

Reading Passage 1

The Evolution and Pervasiveness of Social Media

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, fundamentally reshaping how we communicate, share information, and interact with one another. What began as a niche interest for tech-savvy individuals has exploded into a global phenomenon, with billions of users across a multitude of platforms. This transformation has been driven by a combination of technological advancements and the innate human desire for connection.

The origins of social media can be traced back to the early days of the internet, with the advent of email and online forums. These early platforms, while rudimentary by today's standards, laid the groundwork for the more sophisticated social networking sites that would emerge in the new millennium. The launch of Friendster in 2002, followed by MySpace in 2003 and Facebook in 2004, marked a turning point in the history of social media. These platforms made it easier than ever for people to connect with friends and family, share their interests, and form online communities.

The rise of smartphones and mobile internet access further accelerated the growth of social media, allowing users to stay connected on the go. Platforms like Twitter, with its character-limited microblogging format, and Instagram, with its emphasis on visual content, catered to the fast-paced, mobile-first nature of modern life. The proliferation of social media has been so extensive that it has given rise to a new type of celebrity: the social media influencer, who can command the attention of millions of followers and sway public opinion on everything from fashion to politics.

The impact of social media on society is multifaceted and complex. On the one hand, it has been praised for its ability to foster a sense of community and belonging, particularly for individuals who may feel isolated in their offline lives. Social media can provide a valuable source of emotional support, connecting people with others who share similar experiences or interests. It has also been credited with democratizing information, giving a voice to marginalized communities and enabling grassroots movements to organize and effect change.

However, the rise of social media has also been accompanied by a host of concerns. The curated and often idealized nature of social media profiles can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, as users compare their own lives to the seemingly perfect lives of others. The addictive nature of social media is another major concern, with studies showing that excessive use can have a negative impact on mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. The spread of misinformation and “fake news” is another significant challenge, with the potential to polarize public opinion and undermine trust in traditional institutions.

Furthermore, the role of social media platforms in shaping public discourse has come under intense scrutiny. The algorithms that these platforms use to curate content can create “filter bubbles” and “echo chambers,” reinforcing users’ existing beliefs and limiting their exposure to diverse perspectives. This can contribute to a more polarized and fragmented society, where meaningful dialogue and debate are increasingly difficult to achieve. The power that social media companies wield over the flow of information has also raised concerns about censorship and the potential for these platforms to be used to manipulate public opinion.

In conclusion, social media has become a powerful force in modern society, with the ability to both connect and divide. While it offers unprecedented opportunities for communication and connection, it also presents a host of challenges that must be addressed. As we continue to navigate this new digital landscape, it is crucial that we do so with a critical and discerning eye, mindful of both the potential benefits and the potential pitfalls of this transformative technology. “”

Reading Passage 2

The Digital Tightrope: Social Media and Psychological Well-being

A. The proliferation of social media platforms has been a defining feature of the 21st century, with a staggering 70% of adults in the United States now using at least one social media site, a dramatic increase from a mere 5% in 2005. This explosion in usage has, unsurprisingly, led to a surge in interest from psychologists and researchers keen to understand the multifaceted impact of these platforms on our mental and emotional health. The findings, thus far, paint a complex picture, suggesting that social media is a double-edged sword, offering both potential benefits and significant risks to our psychological well-being.

B. One of the most persistent anxieties surrounding social media is the concept of “social displacement,” the fear that time spent online is supplanting valuable face-to-face interactions. However, research in this area has yielded mixed results. Some studies suggest that social media use does not necessarily come at the expense of real-life socializing. Instead, it may simply be augmenting our existing social lives, providing another avenue through which to connect with friends and family. Indeed, for many, social media is a vital tool for maintaining relationships, particularly with those who live far away.

C. For adolescents, the picture is even more nuanced. While some research indicates a correlation between heavy social media use and increased feelings of loneliness, it is not clear whether social media is the cause or a symptom of this loneliness. It is possible that teenagers who are already feeling isolated are turning to social media as a substitute for real-life connection. Furthermore, the nature of online interactions may play a crucial role. The support and validation received online, while momentarily gratifying, may not have the same lasting positive impact as genuine, in-person connection.

D. The curated nature of social media is another area of concern for psychologists. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook are often flooded with idealized images of success, happiness, and beauty, creating a distorted reality that can be detrimental to users’ self-esteem. The constant exposure to these seemingly perfect lives can lead to social comparison, a phenomenon where individuals compare their own lives to others and feel inadequate as a result. This can be particularly damaging for adolescents, who are already navigating the challenges of identity formation.

E. However, it is not all doom and gloom. Social media can also be a powerful tool for self-expression and creativity. For many teenagers, it provides a platform to showcase their talents, share their passions, and connect with like-minded individuals. This can be particularly empowering for those who may not have access to such opportunities in their offline lives. The ability to create and share content can foster a sense of agency and competence, boosting self-confidence and promoting a positive sense of self.

F. Ultimately, the impact of social media on our psychological well-being is not determined by the technology itself, but rather by how we use it. Mindful and intentional engagement, which prioritizes genuine connection and self-expression over passive consumption and social comparison, is key to harnessing the benefits of social media while mitigating its potential harms. As we continue to grapple with the

complexities of this digital age, it is imperative that we cultivate a healthy and balanced relationship with the platforms that have become so deeply embedded in our lives. “”

Reading Passage 3

The Business of Social Media: A New Era of Commerce

In the ever-evolving landscape of the digital age, social media has transcended its origins as a mere tool for personal connection to become a formidable force in the world of business. The days when a company's marketing strategy was limited to print ads, television commercials, and billboards are long gone. Today, a robust social media presence is not just an advantage; it is a necessity for any business that wants to thrive in the modern marketplace.

The transformative impact of social media on business can be seen in the way it has revolutionized marketing and advertising. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter offer businesses unprecedented access to a global audience of billions. Unlike traditional marketing channels, which often rely on a one-size-fits-all approach, social media allows for highly targeted advertising, enabling businesses to reach specific demographics with tailored messaging. This level of precision was once unimaginable, but it is now a reality for businesses of all sizes, from multinational corporations to small, local shops.

Furthermore, social media has fundamentally changed the nature of the relationship between businesses and consumers. In the past, this relationship was largely a one-way street, with businesses broadcasting their messages to a passive audience. Social media, on the other hand, facilitates a two-way dialogue, allowing businesses to engage with their customers in real-time. This direct line of communication can be invaluable for building brand loyalty, gathering customer feedback, and resolving issues in a timely and personal manner. By fostering a sense of community around their brand, businesses can turn customers into loyal advocates who will champion their products and services to their own social networks.

Another key advantage of social media for businesses is its ability to level the playing field. In the past, small businesses with limited marketing budgets struggled to compete with their larger, more established counterparts. Social media, however, has

democratized marketing, providing small businesses with a cost-effective way to reach a large audience. With a creative and engaging social media strategy, even a small startup can go viral, generating a level of brand awareness that would have once required a massive advertising budget.

However, the rise of social media in the business world has not been without its challenges. The sheer volume of content on social media can make it difficult for businesses to cut through the noise and capture the attention of their target audience. The fast-paced nature of social media also means that businesses must be constantly creating new and engaging content to stay relevant. Furthermore, the public and often unforgiving nature of social media means that a single misstep can quickly turn into a public relations nightmare. A negative review, a poorly worded tweet, or an insensitive ad campaign can go viral for all the wrong reasons, causing significant damage to a company's reputation.

In conclusion, social media has ushered in a new era of commerce, one that is characterized by unprecedented levels of connection, engagement, and competition. For businesses that are able to navigate this new landscape effectively, the rewards can be immense. By embracing the power of social media to connect with customers, build brand loyalty, and drive sales, businesses can not only survive but thrive in the digital age.

READING SECTION (40 questions)

Passage 1: The Evolution and Pervasiveness of Social Media

Questions 1-6: True/False/Not Given

1. The use of social media has grown significantly since the early 2000s.
2. The development of the internet was the single most important factor in the rise of social media.
3. Social media has had a universally positive impact on society.
4. The addictive nature of social media is a major concern for many people.
5. Social media has made it more difficult for people to connect with others.
6. The algorithms used by social media platforms are designed to show users a wide range of different perspectives.

Questions 7-10: Multiple Choice

1. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a precursor to modern social media?
A) Email B) Online forums C) Radio D) Friendster
2. According to the passage, what is one of the main advantages of social media? A) It allows people to disconnect from the real world. B) It provides a platform for marginalized communities to be heard. C) It is a completely safe and secure environment. D) It has replaced the need for traditional forms of media.
3. What is one of the main concerns about the impact of social media on mental health? A) It can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. B) It has been shown to improve sleep patterns. C) It encourages people to spend more time outdoors. D) It has no impact on mental health.
4. What is a “filter bubble”? A) A new type of social media platform. B) A tool for blocking unwanted content on social media. C) A phenomenon where users are only exposed to content that reinforces their existing beliefs. D) A type of online community for people with shared interests.

Questions 11-13: Complete the summary

Complete the summary below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

The rise of social media has been a 11. _____ phenomenon, driven by technological advancements and the human desire for connection. While it has been praised for its ability to foster a sense of community, it has also been criticized for its potential to have a negative impact on mental health. The curated nature of social media can lead to feelings of 12. _____, and the algorithms that platforms use can create “filter bubbles” that limit users’ exposure to diverse perspectives. As we continue to navigate this new digital landscape, it is crucial that we do so with a 13. _____ eye.

Passage 2: The Digital Tightrope: Social Media and Psychological Well-being

Questions 14-19: Matching headings

Match the headings below with the paragraphs A-F.

List of Headings

- i. The double-edged sword of self-expression
- ii. The rise of the digital native
- iii. The illusion of perfection
- iv. The debate over social displacement
- v. The complex case of

teenage loneliness vi. The power of mindful engagement vii. The addictive nature of social media viii. The early days of social media

1. Paragraph A
2. Paragraph B
3. Paragraph C
4. Paragraph D
5. Paragraph E
6. Paragraph F

Questions 20-23: Multiple Choice

1. What is the main argument of the passage? A) Social media is a dangerous and destructive force that should be avoided at all costs. B) Social media has no impact on our psychological well-being. C) The impact of social media on our psychological well-being is complex and depends on how we use it. D) Social media is the most important factor in determining our happiness and life satisfaction.
2. What is “social displacement”? A) The fear that social media is replacing face-to-face interaction. B) The feeling of being left out when you see your friends having fun on social media. C) The process of moving your social life from offline to online. D) The act of unfriending someone on social media.
3. According to the passage, what is one of the main reasons why social media can be damaging to self-esteem? A) It is full of negative and critical comments. B) It is a waste of time that could be better spent on other activities. C) It exposes users to idealized images of success and happiness. D) It is difficult to use and can make people feel incompetent.
4. What is the key to using social media in a healthy and positive way? A) Spending as much time on it as possible. B) Only using it for work and professional purposes. C) Being mindful and intentional in your engagement. D) Avoiding it altogether.

Questions 24-26: Sentence completion

Complete the sentences below. Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

1. The number of adults using social media in the United States has increased dramatically, from 5% in 2005 to _____ today.
2. The support and validation received online may not have the same _____ as genuine, in-person connection.
3. The ability to create and share content on social media can foster a sense of _____ and competence.

Passage 3: The Business of Social Media: A New Era of Commerce

Questions 27-32: Yes/No/Not Given

1. Social media has had a limited impact on the world of business.
2. Social media advertising is more targeted than traditional marketing methods.
3. Social media has made it more difficult for businesses to communicate with their customers.
4. Social media has made it easier for small businesses to compete with larger companies.
5. All businesses should have a social media presence.
6. A single mistake on social media can have serious consequences for a business.

Questions 33-36: Multiple Choice

1. What is the main idea of the passage? A) Social media is a passing fad that will soon be replaced by a new technology. B) Social media has had a profound and transformative impact on the world of business. C) Social media is only useful for large, multinational corporations. D) The risks of using social media for business outweigh the potential rewards.
2. What is one of the key advantages of social media marketing? A) It is free to use. B) It allows businesses to reach a global audience. C) It is a one-way form of communication. D) It is not as effective as traditional marketing methods.
3. How has social media changed the relationship between businesses and consumers? A) It has made it more difficult for businesses to get feedback from their customers. B) It has created a more impersonal and distant relationship. C) It has facilitated a two-way dialogue between businesses and consumers. D) It has had no impact on the relationship between businesses and consumers.

4. What is one of the main challenges of using social media for business? A) It is difficult to measure the return on investment. B) It is not a very creative or engaging medium. C) It is easy to make a mistake that can damage a company's reputation. D) It is only effective for certain types of businesses.

Questions 37-40: Complete the notes

Complete the notes below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

The Impact of Social Media on Business

- **Marketing and Advertising:**

- Allows for highly 37. _____ advertising.
- Facilitates a 38. _____ with customers.

- **Advantages for Small Businesses:**

- Levels the 39. _____ with larger companies.
- Provides a 40. _____ way to reach a large audience.

LISTENING SECTION (40 questions)

Section 1: Questions 1-10

Complete the table below.

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** for each answer.

Social Media Usage	Tom	Sarah
Platforms	Instagram and Twitter	Instagram and 1. _____
Daily Usage	2. _____ hours	2.5 hours
Impact on Sleep	Affects sleep	Tries to put phone away before bed
Sleep Tracking App	N/A	3. _____
Digital Detox Plans	Next weekend	Considering a 4. _____ detox
Brother's Name	5. _____	N/A
Feelings about Social Media	Can feel 6. _____	Can feel insecure
Positive Social Media Account	N/A	7. _____
Sister's Name	8. _____	N/A
Lunch Meeting	With his sister	N/A
Next meeting	9. _____	10. _____

Section 2: Questions 11-20

Questions 11-15: Multiple Choice

1. What is the main topic of the lecture? A) The history of social media B) The impact of social media on mental health C) The benefits of social media for students D) The dangers of social media addiction

2. According to the lecturer, what is one of the positive aspects of social media? A) It can help people to feel more connected and less isolated. B) It is a great way to make new friends. C) It can improve your academic performance. D) It is a good source of entertainment.

3. What is “compare and despair”? A) A new social media platform. B) A type of online game. C) The feeling of inadequacy that can result from comparing your life to others on social media. D) A mental health condition caused by excessive social media use.

4. Which social media platform was found to be the worst for young people's mental health? A) Facebook B) Twitter C) Instagram D) TikTok

5. What is one of the ways that the lecturer suggests to mitigate the risks of social media? A) Delete all of your social media accounts. B) Only use social media for a maximum of 30 minutes per day. C) Be more mindful of your social media usage. D) Only follow people who you know in real life.

Questions 16-20: Matching

Match the following studies with the findings.

List of Findings

A. The more time people spent on social media, the more likely they were to experience symptoms of addiction. B. For many, social media is a lifeline, offering support and understanding. C. Instagram was the worst social media platform for young people's mental health. D. Social media can be a powerful tool for self-expression and creativity. E. The pressure to present a perfect, curated version of oneself can be incredibly stressful.

1. University of Oxford
2. Royal Society for Public Health
3. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking
4. A recent survey
5. A 2022 study

Section 3: Questions 21-30

Questions 21-25: Multiple Choice

1. What is the main topic of the students' research project? A) The history of political advertising. B) The impact of social media on the last two general elections in the UK. C) The role of the media in a democratic society. D) The rise of fake news and its impact on society.

2. According to the students, what is one of the most significant trends in political discourse? A) The decline of television as a source of news. B) The increasing role of social media as a primary source of news. C) The growing importance of print media. D) The rise of citizen journalism.

3. What is “micro-targeting”? A) A new type of social media platform. B) A technique for creating viral content. C) A method of showing different ads to different groups of people. D) A way of measuring the effectiveness of a political campaign.
4. What is one of the ethical concerns raised by the students? A) The use of personal data to manipulate voters. B) The high cost of political advertising on social media. C) The lack of diversity in the media. D) The spread of hate speech online.
5. According to the students, what is one of the consequences of the increasingly toxic nature of online debate? A) It is making people more interested in politics. B) It is putting people off from engaging in politics. C) It is leading to a more informed and educated electorate. D) It is having no impact on political engagement.

Questions 26-30: Multiple Choice

1. According to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, what percentage of 18-24 year olds get their news from social media? A) 25% B) 50% C) 75% D) 88%
2. In the 2019 election, how much did the Conservative Party spend on Facebook advertising? A) £1 million B) £2 million C) £3 million D) £4 million
3. What has the Electoral Commission called for? A) A ban on all political advertising on social media. B) New laws to ensure greater transparency and accountability. C) A public inquiry into the role of social media in elections. D) More funding for media literacy education.
4. According to a study from New York University, posts that used moral and emotional language were how much more likely to be shared? A) 10% B) 20% C) 30% D) 40%
5. What is the title of the Amnesty International report mentioned by the students? A) The Impact of Social Media on Political Discourse B) Trolling, Toxicity, and Terror: The Online Abuse of Women in Politics C) Fake News and the Future of Democracy D) The State of the Media in the UK

Section 4: Questions 31-40

Complete the notes below.

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** for each answer.

The Impact of Social Media on Business

- **Marketing and Advertising:**

- Social media has created a new, dynamic, and highly 31. _____ marketing environment.
- Businesses can use social media to target specific 32. _____ with a high degree of precision.

- **Customer Service:**

- Customers can now use social media to get a 33. _____ and personal response from businesses.
- A study by J.D. Power found that 34. _____ of consumers have used a company's social media site for servicing.

- **Recruitment and Hiring:**

- Platforms like LinkedIn have become an essential tool for 35. _____.
- A survey from the Society for Human Resource Management found that 36. _____ of organizations are now using social media for recruitment.

- **Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs:**

- Social media has 37. _____ the playing field, allowing small businesses to compete with their larger rivals.
- A report from the Small Business Administration found that 38. _____ of small businesses are now using social media to grow their business.

- **Conclusion:**

- The impact of social media on the business world has been 39. _____.
- As social media continues to evolve, we can expect to see even more 40. _____ changes in the years to come.

WRITING SECTION

Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The chart below shows the average daily time spent on social media by different age groups in the UK in 2023.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.

(A bar chart would be inserted here showing the following data:)

- **16-24:** 3.5 hours
- **25-34:** 2.8 hours
- **35-44:** 2.1 hours
- **45-54:** 1.5 hours
- **55+:** 0.8 hours

Task 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

Some people believe that social media has had a positive impact on society, while others argue that its effects have been largely negative.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

SPEAKING SECTION

Part 1

- Do you use social media?
- What is your favorite social media platform and why?
- How much time do you spend on social media each day?
- Do you think you spend too much time on social media?
- What are some of the positive and negative things about social media?

Part 2

Describe a time when you used social media to connect with someone.

You should say:

- who you connected with
- what social media platform you used
- why you connected with them

and explain how you felt about the experience.

Part 3

- How has social media changed the way we communicate with each other?
- What are the dangers of sharing too much personal information online?
- Do you think social media has a positive or negative impact on society as a whole?
- How can people protect themselves from the negative aspects of social media?
- What do you think the future of social media will look like?

GRAMMAR SECTION (20 questions)

Questions 1-5: Error correction

Find the error in each sentence and correct it.

1. I have been using the social media for many years.
2. She is the most popular influencer which I know.
3. He spended too much time on his phone yesterday.
4. They are worried about the affect of social media on their children.

5. I am agree with the statement that social media has a lot of benefits.

Questions 6-10: Sentence transformation

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.

1. I think you should spend less time on social media. (**WERE**) If I _____, I would spend less time on social media.
2. She started using Instagram five years ago. (**FOR**) She has been using Instagram _____ five years.
3. He regrets sharing that photo online. (**WISHES**) He _____ that photo online.
4. The new social media app is very popular with teenagers. (**AMONG**) The new social media app is very popular _____ teenagers.
5. It is said that social media can be addictive. (**TO**) Social media is said _____ addictive.

Questions 11-15: Fill in the blanks

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets, or with the correct article or preposition.

1. She _____ (check) her phone constantly since she woke up this morning.
2. He is addicted _____ playing online games.
3. I saw _____ interesting documentary about the history of social media last night.
4. They have been friends _____ they were at primary school.
5. She is not used to _____ (spend) so much time alone.

Questions 16-20: Word formation

Use the word in capitals to form a word that fits in the gap.

1. The _____ of social media has been a global phenomenon. (**GROW**)

2. It is important to be aware of the _____ risks of using social media.
(POTENTIAL)
 3. The company is looking for a new social media _____. **(MANAGE)**
 4. The website is not very _____-friendly. **(USE)**
 5. She is a very _____ and creative person. **(INFLUENCE)**
-

LISTENING SCRIPTS

A conversation between two friends, Sarah and Tom, about their social media usage.

Sarah: Hi Tom, how are you? I feel like I haven't seen you in ages.

Tom: Sarah! I'm good, thanks. I know, it's been a while. I've been so busy with work and, I have to admit, I've been spending way too much time on social media.

Sarah: Tell me about it! It's so addictive, isn't it? Which platforms are you on?

Tom: Mainly Instagram and Twitter. I used to be on Facebook, but I deactivated my account last year. It was all getting a bit too much. What about you?

Sarah: I'm on Instagram too, and I also use Pinterest for creative ideas. I've never really gotten into Twitter, though. How much time would you say you spend on social media each day?

Tom: Oh, that's a scary question! I'd say, on average, probably about **three hours** a day. It's terrible, I know.

Sarah: I'm probably not much better. I'd say I spend about **two and a half hours** a day. I find myself scrolling through my phone whenever I have a spare moment.

Tom: Exactly! And I've noticed it's really affecting my sleep. I often find myself scrolling through my phone in bed, and then I can't switch off. I read an article the other day that said the blue light from your phone can really mess with your sleep cycle.

Sarah: I've heard that too. I've been trying to make a conscious effort to put my phone away at least an hour before I go to sleep. I've also started using a sleep tracking app to monitor my sleep patterns. It's called "**SleepWell**".

Tom: Oh, that sounds interesting. I might have to check that out. I've also been thinking about doing a "digital detox." You know, where you completely disconnect from all social media for a certain period of time.

Sarah: I've heard of that. A friend of mine did it for a week and she said it was amazing. She said she felt so much more present and focused. I'm not sure I could do it for a whole week, though. Maybe a weekend to start with.

Tom: That's a good idea. I think I'll try it next weekend. I'm going camping with my family, so it's the perfect opportunity to disconnect. My brother, **David**, is a huge advocate for digital detoxes. He does one every month.

Sarah: Wow, that's impressive. I need to be more like your brother. I've also noticed that social media can be a bit of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it's great for staying connected with people, but on the other hand, it can make you feel really insecure.

Tom: I completely agree. It's so easy to fall into the trap of comparing your life to everyone else's. I saw a post the other day from a friend who's travelling the world, and I couldn't help but feel a bit jealous.

Sarah: I know what you mean. I think it's important to remember that people only post the highlights of their lives on social media. It's not a true reflection of reality. I follow a great account called "**RealTalk**" that promotes a more realistic and positive use of social media.

Tom: I'll have to check that out. Well, it's been great catching up, Sarah. I should probably get going. I'm meeting my sister, **Emily**, for lunch.

Sarah: You too, Tom. Let's make sure we catch up again soon, in person!

Tom: Definitely. Bye for now! A monologue by a university lecturer, Dr. Evans, about the impact of social media on mental health.

Dr. Evans: Good morning, everyone. In today's lecture, we're going to be discussing a topic that is highly relevant to all of our lives: the impact of social media on mental health. It's a complex and often controversial subject, with passionate arguments on both sides. But today, I want to take a balanced and evidence-based look at the issue.

First, let's acknowledge the positive aspects. Social media can be a powerful tool for connection and community. For individuals who may feel isolated due to geography,

illness, or social anxiety, online communities can provide a vital sense of belonging. A 2022 study from the **University of Oxford** found that for many, social media is a lifeline, offering support and understanding that may be lacking in their offline lives. It can also be a fantastic platform for self-expression and creativity, as we see on sites like Instagram and TikTok, where people can share their art, music, and ideas with a global audience.

However, we cannot ignore the growing body of evidence that points to the potential negative consequences of excessive social media use. One of the most well-documented of these is the link between social media and increased rates of anxiety and depression, particularly among young people. The constant pressure to present a perfect, curated version of oneself can be incredibly stressful. This phenomenon, often referred to as “compare and despair,” is where we constantly measure our own lives against the seemingly perfect lives of others, leading to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. A recent survey by the **Royal Society for Public Health** in the UK found that Instagram was the worst social media platform for young people’s mental health, due to its focus on images and the pressure to have a perfect body and lifestyle.

Another major concern is the addictive nature of social media. The platforms are designed to keep us engaged for as long as possible, using features like infinite scrolling and push notifications to trigger the release of dopamine in our brains, the same chemical that is associated with pleasure and reward. This can lead to a cycle of compulsive checking and a fear of missing out, or “FOMO,” which can have a significant impact on our ability to concentrate and be present in the real world. In fact, a study published in the journal **”Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking”** found that the more time people spent on social media, the more likely they were to experience symptoms of addiction.

So, what can we do to mitigate these risks? Well, the first step is to be more mindful of our social media usage. This means setting limits on our screen time, turning off notifications, and being selective about who we follow. It’s also important to remember that what we see on social media is not always a true reflection of reality. Following accounts that promote a more realistic and positive body image, for example, can help to counteract the negative effects of social comparison. And finally, it’s crucial that we prioritize real-life connections. While online communities can be a valuable source of support, they are not a substitute for genuine, face-to-face interaction. So, make sure you’re making time for the people who matter most in your life, away from the distractions of the digital world. An academic discussion between a

university tutor, Dr. Williams, and two students, Chloe and Ben, about their research project on the impact of social media on political discourse.

Dr. Williams: So, Chloe and Ben, how are you getting on with your research project? You're looking at the impact of social media on political discourse, is that right?

Chloe: Yes, that's right, Dr. Williams. We've been focusing specifically on the last two general elections in the UK.

Dr. Williams: And what have you found so far?

Ben: Well, it's been a really interesting, and to be honest, a slightly overwhelming, topic to research. There's so much data out there. But I think we've managed to identify some clear trends. One of the most significant is the increasing role of social media as a primary source of news and information for many people, especially younger voters. A recent report from the **Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism** found that over 50% of 18-24 year olds now get their news from social media.

Chloe: And that has some pretty significant implications for political discourse. On the one hand, it can be seen as a democratization of the media, with a wider range of voices and perspectives being heard. But on the other hand, it also creates the perfect environment for the spread of misinformation and disinformation. We found that during the last election, a staggering **88%** of adults in the UK were exposed to at least one piece of fake news online.

Dr. Williams: That's a very worrying statistic. And how are political parties and candidates adapting to this new media landscape?

Ben: They're pouring huge amounts of money into social media advertising, that's for sure. In the 2019 election, the Conservative Party spent over **£2 million** on Facebook advertising alone. And they're becoming increasingly sophisticated in the way they target their messaging. They use a technique called micro-targeting, which allows them to show different ads to different groups of people based on their interests, their location, and even their personality traits.

Chloe: And that raises some serious ethical questions. Is it right for political parties to be using our personal data to try and manipulate us in this way? There's a growing debate about the need for greater regulation of political advertising on social media.

The **Electoral Commission** has called for new laws to be introduced to ensure greater transparency and accountability.

Dr. Williams: It's certainly a complex issue. And what about the impact of social media on the tone of political debate? It often feels as though it's become more polarized and aggressive in recent years.

Ben: I think that's definitely true. The anonymity of social media can embolden people to say things that they would never say in a face-to-face conversation. And the algorithms that the platforms use are designed to show us content that will provoke a strong emotional reaction, which often means that the most extreme and outrageous voices get the most attention. A study from **New York University** found that posts that used moral and emotional language were 20% more likely to be shared.

Chloe: And that can have a real-world impact. There's a growing concern that the increasingly toxic nature of online debate is putting people off from engaging in politics altogether, particularly women and people from minority groups who are often the targets of the most vicious abuse. The **Amnesty International** report on online abuse against women in politics makes for very sober reading.

Dr. Williams: It certainly does. Well, it sounds like you've made a very strong start to your research. I'm looking forward to reading your final report. Do you have any questions for me?

Chloe: I think we're okay for now, thanks, Dr. Williams.

Dr. Williams: Excellent. Well, keep up the good work. An academic lecture by a professor of business studies, Professor Davies, about the impact of social media on the business world.

Professor Davies: Good morning, everyone. In the final lecture of our series on digital disruption, we're going to be turning our attention to the world of business and the profound impact that social media has had on the way that companies operate. It's a transformation that has been both rapid and far-reaching, and it's one that shows no signs of slowing down.

First, let's consider the area of marketing and advertising. In the pre-social media era, marketing was a largely one-way process. Companies would broadcast their messages to a mass audience through television, radio, and print, with very little opportunity for interaction or feedback. Social media has completely upended this model. It has

created a new, dynamic, and highly interactive marketing environment, where the consumer is no longer a passive recipient of information, but an active participant in the brand conversation. A 2023 report from the **Content Marketing Institute** found that 91% of B2B marketers and 86% of B2C marketers are now using social media as part of their content marketing strategies.

One of the key advantages of social media marketing is the ability to target specific demographics with a high degree of precision. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have a wealth of data about their users, from their age and location to their interests and hobbies. This allows businesses to create highly targeted advertising campaigns that are much more likely to resonate with their intended audience. For example, a company that sells hiking equipment can use social media to target users who have expressed an interest in hiking, camping, and the great outdoors. This level of targeting was simply not possible with traditional marketing methods.

Another major impact of social media on business is the way that it has transformed customer service. In the past, if a customer had a complaint, they would have to write a letter, make a phone call, or send an email. Now, they can simply send a tweet or a Facebook message and expect a response in a matter of hours, if not minutes. This has created a new set of expectations for businesses, who are now under pressure to provide a fast, efficient, and personal customer service experience. A study by **J.D. Power** found that 67% of consumers have used a company's social media site for servicing, compared with 33% for social marketing.

Social media has also had a profound impact on the way that businesses recruit and hire new employees. Platforms like LinkedIn have become an essential tool for recruiters, allowing them to search for candidates with specific skills and experience. It's also a valuable platform for job seekers, who can use it to network with potential employers and showcase their professional achievements. A recent survey from the **Society for Human Resource Management** found that 84% of organizations are now using social media for recruitment, and 9% of those who don't are planning to start.

Finally, it's important to recognize that social media is not just a tool for large corporations. It has also been a game-changer for small businesses and entrepreneurs. The low cost and ease of use of social media platforms have leveled the playing field, allowing small businesses to compete with their larger rivals on a more equal footing. With a creative and engaging social media strategy, a small business can build a loyal following and reach a global audience, something that would have been unimaginable just a few decades ago. A report from the **Small Business**

Administration found that 64% of small businesses are now using social media to grow their business.

So, as you can see, the impact of social media on the business world has been nothing short of revolutionary. It has transformed the way that businesses market their products, interact with their customers, and recruit new employees. And as social media continues to evolve, we can expect to see even more profound changes in the years to come.

ANSWER KEY

Reading Section

1. True
2. Not Given
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. False
7. C
8. B
9. A
10. C
11. transformative
12. inadequacy
13. discerning
14. viii
15. iv
16. v
17. iii
18. i

- 19. vi
- 20. C
- 21. A
- 22. C
- 23. C
- 24. 70 percent
- 25. lasting positive impact
- 26. sense of agency
- 27. No
- 28. Yes
- 29. No
- 30. Yes
- 31. Not Given
- 32. Yes
- 33. B
- 34. B
- 35. C
- 36. C
- 37. targeted
- 38. two-way dialogue
- 39. playing field
- 40. cost-effective

Listening Section

- 1. Pinterest
- 2. three
- 3. SleepWell
- 4. weekend
- 5. David

6. jealous

7. RealTalk

8. Emily

9. in person

10. soon

11. B

12. A

13. C

14. C

15. C

16. B

17. C

18. A

19. E

20. D

21. B

22. B

23. C

24. A

25. B

26. B

27. B

28. B

29. B

30. B

31. interactive

32. demographics

33. fast

34. 67%

35. recruiters

36. 84%

37. leveled

38. 64%

39. revolutionary

40. profound

Grammar Section

1. I have been using social media for many years.

2. She is the most popular influencer that/whom I know.

3. He spent too much time on his phone yesterday.

4. They are worried about the effect of social media on their children.

5. I agree with the statement that social media has a lot of benefits.

6. were you

7. for

8. wishes he hadn't shared

9. among

10. to be

11. has been checking

12. to

13. an

14. since

15. spending

16. growth

17. potential

18. manager

19. user

20. influential

TUTOR GUIDE

Model answer for Writing Task 1

The bar chart illustrates the average amount of time spent on social media per day by different age groups in the United Kingdom in 2023. The data is presented in hours.

Overall, there is a clear inverse correlation between age and the amount of time spent on social media, with the youngest age group spending the most time and the oldest age group spending the least.

The 16-24 age group spent the most time on social media, with an average of 3.5 hours per day. This is significantly higher than any other age group. The 25-34 age group spent the second most amount of time, at 2.8 hours per day, followed by the 35-44 age group, at 2.1 hours per day.

The amount of time spent on social media continues to decrease with age. The 45-54 age group spent an average of 1.5 hours per day, while the 55+ age group spent the least amount of time, at just 0.8 hours per day. The difference between the youngest and oldest age groups is substantial, with 16-24 year olds spending over four times as much time on social media as those aged 55 and over.

Model essay for Writing Task 2 (Band 9 level)

The proliferation of social media has been one of the most transformative technological developments of the 21st century, fundamentally reshaping the way we communicate, consume information, and interact with the world around us. While these platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for connection and community, they have also been accompanied by a host of concerns about their impact on individuals and society as a whole. In my opinion, while the negative consequences of social media are significant and should not be underestimated, its overall impact has been more positive than negative.

On the one hand, the arguments against social media are compelling. The curated and often idealized nature of social media can foster a culture of social comparison, leading to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression. The addictive nature of these platforms, which are designed to keep us scrolling for as long as possible, can have a detrimental effect on our mental health, our sleep patterns, and our ability to

concentrate. Furthermore, the spread of misinformation and “fake news” on social media poses a serious threat to our democracy, polarizing public opinion and eroding trust in our institutions.

On the other hand, the benefits of social media are equally, if not more, significant. For many people, particularly those from marginalized or isolated communities, social media can be a lifeline, providing a sense of belonging and a platform to have their voices heard. It has been a powerful tool for social and political change, enabling grassroots movements to organize and challenge the status quo. In the realm of business, social media has leveled the playing field, allowing small businesses to compete with large corporations on a more equal footing. It has also revolutionized the way we learn, providing access to a wealth of information and educational resources.

In conclusion, while it is crucial to be aware of the potential pitfalls of social media, I believe that its positive impact on society outweighs the negative. The key is to use these platforms in a mindful and intentional way, to be critical consumers of information, and to prioritize genuine human connection. By doing so, we can harness the power of social media to create a more connected, informed, and equitable world.

Speaking Part 2 sample response

I'd like to talk about a time when I used social media to reconnect with an old friend from primary school. His name is Mark, and we hadn't seen or spoken to each other in over 15 years. I was scrolling through Facebook one evening when I saw his name pop up in the “People You May Know” section. I was so surprised to see him after all these years, and I immediately sent him a friend request.

He accepted my request a few hours later, and we started chatting on Facebook Messenger. It was amazing to catch up with him and find out what he had been up to. He told me that he was now living in Australia and working as a graphic designer. I told him that I was still living in our hometown and working as a teacher. We spent hours reminiscing about our school days and sharing stories about our lives since we had last seen each other.

I felt a real sense of joy and nostalgia during our conversation. It was wonderful to reconnect with someone who had been such a big part of my childhood. We have stayed in touch since then, and we even have plans to meet up in person the next time

he is back in the UK. This experience really highlighted for me the power of social media to bring people together, even after many years and across great distances.

Key vocabulary list

1. **Proliferation:** Rapid increase in the number or amount of something.
2. **Rudimentary:** Involving or limited to basic principles.
3. **Multifaceted:** Having many different aspects or features.
4. **Pernicious:** Having a harmful effect, especially in a gradual or subtle way.
5. **Nuanced:** Characterized by subtle shades of meaning or expression.
6. **Detrimental:** Tending to cause harm.
7. **Inadequacy:** The state or quality of being inadequate; lack of the quantity or quality required.
8. **Polarize:** Divide or cause to divide into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs.
9. **Fragmented:** Broken into small or separate parts.
10. **Discerning:** Having or showing good judgement.
11. **Augmenting:** Making something greater by adding to it; increasing.
12. **Gratifying:** Giving pleasure or satisfaction.
13. **Empowering:** Make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights.
14. **Mitigating:** Making (something bad) less severe, serious, or painful.
15. **Unprecedented:** Never done or known before.
16. **Demographics:** Statistical data relating to the population and particular groups within it.
17. **Advocates:** People who publicly support or recommend a particular cause or policy.
18. **Democratized:** Made (something) accessible to everyone.
19. **Upended:** Set or turned (something) on its end or upside down.
20. **Revolutionary:** Involving or causing a complete or dramatic change.