doing and I'm happy I left plenty of time to do it, so I won't have to panic, and I am sure I will finish my dissertation well before the deadline, then have time to polish and perfect it in a relaxed manner.

Part 3

1. How can people search for information now?

The most common way of searching for information is online, of course. We use the internet today for almost everything and there are millions, literally millions of websites with all the information that we can think of at our very fingertips. So, generally people don't need to go to libraries anymore. Although I'd argue that

physical books are also useful, as reading on a screen of a phone, laptop or tablet can be annoying after a while.

2. With the development of the Internet, are libraries still important?

Libraries are still important, I believe. As libraries are not only places where we can look at physical books anymore, they are places where we can use computers, sit at comfortable desks and work, and sit in peace and quiet to think and study. For this reason, I do not think libraries will ever be phased out, and they will continue to exist, especially in further educational settings.

3. Does the development of the Internet have any influence on disadvantaged people?

The internet does help people from all walks of life access information and study. Even people on very low income or with difficulties leaving the home, or living in remote places, can access the internet at very low cost. This was not the case before the internet at all. If you were living in a remote area of a poor country it was very hard to get access to books and information – but now it's very easy. So, the internet has levelled the playing field in this sense and given opportunities to people who otherwise would not have access to educational information.

Describe a time when you saw a lot of plastic waste (e.g. in a park, on the beach etc.).

You should say:

Where you saw the plastic waste

When you saw the plastic waste

What you did

And explain how you felt about this experience

A time when I saw a lot of plastic waste was... well, I wonder if this counts or not... I think it does... it was actually at a presentation I went to see in a large bookshop in my city. Let me explain. There's a big international bookstore in my city, which also has a café, restaurant area, and an area where they host exhibitions and other events. There was a presentation – a sort of talk really – by an environmental organization, about recycling and the importance of individual contributions to the world recycling efforts. The focus of a big part of the presentation was on the use of plastics. They explained how so much plastic does not actually get recycled, but ends up filling the land and often also ends up in the oceans. What really stick in mind was this photograph of the “doldrums” – an area of the ocean where loads of plastic ends up coming together in one big island – yes, it's almost like a huge island of plastic. I am not sure why it all gathers together in that one place, the size of a country, but it does – it's something related to ocean currents and so on. Anyway, the series of images, the photos, in the presentation, of this huge amount of plastic just tangled up and floating like a giant island, really made me feel quite depressed. Especially when I learned,

and saw pictures of the harm this does to sea animals and birds. So, yes, I felt depressed about this experience, but it did make me think more carefully about our daily plastic use and the environment.

Part 3

1. Why do some people like to use plastic products?

Everyone uses plastic products to some extent. They're now completely ubiquitous. So much is made out of plastic, from simple, lower-quality plastic for bags and packaging to the higher quality, very durable plastic that is used for making phones and electronic equipment, casing and car interiors and all sorts. So, I am not sure if people "like" using plastic products really – I think they are just a part of everyday life as plastic, of varying sorts, features in almost everything.

2. Do you think we should use plastic products?

We should certainly make more effort to reduce our use of plastic, that is for sure. We should try to limit our use of plastic to those things which are absolutely necessary and not just frivolously use plastic bags when we don't need to, or buy things with loads of plastic packaging and so on. So, though the use of plastic is unavoidable really, we can at the very least reduce unnecessary use of plastic in daily life and be more careful about our attitude to recycling and waste.

3. How can we reduce our use of plastic products?

We can reduce our use by recycling more, for starters. That act in itself makes us think more about the amount of plastic we collect – as we can see it mounting up in our recycling bin at home, so we become more aware of just how much we waste. Secondly, I think we should re-use bags more often when we go shopping, rather than just taking new bags from the vendors or supermarkets every time we buy things. These are two key steps we can employ to reduce plastic use.

4. What kinds of plastic waste are often seen in your country?

Mainly plastic shopping bags from supermarkets and markets and packaging. We use a lot of packaging in China, especially with the obsession with online purchasing, so this means that things get delivered in plastic, often. So, I believe that the biggest use of plastic must be supermarkets and online shopping businesses that use plastic in their packaging. I can't think of anything else off-hand, but there must be lots more examples – plastic is everywhere these days.

Describe a time when you enjoyed an impressive English lesson.

You should say:

When and where you had the lesson

Who gave the lesson

What the lesson was about

And explain why you enjoyed the lesson

A time I enjoyed an impressive English lesson was when I went to a summer school in a town just outside London when I was a teenager. The summer school was set in a wonderful countryside location in a really old “harry potter” style school, rented out for the summer by the organization that ran the international summer camp. There were students from all over the world there. Anyway, the lesson that I enjoyed the most was from a Scottish teacher called Charlotte. She was in her early 30s, and had a wonderful way of making learning fun. She was quite firm and strict, but at the same time, she encouraged everyone to fully engage in the lessons. She told interesting stories of her travels, explained words and vocabulary on the board at the same time, asked a lot of questions about our opinions and views, modelled answers, corrected our answers, came up with language games, detective-like puzzle games that got us talking and using the language... I don't know how to describe it but she was the best teacher I've ever had. The lesson I liked the most was a detective game where we had to solve a mystery by reading the plot, the clues and then interviewing all the suspects – we had target language to incorporate into our interactions of course, and she corrected us sporadically throughout the game, but it was so much fun. It was designed really well... and was just as exciting as a really thrilling detective novel – except we were the characters in it! It was great and made me really enjoy learning. In fact, I think I remember more language from that lesson than any other in my life of lessons learning English!

Part 3

1. Is it interesting to be a foreign language teacher?

It really depends on the institution you're teaching at I imagine – what your bosses are like, what the curriculum is like, and what your language learning goals are. If you are just teaching IELTS or TOEFL it must be very boring, but if you are teaching a more creative and inspiring syllabus, perhaps in an international school, then it must be quite inspiring – you know, creative writing, English literature, and perhaps conversational English in a multicultural classroom. That would be interesting.

2. What makes a good foreign language teacher?

I think the most important qualities of a good foreign language teacher are empathy, cultural awareness, the understanding of another culture's learning styles and habits, and the ability to explain things clearly and concisely and give great instructions that everyone understands. And, of course, making it a bit entertaining and inspiring too – to motivate the less intrinsically motivated students in the class.

3. Do you think language learning is important?

I think it is to some extent, but it largely depends on what field you wish to go into in the future. If you want to work in a local company, in a local capacity, then no, learning another language is not always helpful or useful. If you want to work in a more international context, then learning another language is essential – in business, in education or in international relations. So, it really depends on which direction in

life you wish to go in and what you aspire to do in the future.

4. Do you think grammar is important when learning foreign language?

Grammar is indeed important yes, if your aim is to pass exams and reach a high level for academic study. If your learning goals are to achieve a level of basic spoken conversational competency then maybe grammar isn't as important. But if you need to pass exams, or move on to study in university overseas, then a strong grasp of grammar and a wide vocabulary are both essential.

Describe a difficult thing you did and succeeded.

You should say:

What it was

How you overcame the difficulties

Whether you got help

And explain how you felt after you succeeded

A really hard thing that I did that I really feel I succeeded in was passing my driving test. I know that sounds a bit silly, because most people pass their driving test, but I have a sort of problem... I'm not sure how to explain. It's a sort of problem with perception and I always mix up my left and my right and things like this. So, driving or doing any kind of sport that involves hand-eye coordination, or playing an instrument, is more difficult for me than for most people, because of this problem I have. So... anyway, I was really worried about my driving test, as I was sure I would not pass it. In fact, I failed it several times already... so, you can see how hard I found it. I passed the theory test easily – that's the one you do on the computer – but the practical driving test was the one I failed. So, I just kept on trying. I kept on practicing with my dad in his car, with a sort of computer simulator game on my tablet, and eventually, this summer, I actually passed! I am so happy that I had the determination and dedication to keep trying after having failed it three times. That really just goes to show how important it is to keep on trying and not give up, if it's something that is important to you. The reason it was important to me to pass my driving test is that I am really into exploring and photography – it's my main hobby – so I need to be able to get out to remote natural places and take photos of landscapes, birds and other places of interest. So, you can't really do that well if you can't drive yourself. So, anyway, yes, that's something I'm really pleased about, relieved about and frankly feel totally liberated from now! I won't have to do it again for another ten years I hope!

Part 3

1. What kinds of things do children feel very hard to do?

Children find it very hard to do things that they are initially not that good at, I think. Often children feel demotivated easily if they try something and don't do really well, or see others performing better than them. Especially if they don't get positive

encouragement. I think it depends on the child and his or her talents, as to what this might be. Some children, like myself, find sporting activities really hard. Others find maths hard, others, languages. It depends. But, the common factor is that when children are not initially good at something they will find it hard to get into and excel at because they quickly can lose motivation.

2. How can parents encourage children to do something difficult?

Parents can offer positive reinforcement rather than criticism. Parents should attempt to strike a balance between praising children too much, and being too critical and too pushy. If a parent can be positively encouraging, but also fairly firm and attempt to instill discipline and perseverance into a child, then this can be the best way to encourage children. It's not always easy to get this balance though.

3. What kinds of jobs can help people become confident?

I think jobs in which people have a good, caring and encouraging boss, can help people become more confident. Whatever jobs they may be, the important factor is the boss and the team mates. I really believe that the people we work with are the most important factor in performing well and confidently in a job. Any kind of job can make people feel confident if they feel they are learning something, and they feel encouraged and supported by their managers.

4. What's your definition of success?

I think success is basically being able to try at something and struggle, and go through some hardship, and eventually succeed in doing it. I think that is the best, most succinct definition of success. I'd say that some people define success as getting lucky, or having a lot of money or support from family to do whatever you want, but personally, I think real success involves personal effort, struggle and a sense of determination.

Describe a time when someone asked for your opinion.

You should say:

Who asked for your opinion

Why he/she wanted to know your opinion

What opinion you gave to him/her

And explain how you felt when he/she asked for your opinion

There are a few times when people have asked my opinion. I think it's because I have ended up, on several occasions in my life, being a sort of advisor, a listening ear, a mentor, if you like, for some of my younger friends. The time that really comes to mind right now, is last year when my work colleague was having a real dilemma about whether she should leave the company and go work at a smaller company, for less money, but a more exciting job and possibly better future prospects, or stay with our company and have a more stable, secure job, but without many prospects of future

development or task variation in the role. I sat and listened to her for some time and tried to understand what really mattered to her. You see, our choices in life often depend on both practical issues like pay or living conditions, and also on what really makes us feel whole, motivated, happy and encouraged in life to self-develop. I realized that she was the type of person who needed more than just stability and a salary and a boring job – it really mattered to her to have some sense of strong self-development in her working life. She was not super-ambitious, but she needed something more than just the basics. Because of this, I advised her that she should move to the smaller company, as long as she was willing to put in the extra hours, and be prepared to work harder. And that if you're going to search for task variety, interesting promotional opportunities and personal development in work, you also have to put a lot of effort in. It's not always the easiest path, but it can be more exciting, if you're the type of person who needs ambition. I felt quite good, and mature, in giving my views to her, and I liked listening to her and trying to work out what really mattered to her, and why. I think that one of the most important things in giving advice to people is actually carefully listening to the feelings of others first. So, yes, I felt good and I think I am good at advising people, in general, mainly because I am an active listener.

Part 3

1. Why do some people dislike giving their opinions?

Some people are worried about offending others, or are shy about stating exactly how they feel because they do not like to be seen as overly assertive, dominant or opinionated. These kinds of people often keep their real feelings to themselves, and prefer to either say nothing, or just quietly go along with others. It's a personality thing – some people are simply more forthright in their views, and others are more passive, usually for an easier life, or because they are less confident.

2. Are there any apps designed for collecting opinions about products and services?

There are a lot of apps today which aggregate only shopping experiences, provide recommendations based on other customers' ratings and reviews. I guess these apps are the main sources of online collection and evaluation of others' opinions. There are also these features built into the online shopping experience itself – integrated into the websites and apps of online stores. Many of which give independent and increasingly honest ratings from customers. This is a great guide for taking into account what other customers have felt and experienced, before we make a purchase ourselves.

3. Why do people like to express their opinions on the Internet nowadays?

People in general have the tendency to want to express and exchange opinions. It's a very natural human emotion, and it's the way we analyse things, make decisions and reach conclusions. So, fundamentally, the discussion of different views and opinions is an intelligent and useful pursuit. The internet today is the main forum for idea sharing – everyone spends their time on their phone or online, and they love social media apps, especially in China. So, yes, these social utilities give people the tools

and opportunity to share and express personal views and opinions on a range of popular and contentious topics.

4. What are the disadvantages of giving opinions online?

The disadvantages of giving opinions online is that you can get into online arguments with people, and people don't like to be disagreed with at times. If you don't share the same opinion as someone else, some people do not react well to this. So, there are disadvantages but I would argue that the advantages outweigh those significantly – I will also agree that expression opinions and views is an important way for a society to develop and self-reflect and encourages personal and group self-development.

Describe a time when someone gave you positive advice on your work.

You should say:

When it happened

Who the person is

How the advice affected you

And explain how you felt about it

There is one time that sticks in mind when someone gave me positive advice about my work. I'll try to tell the story. You see, I worked as an intern in a technology education company in Zhongguancun, in Beijing. It was a young company, and I spent a summer working in the sound recording studio. You see, the company hired all sorts of voice actors to record online spoken materials, in a number of languages but mainly Chinese and English. I studied media studies in university and I have been moving in the direction of working with sound recording and editing since I got back to China a year ago. Anyway, I got this job as an intern, well, in some ways more than an intern because I was responsible for the whole studio for that summer – from the setting up of the equipment and the organizing of the schedules, and the recording and editing itself. I didn't have to hire the voice actors, but I had to guide them through the process, on arrival, and coordinate all the recording sessions and so forth. The best advice I received on this job was to really maintain a great relationship with the people we hire to come and act for us. This sounds silly maybe... but it is in this job that I realized the real importance of treating people not only with respect, but going that extra mile to make them feel really welcome. Especially as it was a small company and we couldn't afford to pay them that well, it was even more important to keep them happy. You see, because I'm used to working in front of a computer all the time, and in sound studios, I don't often mix with people that much and I can be unintentionally quite standoffish and quiet and not especially engaging with outsiders. When my boss gave me the advice to be extra nice and polite, and make a real effort to be positive and display a more "American style optimism" I thought that this was a bit pointless... but then after a month or so I realized that it really did make my job easier, because the same people would come back every time we needed them, and it made scheduling really easy and saved me a lot of time on the job, too, because I

didn't need to explain our system and processes each time – they just came in, sat down. I handed them the scripts and they did their job. It really speeded things up and helped to build positive relationships, and have the same voices for a range of our products. So, all in all, that simple piece of advice about nurturing positive relationships with a more engaging and extrovert attitude, really really helped me. It's often these little things that can make a big difference in life, and we all should remember this more often.

Part 3

1. Is it important to give children positive feedback?

I think it's very important to give children positive feedback. Children are especially sensitive to criticism and encouragement, and often if you encourage them positively they will become more confident and make more efforts in certain areas, and if you criticize them they will go the opposite way... So, all in all, I am a firm believer in the importance of positive feedback and encouragement for children. It makes them enjoy things like study and therefore they succeed and perform better.

2. What would happen if parents overly encourage their children?

If parents are too encouraging of their children and never criticize them then this is also a form of spoiling your kids. They can become over-confident, arrogant and competitive with others in the wrong way. By 'the wrong way' I mean they can become aggressive in their attitude to competition and their attitude to others. There is a fine balance between praising and encouraging children, and spoiling them and turning them into over-confident arrogant individuals. Parents need to be judicious in this regard.

3. Do you think negative feedback is more important than positive feedback?

I do not think that negative feedback is more important. I think positive feedback is more important, and also, remember, positive feedback can also highlight areas that need to be improved as well. We do not have to see such a strict division between negative and positive feedback. You can give constructive feedback that highlights strengths and weaknesses – it's really all about how you deliver the feedback and your attitude to presenting it to people. That's what makes the difference.

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