

Real Test Topic 1: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Playing sports teaches people lessons about life.

Why do people play sports? I used to think that health and entertainment are the main causes, but more and more I realize that sports can actually serve as powerful lessons as I now involve myself in it often enough.

One important life lesson I learned from sport games is that it is not always better to win. Normally, people take winning in a competition as something worth celebrating, but my experiences of playing sports with friends and families let me know that what matters the most when playing games with them is to have a good time together. Sometimes, we even need to deliberately lose the game in order to cheer others up. A person who is addicted to the feeling of being superior all the time is unlikely to have anyone close to him or her.

Another important principle I figured out by playing sports is that if we want to be trusted, we need to have faith in others first. We all have seen people complaining that they are not given the opportunities to do something they can, and a lot of them tend to blame it on the jealousy of others, but when I played basketball with some strangers on the court, I realized if I chose to believe that a person could score and thus passed him the ball, the person would also be willing to count on me when I had the chance. Simply put, people treat us the way we treat them.

While many claim that they are too busy to participate in physical activity, I actually find it quite effective in helping me make good use of my time. With the proper amount of weight training and cardiovascular training, my brain gets some very good rest and my body becomes way more energetic, which is why I have even higher work efficiency after going to the gym. The hours I spend there could totally be compensated for because I will get more work done within a shorter time. This lesson, however, is unlikely to be learned without getting any workouts.

One of the greatest things about life is that there are lessons to be taken everywhere. If we keep that in mind, then we will realize that we are making discoveries even when we do not intend to do so. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 2: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is more important to make friends with people who can have fun with us than to make friends with people who can help us when we are in need.

Friends, in some ways, determine what kind of life we live and thus we choose them carefully. Since friends have different types, people naturally try to distinguish good ones from the bad. Some people claim that it offers more advantages to make friends with people who can have fun with them than with people who can help them when they are in need. However, my attitude is just the opposite of such statement. I believe that no one is more important and valuable than those who can help.

Making friends with people who can have fun with us is not always necessary or beneficial. Having fun is indeed an indispensable part of life, yet we do not always need friends to do so. When the timing is right, we can have fun with anyone without making friends with them. It is just like that we dance with strangers on a square when celebrating the national day, or that we have an interesting chat with the driver while taking a taxi. Such things happen frequently, but these people do not necessarily become our friends. What is more, even if such people become our friends, they would not act as important ones if the only thing we do together is having fun. Staying with fun friends too much can easily distract our attention from things that we are supposed to focus on, which means a waste of time and letting opportunities slip. People with so many tasks to deal with every day seldom need or think of their fun friends.

On the contrary, friends who can help us when we are in need not only benefit our life but even change it in an unexpected positive way. Getting support from others always brings us a sense of security and makes us feel safe no matter what difficulty we encounter. Making friends with such people means comfort, protection, and sometimes, even privileges. That is why many of us consider making some local friends the most urgent mission that we need to accomplish after moving to a new city or a new country. In addition, some people not only help us when we ask for assistance but even remind us of what we need or lack without being required to. These people can be our saviors as well as mentors, for they can even prevent us from being too proud of ourselves and making terrible mistakes. To me, my parents are such kind of friends and they give me advice even if they know that I may not like it. Thanks to them, I have achieved accomplishments better than most people expected.

Friends might be the most influential people in our lives. They are like teachers, supporters and reminders. Although we can also have fun with them, we still know quite clearly that this is not why we value them so much. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 3: Some schools now use video games in their classes to help young students (students aged between 5 and 8) increase their interest in studying, but some worry that this can only distract students' attention from their studies. What is your opinion and why?

Teaching young children has never been an easy task, for they lack self-control and can be distracted with ease. However, some teachers nowadays seem to find a rather effective solution to this problem, claiming that they can use video games to tap into students' passive attention and thus keep them focused in class.

In a traditional class, students try to stay focused because they know they should. In a class where video games are talked about, however, students naturally pay attention since they are interested. When a history teacher introduces a historical event with a popular video game related to it at the beginning, you can imagine how excited and involved students who love the game will become. Even students who have never played the game could show strong interest, because the teacher just knows how to associate what students naturally like with classes in order to make them more passionate about studying than they normally would be.

There are also instances when students get more interested in learning even if the video games they play have very little to do with their lessons. When I was in high school, I was addicted to video games, which increased my interest in learning English. As most of the games I played were the English versions, I had no choice but to look up information in a dictionary and search references on the Internet to gain a better understanding of the English words and sentences I read in the games. Surely an English teacher can turn some video games into their students' motives for improving their foreign language skills.

Interestingly, some parents are against these new practices, for they feel that their children could be distracted by these games. However, I do not think they have a legitimate concern. There are countless forms of distraction that children could have other than video games, so not allowing them to discuss or play the games that can help them study will not necessarily make them more motivated in class. Even if these games are distracting to some students, they are still under the supervision of their teachers and will be reminded right then and there. From this perspective, saying that games are distractions is really an exaggeration.

We now live in a time when new methods of doing things are discovered and implemented every day. With the courage for embracing these new changes and the wisdom for making good use of them, our life will surely be better than ever. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 4: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Cars have more effects on human beings than airplanes do.

Cars and airplanes are both significant inventions in human civilization and they influence our lives in different ways. These days, we often hear people say that the influence of cars far outweighs that of planes, for they are used more frequently. However, I believe this is a misunderstanding, for importance is not just a matter of the frequency of usage. Automobiles and jets complete each other by playing different yet indispensable parts in our lives, so we cannot value one more than the other.

With cars, our trips will be fun and flexible. If there is no limit of time, most people would choose to travel by having a road trip, taking pictures for beautiful scenery, enjoying wonderful foods all along the journey. But with jets, they have no choice but to sit tight, even without being allowed to use their cell phones, not to mention the fact that foods on planes are usually bad-tasting. Also, cars can be parked anywhere they can go, but airplanes need to land at an airport, which is not seen everywhere. In other words, cars can directly take people to their destinations; jets, however, still need to be assisted by other transports to deliver their passengers to where they want to go. We often see that people drive their cars to offices, schools and supermarkets, but such places are not even able to accommodate helicopters, not to mention jets. It is quite obvious that cars can do the parts that planes never do and we cannot live without them.

Although automobiles enjoy many advantages, we still need planes to make the society function for the time they save and the possibility they offer. For international or intercontinental traveling, airplanes would always be the primary choice, as most people do not want to waste too much time on the way. The saved time could be used in lots of more meaningful ways like having a good rest, preparing for a conference or visiting a friend. In addition, people taking airplanes usually do not worry about what is between where they leave and where they go. However, cars can be blocked by oceans, rivers, mountains and forests, which makes them not even practical options when traveling to some destinations. No matter how capable a car is, it has limitations in the face of a varied topography, which has no influence on planes at all. Airplanes' merits make them perfect choices on many occasions when cars are not capable or suitable, and living without them is also unthinkable.

Since cars and planes cannot replace each other while both handling important tasks, it would be illogical to claim that the influence of one kind is greater than the other's. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 5: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Telephone has more effects on people's lives than television does.

Telephones and TV sets are quite common appliances in modern families and they influence people's lives in different ways. Nowadays, some people claim that the influence of telephones already outweighs which of television, for they feel that they use telephones more frequently. However, I believe this is a popular misunderstanding. Actually, people of different ages will have different answers to the same question. Young people (people under 50) rely on telephones much more than on TV, yet aged people (people older than 50) are more likely to be influenced by TV programs than by phone calls.

Most young people cannot live without phones, but they will not feel the same about television. Young people are either students at school or employees in companies, so they will need to keep in touch with their classmates, teachers, colleagues and bosses. Missing an important phone call or text message might be unacceptable to young people, for they may miss a test or even lose a job because of that. Telephones are also indispensable tools for young people to contact friends and to make arrangements. However, most young people do not watch TV frequently. The two main purposes for people to watch TV are to acquire information and to entertain, and it is quite obvious that young people have many other better options. They usually turn to the Internet for help if they want to learn about something, for information from that source is usually much more specific and professional. Also, they do not consider watching TV a good way of relaxation, for they would prefer going shopping or playing sports. Young people's life relies very much on their phones, yet television never plays a necessary or even important part.

For aged people, making phone calls is no longer a daily activity, but watching TV happens almost every day. Aged people no longer work, nor do they go to schools. So there is no need for them to keep in touch with many people frequently. The only people they want to contact with are their family members, who come back home at regular hours, and aged people would prefer to have face-to-face communication rather than make phone calls, for they sometimes cannot even hear clearly on the phone. On the contrary, television seems to be the best friend and companion to most aged people, for it helps them keep up with changes and kill the "too much leisure time". Most elderly people do not surf the Internet or read newspapers much, so TV programs might be the only source from which they can know what is happening around the globe. Since they have a whole day to spend at home alone if their children are working in companies or studying at school, watching their favorite TV programs serves as the time-killing activity with which they will not feel lonely and bored. For aged people, a wonderful gift would be a TV set but not a new cell phone.

It is obvious that people with different expectations will have different choices. The importance of telephone and television differs as the users' ages change, which is why we cannot say that anyone always has more effects than the other does. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 6: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Students twenty years from now will no longer use printed books.

With the appearance of new technology, things which used to be popular and widely used keep turning into antiques in museums and many believe that printed books will be among those things in the future—some even go so far as to say that students at school will no longer use them in about 20 years. This, however, is an exaggeration from my perspective. Although the use of electronic books will be more frequent, it does not mean the disappearance of printed ones.

Since many **students in developing countries** are unlikely to afford e-books, printed ones will continue playing an important part in the near future. One of the primary advantages of using paper books is the **low cost** and even students in developed countries like the United States today are still using them almost every day. It is hard to believe that all the countries in the world will be wealthy enough to afford every student at school an electronic book. In comparison with e-books, printed books are much more cost-effective choices and will still be popular at school in most countries even 20 years from now.

Another reason which keeps paper books popular is the convenience they offer, and it is clear that e-books might never have those attributes. Paper books are so easy to take and to read anywhere: you never worry about running out of batteries and the notes you take or the signs you mark will never disappear because of that. On the contrary, people usually need to **take extra care** when using e-books, for they could be easily broken. We often see that people pass their printed books to others by throwing them, yet they can never do the same to e-books. Printed books just have too many advantages that they cannot be easily replaced soon.

No matter how advanced and powerful e-books are, schools should always consider carefully whether to use them since not all students can benefit from their merits. High school and university students may find electronic books powerful tools helping them study, yet **primary school students**, lacking self-control, are very likely to treat them like toys. The functions that printed books do not have, such as connection to the Internet and video playing, would probably distract them instead of improving their efficiency. It is for sure that both parents and teachers would not like to see that both now and in the future.

Technology indeed changes us and the world we live in, but it does not easily make things disappear. Printed books, enjoying so many advantages that e-books never possess, will continue to be used in the near future or even forever. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 7: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Patience is usually not a good thing and we need to take actions at once.

People encounter problems and issues throughout their lives, and being patient is always considered to be a wise practice. Nowadays, some people claim that patience is no longer a good thing and it sometimes lets opportunities slip, so taking action at once is usually a better choice. However, I cannot agree. In most cases, being patient continues to be a sound strategy.

Admittedly, being patient could make people miss opportunities, but it only happens when it comes to emergencies. When natural disasters happen, many people lose everything and become refugees. Some of them are trapped in burning houses or sinking cars, and we need to take actions at once instead of trying to figure out the best solutions. The time is so limited that taking any action will be better than taking no action at all. However, such situations do not happen frequently. Plus, rescuing people immediately without thinking carefully sometimes also brings unpleasant results.

Being patient sometimes means waiting for the best chance to carry out a deliberate plan, and taking actions before the right time is an unwise practice. My father here is a good case in point. He used to plan to set up his own company when he was a college student, but he did not do it immediately, for he believed that he was not experienced enough and there was still much to learn. My father worked for a large company for three years to gain field experience. He also spent two years finding a like-minded sponsor. He did not start his own business before everything was ready, and that is why his company now runs quite well and makes large profits.

Sometimes people take actions at once when they are in a bad mood, and being patient may help them avoid making terrible mistakes. All parents want their children to do well at school, and they usually get upset if their children fail to satisfy them. Some parents are not patient enough to allow children to make mistakes and to learn from these mistakes, and instead, they blame children violently. Being treated in an inappropriate way, children are very likely to become passive and diffident. Many young parents often regret that they hurt their children's feelings, and they all admit that if they could be patient at first, some negative results can be avoided.

Even though we are living a life of a quicker rhythm, it is quite obvious that being patient is still a good way to find the best solution to problems and issues or the wisest strategy to carry out our plans in most cases, and it would be an exaggeration to say that it is no longer a good choice. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 8: When you are working or doing school work, many factors can affect your productivity. Which one of the following do you think is the most important one?

Having an environment free of noise and distractions

Knowing that you will receive a reward (a pay rise or a better grade)

Doing something you are interested in

Our productivity at work is mostly determined by how concentrated we are, and the level of our concentration usually depends on how motivated we feel. Since nothing, from my point of view, provides stronger motivation than our own interests, I believe that of the three factors listed above, the third one is the most important when it comes to doing something well.

It is true that people need quiet to concentrate, but “the real quiet” comes from the inside. For those with real concentration, any environment could be free of noise and distractions, as they can barely notice what is going on around when they are fully occupied by their tasks. Interestingly, whenever we go to the library where the atmosphere is totally conducive to studying, we can see students playing video games on laptops or twittering with cellphones. There is no doubt that we cannot expect these people to be as productive as they are supposed to, even in such an ideal place for studying or working.

Some people attribute their low productivity to a lack of reward, but I say this is just an excuse. Every student knows that if he or she works harder, higher scores are very likely to be achieved. However, some of them, including myself sometimes, just cannot help playing when they are supposed to be learning. Why? Because doing something fun is way more interesting than reading textbooks or doing experiments. Surely employees in companies are more mature and rational than students, but they also behave in a very similar pattern. So, it is obvious that there is a huge difference between “knowing the path” and “being willing to walk the path”.

What motivates people to give their best? The answer would definitely be interests! A person can manage to become an expert without any help or encouragement as long as he or she has the passion for something. I am a big fan of cars, and I just naturally choose to keep learning about these vehicles and how to drive them. I watch car reviews over and over gain till I hear every single word clearly in a noisy gym, and I often wake up very early on weekends to go for a ride. It is my interest that motivates me to be an effective learner, not a specific environment or some kind of reward.

Productivity is what everyone needs for getting something done well. Although many claim that there are a lot of factors that can affect it, I still believe that the importance of interests far outweighs that of the others. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 9: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The government should support scientific research which does not have any practical use.

The benefits of scientific research, in some ways, shape the future of a nation. Thus, supporting scientific research naturally becomes one of the highest priorities of every government. However, it seems that not every research is worth supporting, for some do not have practical use. Some people believe that there is no need for the government to fund these useless researches, but I think this is a misunderstanding.

Researches which seem to have no practical use today may become meaningful, or even revolutionary as time goes by. Governments focusing on programs which provide immediate benefits only are short-sighted, because many so called unpractical researches actually have huge potentials. The research on nuclear materials seemed to be useless and even dangerous in the past, but today they turn out to benefit us in many respects: nuclear power stations can satisfy the increasing need for electricity; radiation can be used to reveal the internal structures of human body and steel. If governments refuse to encourage and fund these advanced researches, we may have no revolutionary progress at all.

Since some advanced scientific research cannot produce immediate benefits, individuals or companies are unlikely to be interested, and **governments' supports may be the only chance for this kind of researches.** Many countries pay close attention to space exploration, and probes are sent into the space by rockets constantly. Building such facilities and hiring engineers and technicians concerned require an incredibly large fund and various resources, and no organization but governments can afford to do that. Without necessary equipment and facilities provided by governments, these researches with huge potentials cannot be conducted.

Besides requiring money and resources, advanced researches also **involve a great number of specialists and experts**, and only governments have the power to gather so many talents. We humans have already established a gene mapping database by carrying out an international program which involves six big powers in the world. Such a program cannot be completed by any individual or organization without governments' backup, because few people are really interested in it due to its lack of immediate benefits, and if governments did not realize its importance, there would be no enough human resource to finish all the tests, calculations and analyses.

Governments should support scientific researches which have no practical use by providing assets as well as human resource, because all the researches will finally benefit us in some way someday. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 10: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In order to succeed, people should be more like others than be different from others.

Being successful is always desirable to everyone, and what exactly is the key to success? Some suppose that they should be different from others, while other people believe that being like others is the best choice. As far as I am concerned, we should try to be different while working or studying, but we should be like everybody else in daily life.

People who can appear to be different from others when studying or working are more likely to catch the eye of important people and gain opportunities. In this competitive society, being good is no longer enough. In order to be remembered, we have to be different as well. Steve Jobs was never satisfied with making a good cell phone because he knew that a good product could only attract attention while it is novelty. To make something remarkable and classic, he created iPhone, a revolutionary product which did not look like any other competing products. Being good and different, iPhone soon became the most popular and successful cell phone that human had ever made. It ended NOKIA's dominance at its best time and opened a new era of the cell phone industry. Since then, no other products could seriously threaten iPhone because they all looked or felt a lot like it.

Although being different invites opportunities, we still cannot deny the importance of being like others in daily life. Being too different from others in life sometimes makes it hard to fit in, and thus we are unlikely to gain trust or cooperation from others. My father is a businessman who looks a lot like other business people—he likes wearing gray or black suits, and he smokes and drinks every day. But actually, he was totally different before, and he never wore clothes without light colors and he used to hate smoking and drinking. He changed himself because he found that his previous preferences and behaviors brought nothing but misunderstanding from others. Since he finally became a “typical” businessman, he made a lot of friends and widened his social circle considerably. His success today, in some ways, relies on his popularity, and popular people can usually get along well with everyone because they look like everyone.

Being different at work is a wise choice, and being like others in life will bring more friends. People should have different strategies when facing different situations and it would be an exaggeration to suggest that any strategy is always better than others. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real test topic 11: How do you think the following sources of information will influence you when you are about to make a big purchase?

Advice from friends and family

Claims and descriptions in advertising

Recommendation from a sales person

Making a big purchase means that people spend a relatively large amount of money buying something important. When this happens, information from different sources will come in handy for making a good choice.

Most of us will consult our friends and family members before we purchase something costly, and advice from these people is generally considered to be trustworthy, as they do not have any motive for misleading us. Also, since our friends and relatives know us much better than others, they can stand in our shoes and recommend products or services that meet our needs the most. However, since their experiences are limited and they have not tried everything on the market, they may fail to let us know all the possibilities, which can make us miss out on some of the available brilliant choices.

Advertising is the best source from which we can learn what products and services are available at present, but I tend to be critical when watching advertisements, for I feel that they usually exaggerate the features of what they try to sell, making them look or sound much better than they truly are. What's worse, some commercials even claim that their products possess the merits which they do not really have. The "empty descriptions and questionable claims" make me put much less trust in advertising claims in general. To me, advertisements are only valuable when I try to find out exactly how many choices I have.

As for recommendation from a sales person, while many people never have faith in it because they suppose that all sales persons are motivated by the money they pay, I still count on some of them for getting the information that others cannot provide. Sales persons are systematically trained to familiarize themselves with products' features and to analyze customers' needs so as to help us make up our mind when we are struggling about what to buy. They provide the second opinion we need for spending a great deal of money wisely right then and there. From this perspective, they are irreplaceable.

From what has been discussed, we can come to the realization that every source of information has its own pros and cons, and that is why none of them would be completely ignored or fully trusted if I had a plan to spend a lot of money and make it count. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 12: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The best way for a company to invest its money is to improve the skills of its employees.

Businesses invest their profits into various aspects for the betterment of themselves. Many people feel that since employees are the major contributors to the success of their companies, the most important investment is to improve their skills, but is this really the case? As far as I am concerned, improved skills of employees do not necessarily benefit companies and there are other better places where the money should go.

Improving employees' skills does not always guarantee that the employees will contribute more. In fact, they may even become **unstable constituents** of a company because of that. Once they feel that they are more skillful because of the training, they would expect higher salaries and positions. Yet their bosses are unlikely to satisfy them, for they have already invested money in their training. Without getting the reward that they feel they deserve, these better trained employees would probably become passive workers or even leave their companies for better positions elsewhere. If this happens, bosses are going to lose both their employees and the money they paid for their training.

Since the main purpose for most people to have jobs is to make money, I strongly believe that increasing salaries is a wiser practice to make employees more loyal and productive. If the salaries are considerable, employees who are capable will be satisfied, and those who are not qualified will have to try everything to improve themselves in order to avoid being replaced by competitors from both inside and outside of their companies. Companies offering good salaries never lack contributors, but stingy bosses will encounter many "unnecessary" problems because they refuse to offer what most competent employees truly care about—good salaries.

Another effective way for companies to use their money is to better the office environment. Employees will be more willing to go to their office and enjoy their time there more if the environment is comfortable and satisfying, and even things like working overtime will seem to be much less difficult to accept, not to mention a better environment usually induces higher working efficiency. In addition, a good office environment will leave a good impression on everyone, especially clients who visit the company. No wonder many beauty salons renovate their places almost every year. From this perspective, good environment contributes to good business.

It is true that employees are the most important assets of their companies, but improving their skills is not the best way to keep and to encourage them and only bosses who can precisely tell what their employees really need have the best chances to succeed. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 13: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Movies and television shows should tell stories in which good people are rewarded and bad people are punished.

Movies and television programs tell stories, and all these stories can be classified into two types: the positive type and the negative type. Positive stories always show audience that good people are rewarded and bad people are punished; negative ones show just the opposite. Since these stories usually have strong influence on how people behave, some believe that only the positive ones should be told; however, I cannot agree. Actually, each type of movies and TV programs exists for good reasons, and both of them are worth watching.

Positive stories in movies and television shows benefit people by telling them what the world is supposed to be like. People will be encouraged to behave in good manners and to discipline themselves well if they know that everyone eventually gets what he or she deserves. In other words, positive stories show people the very likely consequences of their actions so that they can make wiser and more informed choices based on the experiences of others. If everyone in the society is well aware of the fact that what comes around goes around, then the world will become a better place to live in.

Knowing what is right is important but not enough; understanding what the world really is like is another important part of education, and also the reason why negative stories should be shown sometimes. Without knowing that there is injustice and unfairness widely existing in life, people may never be well prepared for what they might encounter in real life as they leave home and go to university or start working. Some of these people just cannot fit in well with their new environments because they used to be protected too much from “the dark side”.

Besides showing people the reality, sad stories can also encourage people to bring positive changes to the world by making them feel angry and disappointed. It is human nature that we tend to feel or assume that we are the protagonists when watching films and TV plays, so if something unfair happened to these characters we like and made them suffer, we would have a strong motivation to do something like making new laws to prevent the same tragedy from happening again. I guess that is why news reporters keep exposing the darkness: everything and everyone needs supervision and correction.

From what has been discussed above, we can come to the realization that all types of movies and TV shows benefit people and the society in their own ways and it would be illogical to say that any type is the only one that should be seen. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 14: Which one of the following do you think contributes the most to an enjoyable vacation? Good friends/Good location/Good food

Going on an enjoyable vacation is always a pleasant thing, but people do have different views when talking about what makes a vacation enjoyable. Some people claim that tasty foods and good locations are the most influential factors; however, I tend to attribute the enjoyment of my vacations to good friends.

Good food is indeed attractive, but it is usually not a necessary part of an enjoyable vacation. Delicious foods are not available everywhere, and we do not always expect to enjoy fine dining while traveling. Tasty foods can only make a good vacation more enjoyable, but they cannot guarantee enjoyment. If we do have choices, some of us may even prefer having plain food with friends to eating something tasty alone, for friends can amuse us all along the way, but tasty food only provides satisfaction while we eat. No one keeps eating all along the way, so it is obvious that good food is not as important and influential as good friends.

Good location, in most cases, is more important than good food, but it is still not the primary reason for the joy of a journey. Raveling to a beautiful place and enjoying wonderful scenes can be quite enjoyable, but it only happens when we are in good moods. Being with friends is usually one of the best ways to bring good moods; however, if we travel alone, it sometimes means that we are upset and trying to hide from something unpleasant or unfortunate, then we would be unlikely to have the mood to appreciate the beauty we see. For most of us, going on a vacation alone to anywhere is not as good as traveling with best friends.

Friends are like miracles in our lives, for they make ordinary places beautiful and memorable, and they also make plain food attractive. If we have to make a choice from raveling with our parents to some cool places and staying at home with our friend while parents are gone for a trip, I believe that many of us would prefer the latter one. Students living in dormitories often eat together, and eating with friends brings them a lot of fun which makes some plain food tasty, but if we ask them to have the same thing at home, they would probably not touch the food without the fun. It is such a good thing to have our friends with us no matter where we are or what we do.

Obviously, among the three factors, good friends contribute the most to an enjoyable vacation. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 15: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Students at school should be required to study art and music in addition to math, language, science and history.

Students at school are usually educated and trained in a wide range of different subjects to prepare for challenges ahead. Since our society gets increasingly competitive, some people say that there is no need for students to waste time on learning art and music, which can hardly help them survive or succeed. However, I believe this a huge misunderstanding. Besides taking classes of math, language, science and history, students at school should definitely be required to have art and music education.

Learning math, language, science and history is the primary goal for most students to attend schools and it is indeed valuable and important. Math cultivates our logical thinking; science explains how the world and the universe function; language allows us to communicate; history teaches us wisdom and strategies. The knowledge and information we gain from such education enables us to make our own judgments and decisions wisely and independently. Without knowing the facts and principles from these courses, the world we live in and even ourselves will appear to be so unpredictable.

Although the subjects I mentioned in the last paragraph teach students a lot, they are still not enough and need to be complemented by other education such as art and music classes. Learning art and music helps people get relaxed, which is quite necessary in such a competitive and stressful society. Many students at school take having such classes as an opportunity to find relief from the heavy schoolwork, and they will also listen to music and go exhibitions to reduce stress from jobs after graduation. Without taking music and art classes, such relaxation will not even be available due to the lack of capacity to appreciate the beauty of art and music.

Besides providing people with relaxation, learning art and music also brings them a lot of topics of conversation which benefit their social lives. Normally, people do not talk about anything serious or professional when they first meet each other. Art and music then become the best choices for starting a conversation and making acquaintance with each other. Students can make friends by talking about their favorite pop stars; adults can draw each other's attention by discussing paintings or concerts. Basic knowledge of art and music will help us fit in and the lack of it often makes one appear to be uneducated.

Education is one of the most complicated tasks in the world, for it is supposed to prepare students for anything possible. If schools only focus on teaching "practical" and job-oriented skills, their students will never be able to grow as well-rounded and competent contributors to the society. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 16: Which one of the following do you think is the best way for students to make friends?

-Joining a sport team

-Attending community activities

-Traveling

Making friends always adds something positive in our lives, but we do have different views about what is the best way to make friends. While some people believe that joining sport teams and traveling are the most ideal approaches to meeting new people and developing friendships, I prefer to attend community activities to widen my social circle.

Playing sports with people is a good way to have a close relationship with them, but it is not always good because not everyone likes sports. I myself can be a good case in point here. I never like playing sports, for I am not good at it. Playing sports only makes people and even myself feel that I am inferior to others. Who wants to make friends with a person who always makes the team lose? Also, most girls will not consider playing sports a good way to gain friendships, and instead, they get to know more people by going shopping or having dinners together, for these activities are much more common than joining sport teams in their lives.

Since most student are busy with their studies, traveling is not a practical way to make friends either. Students today have very tight schedules, and they are always occupied by their assignments, exams, and papers, which is why they simply do not have the time for traveling, not to mention making friends while traveling. When they do have some treasured leisure time, they are more likely to hang out with their existing friends at cafes instead of going on a trip. In addition, people who meet each other on a trip can hardly keep in touch for long years as they will get back to their own lives once they return home. From this perspective, traveling is an impractical approach of making friends, not only for students but also for everyone.

Unlike the ways I have mentioned above, attending community activities is a very effective way to widen students' social circles, for it allows them more opportunities to get to know people of different backgrounds. When attending community activities, students can meet not only peers but also people who are much younger or older, and most importantly, they can do the things that they enjoy doing the most with others. Pursuing common interests with one another will definitely strengthen the relationships they have with others. Plus, community activities are much more available for students to attend than the other two, and that also makes it an ideal choice for making friends.

It is quite obvious that joining sport teams and traveling cannot be seen as good ways of encountering new people and becoming friends with them. Attending community activities, however, is easily available and offers more possibilities, which makes it the most effective approach for students to gain and to enjoy friendship among the three.
(Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 17: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Parents today find it harder to influence their children for children are now influenced by many things outside home.

Throughout history, parents have been the guardians and the most important influencers of their children. However, it seems that things have changed during the past few decades: parents today find it harder to influence their children than in the past. Actually, along with the development of technology, this is an inevitable phenomenon and there is no way to avoid it.

Children today attain information from much more sources, which makes parents no longer the only authority, and they gradually lose their influence. In the past, children mostly acquired basic knowledge of themselves and the world around them from their parents, but today, with the help of the Internet and other media, children can get access to anything that they find interesting and it seems like there is no need to turn to parents for help. Some of them even trust the Internet more than they trust their parents, and no matter what their parents tell them, they would go online to check the information by themselves.

Also, advanced means of communication provides children with countless listeners, who replace parents as consultants and advisers. Children 50 years ago might have no choice but to share their happiness and sorrow with parents for they had no other outlets, not even telephones, at home. But today, the Internet connects people around the globe, so that they feel like they live in a huge online community. They can meet and talk without being blocked by time and distance. Parents, therefore, now play a secondary role in the influence of a child because of these new options. Many of the parents will even tell you that they have no idea what really bothers or confuses their children.

Finally, I would like to talk about the changes that modern means of transportation invites. With the frequent use of cars, trains and even airplanes, young people tend to go to bigger cities and better countries for a better life, so they no longer live with their parents for a long time like they did in the old days. The truth is that many young people, in search of better education or jobs, would go to a new environment without parents beside them, and during these years they do not even visit their hometowns once. Under these circumstances, they are more likely to be influenced by people around them like their colleagues or classmates. Parents gradually become “strangers” with whom they might not even be able to get along well after leaving home for several years.

Technology has brought us many changes and the decrease of parental influence is one of them. Whether we like it or not, this trend will continue in the future. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 18: Should the government support artists or should artists support themselves?

Artists are very special people who do not seem to fit the norm of any other main stream professionals. Many people feel that they cannot fully understand how or even whether they contribute to the society. Some people even claim that there is no need for the government to waste money on supporting them. I, however, believe this is a huge misconception. Actually, the government should allocate budgets for supporting artists for many reasons.

Artists and their works are what **make a nation popular and adored**. Throughout history, achievements of art and music have always been seen as the soft power of a nation and they, to some extent, determine the nation's status in the international society. People admire France because of its Palaces decorated with masters' paintings; people travel to Italy to see statues created by geniuses; my friends and I choose to attend universities in the US for we have been influenced by American movies and music ever since we could remember. If governments refuse to support artists, it is no different from deciding to cut a country's most powerful non-political influence.

Since artists cannot always support themselves, they need the help from governments at times. Unlike other professionals, artists do not always get paid for their work. **It seems that average people might never be able to understand or appreciate what artists do before they get famous, which led to countless tragedies in history:** musicians and artists starved to death without enjoying the glory and wealth they deserved for creating wonderful pieces of art. If the government is as shortsighted as most average citizens and do not support artistic talents, some artists would have no choice but giving up their dreams and goals in order to survive.

Some people may wonder why it should be the government, not others, to support artists. Of course it is always welcomed that other private sources of funding are willing to support such a cause. **The government, however, is still in the best position and has the biggest capacity and possibility to assist them in a sustainable way.** A musician or movie maker may be lucky enough to have a wealthy businessman as a sponsor, but what about many other his or her colleagues? It is for sure that **no individual or company will be able to provide all of them with the necessary assets and resources, and most importantly-- policies.** From this perspective, the government seems to be the only one that artists can rely on for sustainable support.

From what have been discussed above, it is easy to conclude that artists need their governments as their supporters and governments also need their artists as their contributors to soft power. Any government that is blind to this fact will miss out on huge benefits and countless opportunities. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 19: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The government should spend more money on improving young children's education than on improving university education.

The quality of education, in some ways, shapes the future of a nation, so every government pays close attention to it. Nowadays, some people claim that young children's education deserves more attention as well as more funds from the government than college education due to its greater influence. However, this statement is not convincing. Actually, since these two stages of education are all indispensable in our life-long education, they deserve equal attention as well as equal money.

Young children's education lays groundwork for their higher education by teaching them how to learn and what they are supposed to learn. In primary schools, children are taught how to read, how to write, how to ask relevant questions, as well as how to use different tools like dictionaries and the Internet to look up information. They are also instructed and trained by teachers about how to memorize efficiently so as to get good scores on tests. These are basic learning skills which are necessary for their college education. Plus, young children's education increases their self-knowledge, making them realize their weaknesses and strengths, so that they can make more informed choices in deciding what they want to study in the future. Many people would avoid subjects that they were not good at even in primary schools when deciding which major to study or which job to take. From this perspective, young children's education is the cornerstone of their further education.

University education also serves as an irreplaceable part in the course of many people's lives and it provides things that are not available in earlier education settings. Students in college will be able to prepare for their careers by attending specialized courses and taking internships. They are equipped with skills to use professional software and to operate certain instruments and machines. They also gradually know the path of their career development and have their plans for the future. Besides having classes and internships, students in college and university also attend social activities which improve their skills of making friends with strangers, art of persuasion in a group setting, and ability of giving presentations in front of an audience. Such skills are quite essential not only at work but also in life. Accordingly, we can say that college education prepares students for their lives in the real jungle of the competitive world.

It is quite obvious that young children's education and university education play different roles in our process of learning and growth, and it would be unwise to say that one of them deserves more attention and funds than the other does. (Written by Zirui Wang)

Real Test Topic 20: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Watching movies or reading books is a better way to relax than doing physical exercises.

People today are usually under heavy pressure and they figure out different ways to reduce stress. Many claim that watching movies or reading books is a better way to relax in comparison with doing physical exercises. However, I do not think it is always right. Actually, people will have different preferences under different circumstances and we cannot say that one way is always better than another.

Reading books or watching movies can be the most ideal option when people feel physically tired, and they may also be the only possible choices when people are in tiny space. No one likes to play sports after taking transports for long hours or climbing a high mountain, because such activities have already made them use up their physical energy. Under such circumstances, watching movies or reading books allows their brains to work actively without making their bodies more exhausted. Plus, sometimes people are just limited by their surroundings so that they cannot do exercises. For example, if they are on buses or planes, they cannot even do stretches freely, not to mention jogging or playing basketball. On the contrary, reading books and watching movies do not require much room, nor do they interrupt people around us, and that makes them perfect leisure activities during a long boring journey like an international flight.

When people are mentally exhausted, doing physical exercises will be preferable, and it can also be a nice choice outdoors. After taking a long course or working on a complicated problem, people may feel that they do not want any more information for their brains and all they need is to get relaxed and unwind. Jogging or swimming, on such occasions, can serve well as stress relievers; reading books or watching movies, however, will only make people who are tired of brainwork feel worse. In addition, exercises can be done easily outdoors; on the contrary, reading books or watching movies usually happens inside houses with necessary stuff like a book or a lap-top. However, we do not often use an iPad to watch movies on the seashore where everyone is playing games, and since we do not need to worry about interrupting others, playing volleyball or building a sand castle would be quiet fun and enjoyable.

People choose different ways of relaxation when facing different situations. Since all situations are unavoidable in our daily lives, it would be illogical to say that any type is better than another. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 1: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? At universities and colleges, sports and social activities are just as important as classes and libraries and should receive equal financial support.

Universities and colleges focus their budgets on different aspects, providing students with a better environment to learn and to grow. Some people suggest that classes and libraries deserve more money than other aspects since the main purpose for most students to attend college or university is to be educated. However, I think this is a misunderstanding. Education does not only happen in classes and libraries, and it also happens when students play sports or attend social activities. Therefore, it would be rigid to say that classes and libraries are more important or they deserve more funds.

Students can increase their knowledge of certain careers in classes, and they also learn a great deal about how to study all by themselves in libraries. College students take specialized courses and prepare themselves for the competitive job market, because they know that having special skills can help them gain the upper hand while hunting for jobs. They listen to professors, do experiments, and prepare for exams and papers, so they will get relatively skillful and knowledgeable for specific jobs when they graduate. That is one of the most common reasons for students to go to college. Also, since students cannot be easily satisfied with what their professors teach in classes and professors are not always available to answer their questions, libraries become places where students go most frequently for references. Students can read books about a wide range of topics and broaden their horizons. Without additional information that students acquire by reading in libraries, they can never be fully prepared for challenges ahead.

Playing sports teaches students lessons about how to cooperate, and social activities improve their social skills. Cooperation is now needed everywhere and one of the best ways to learn about it is to play sports. Students who play sports more often will be more likely to know about the importance of respect and tolerance, and they will also be good at dominating a sentiment. Playing sports makes people less selfish by showing them the negative effects that selfishness can cause, and it also teaches people how to communicate with others efficiently because wasting time often means the loss of the game. In addition, other skills that interpersonal communication requires will be trained when students get involved in social activities. Club activities provide students with opportunities to expose themselves to people of different races and backgrounds, teaching them about how to start a conversation friendly and how to end one politely. Without such lessons, students are unlikely to survive the competition after graduation.

Students become professionally knowledgeable and skillful by taking classes and studying in libraries; they also grow socially experienced and prepared by playing sports and attending social activities. Both aspects deserve equal attention as well as equal funds. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 2: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Always telling the truth is the most important consideration in any relationship between people. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Throughout human history, seeking truth has always been a crucial part of human desire, for they consider it to be the key of knowing and changing the world. Some people would even go so far as to say that they would rather die than be denied the right of searching for truth. But is truth always good in any situation for any relationship? If we think about this question rationally, we realize that there are many exceptions.

It is undeniable that any healthy relationship should be based on honesty. Since most of us build relationships for love and support, the truth, in this case, means accurate information with which we can make free and wise decisions. People telling us what they think and how they feel can avoid us from letting opportunities slip or taking unnecessary risks. Even if sometimes we know that we would not like the truth, we still expect to hear about it from family members and friends so that we can correct mistakes and achieve greater success.

However, every coin has two sides, and it would be an exaggeration to say that telling the truth is above everything else in all circumstances. If truth does not serve the purpose of bringing a better life, then it is not the best choice. There are occasions when people close to us would prefer kind feedback than absolute truth from us. When wives ask their husbands the question “I am really getting old, aren’t I” after many years they married, everybody knows the answer should be “no, you haven’t changed a bit”. Under such circumstances, white lies would be considerate and welcomed.

Also, there are instances where telling the truth can cause misunderstandings. For example, if a friend of mine comes to me to ask for my opinions because she is hurt from a breakup, I would probably not tell her exactly how I feel or think about her complaints and vents. What my friend needs now are comfort and understanding. Telling the truth regardless of her feelings would be harsh and would definitely not bring a better outcome. When telling the truth is not only unnecessary but also hurtful, even keeping silence would be a better option than that.

Living a life is indeed an art form. Although telling the truth is desired in most situations for a healthy relationship, the exceptions still exist widely. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 3: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is more important to keep your old friends than it is to make new friends.

People today have various ways to meet strangers and to make friends with them thanks to the ever renewing technology on social networking. Therefore, making new friends seems to be much easier, and some people even start to claim that it is not as important and meaningful as it is to keep old friends, but is this really the case? Since new friends and old friends all have their own ways of making our lives happy, fulfilled and satisfying, **it would be a rigid approach to say that one outweighs the other.**

Making new friends is a natural part of life, for they take good care of us **when we move to new places** and encounter new environments, and they also bring new possibilities which may lead to better lives. Throughout our lives, we are often “newcomers” to a place or situation, and **it is our new friends who lend us a hand when old friends might be unavailable or too far to help.** Without new friends, even finding the nearest hospital in a city we newly arrived in could be a challenging task. Also, new friends show us different ways of thinking or doing things, and they can help us **widen social circles** by introducing us to their friends too. Some people become more tolerant by interacting with friends of different sorts; some people even get married thanks to new friends’ arrangements. With new friends, life is more likely to be safe and promising.

New friends are indeed of great importance and value, but it does not mean that we should pay any less attention to keeping old friends. When we hang out with old friends from the same place in a strange city, **a sense of belonging**, a feeling of nostalgia arises and that is something never happens with new friends. When we return to our hometowns, it is also our old friends who give us a warm welcome and make us feel that we are home. In addition, whenever we need a listener to share our sorrow or happiness, old friends would probably be the first we call on the phone, since they usually know much better about what confuses us and how to comfort us than new friends. **We may not be in the most frequent contact with our old friends, but they do have their own places which cannot be taken in our hearts.**

Friends’ importance cannot be determined by how long we know them, and each friend may play a unique role that can never be replaced by others. It would just be an unfair statement to claim that keeping old friends is more important than making new ones. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 4: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In 20 years there will be fewer cars in use than there are today.

Nowadays, people in growing numbers possess and drive their own cars as the living standard improves. Although some say that there will be fewer cars in use 20 years later, I am of the belief that the need for cars will continue to increase due to the development of society.

The development of technology will allow people to use cars more frequently to improve their quality of lives. Fifty years ago, owning a private car used to be a privilege enjoyed only by the wealthy in developed countries, but today, the middle class in many developing countries can afford private cars due to the lower prices caused by technological improvement in the car industry. As such, it is predictable that people twenty years from now will be much better able to afford using and maintaining their own cars. If this happens, then the number of cars in use cannot get smaller.

Some people claim that the improvement of public transportation system 20 years later will help minimize the use of automobiles; however, public transport has clear limitations that a car owner would not like to experience. No matter how much buses or subways improve, cars are more comfortable and convenient for obvious reasons. Without cars, taking a road trip would carry a different meaning. Having cars at your disposal means flexible schedules and mobility to any destinations at any time. Since public transportation cannot measure up to this level of convenience and efficiency, there is no reason to believe that the number of cars will decrease.

Environmentalists argue that cars will be less frequently driven for they pollute the air and contaminate the environment. For that reason, the governments will limit the use of them by law. I think this is an oversimplification of the situation. It is already a reality that cars are becoming more environmental-friendly, and in 20 years, the technology will be sufficient to address the environmental concerns that people have. In this case, there will be no good reason for the governments to forbid the use of cars. So why would average citizens stop driving if they are not required to?

In 20 years, cars will continue to play an important role in people's lives. I cannot agree with the point of view that there will be fewer cars in use then. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 5: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? People today spend too much time on personal enjoyment—doing things they like to do rather than doing things they should do.

Thanks to modern technology, our life today becomes seemingly much more enjoyable than in the past. Entertainment has become so available and accessible to everyone with such variety and choices. But this phenomenon is not always a blessing. The easy access to amusement sometimes makes people tend to do things they enjoy doing instead of doing things they are supposed to do.

Nowadays, people consume large quantities of interesting yet useless information due to the convenience of the Internet. The Internet is probably the most significant invention in the 20th century, and it enables anything newly happened anywhere to spread instantly. However, the easy access to information has created problems: many students are so obsessed with social networking sites that they cannot even go through a whole night's sleep without checking and replying the comments; employees are fascinated with different video clips that they watch them during office hours. Although they all know quite well that some information is just meaningless, they still cannot resist the temptation of a click.

The frequent use of portable digital devices is another important reason that people waste their time. In subway or a bus or a taxi, we can see people everywhere playing video games, watching some shows or busy texting. It is obvious that they are killing time, but they might have failed to realize that this time can be used more productively and meaningfully. To reflect a little or to study something interesting during those hours could bring benefits beyond measure. The more means of entertainment people have, the more they complain that they do not have enough time. That is probably why many students lock their PSPs before important exams.

Finally, the broader views that people have today also tempt them to find more excuses to relax and rest. In the past, people only celebrated their own traditional festivals, but today, they tend to celebrate every festival available around the world. 50 years ago, people in my country did not even know about Christmas or Thanksgiving, but now it is considered out of date or old fashioned not to join the big frenzy surrounding such as western holidays. With more excuses to play and party, people convince themselves to delay their work or study more frequently.

People today are lucky enough to experience and enjoy the rapid development of everything, but they also need to grow wiser to make good use of the new changes as well as their own time. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 6: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Life today is easier and more comfortable than it was when your grandparents were children. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

The rapid social and technological progress has brought with it many changes. Some of these changes are positive, but there are also negative ones. Some improvements that our grandparents did not have when they were our age are meant to make our lives easier and more comfortable, yet they usually turn out to cause troubles more efficiently than they solve problems.

Life today is much **more stressful** than it was when our grandparents were children. As medical and agriculture technology improves, our society now has to accommodate a much larger population, and this makes people today face much **fiercer competitions**, even though they are far better educated in general than ever before. My grandfather got his first job as a primary school teacher when he was seventeen, though he did not even finish high school. Today, it would not be something outrageous to hear that people with college diplomas lose their jobs or never find one.

When our grandparents were young, their personal lives would not be interrupted by phone calls and emails like today. The invention and the spread of telephones and computers make people so easily reachable, no matter when they are at home or on a vacation anywhere. That is probably why many people would like to turn off their cell phones when they try to stay alone. In the past, however, our grandparents **enjoyed a much better quality of life, for they had more time as well as better moods to stay with families**, enjoy leisure activities, and pursue private interests.

Another progress which makes life today more complicated and exhausting is the advancement of transportation. Since airplanes and automobiles can now go much faster and further, people travel more frequently than ever. More students go study abroad and more businessmen travel around the globe, and this means that they will have to be away from families and friends for longer periods of time, which creates problems like deeper generation gap, loss of friendship, and even divorce. People today would find it harder to keep relationships which seemed to be unbreakable in the past.

In most ways, life today is better than it was when our grandparents were children, but it also meets setbacks and becomes harder and more troublesome in other ways. It is not that progress is not good; it is just that we still need more wisdom to benefit from it instead of being hindered by it. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 7: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is more important for students to understand ideas and concepts than it is for them to learn facts.

To be someone who is considered well-informed or educated has never been an easy task, since there are too many ideas and concepts to understand, and also, too many facts to memorize. Some people claim that ideas and concepts are of greater importance since they are more connected to the use of knowledge than facts. However, this statement does not cover the whole story. In fact, knowing “why” and “how” is as important as knowing “what”. Facts is the basis of ideas and concepts, and ideas and concepts help one dissect and understand facts.

Concepts and ideas teach us how to apply facts we memorize in reality, and they can also help us memorize better and more efficiently. All foreign language learners know that simply remembering vocabularies and sentence structures does not make them effective communicators. They need to understand the differences between expressions with similar meanings or looks so as to avoid mistakes like replacing “important” with “significant” everywhere when writing and speaking. Without such understanding, reading and listening tasks will also be challenging, for they cannot even distinguish “possibly” from “probably”. In addition, understanding ideas and concepts makes people memorize things systematically and thus more easily. After memorizing expressions about a certain topic like the Rainforest, we might not be able to give a speech on it, but reading an essay about it can familiarize us with not only the facts about rainforest but also the accurate expressions of many relevant terms such as the Canopy and the Understory.

Likewise, accurate memorization of facts is the guarantee of successful use of concepts, and with facts it is more likely for us to understand concepts and come up with ideas. When doing math, one must remember all the formulas and theorems; when giving a speech on a historical event, one is supposed to know every single name of important people and the times when significant events happened. Otherwise, they would lack the basic information to complete their tasks or to convince others, and thus they may fail to get good scores on exams which usually test their memorization on facts. Also, since most ideas and concepts are based on observing and analyzing facts, memorizing more enables us to understand better. If we read and remember historical events well, then we may realize that similar stories tend to happen time and time again throughout civilization. These stories remind us to avoid mistakes, and such lessons are usually much more impressive than words and lectures from teachers.

To study and not contemplate the acquired knowledge is a waste of energy, while to contemplate but to not immerse in your studies is potentially dangerous. Understanding and memorizing are both necessary and irreplaceable parts of learning and it would be illogical to claim that one is more important than the other. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 45: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In the past, young people depended too much on their parents to make decisions for them; today young people are better able to make decisions about their own lives. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Throughout human civilization, parents have always been the advisers of their children. However, the rapid development of technology and society that has occurred over the past few decades quietly changed everything. Nowadays, children are much better able to make decisions on their own than ever before.

People in the past tended to seek help and advice from their parents if they had problems with their jobs, but now they have **other access to information**. Before deciding to take a job, a person needs to know whether it suits him or her and how does it feel to do the job over long years. Without the information from the Internet as well as newspapers and magazines, people in the past had no choice but to listen to their parents, and that is why many people took their parents' jobs or jobs that are similar to their parents'. Today, they go online to get information that they need, and such information makes them choose differently. Some of them would even ignore their parents' advice because they seem to have narrow views and cannot keep up with the changes of the world. From this perspective, we can say that children today are more capable of making decisions about jobs by themselves than in the past.

School kids also become much more independent and are less likely to follow their parents' instructions like before. **Children today know much better about how to behave because there are so many celebrities that they can copy**, and this makes them tired of listening to their parents about what to dress and how to pose for a photo. They make decisions quickly by observing their peers and famous entertainers and athletes, and sometimes they even want to make decisions for their parents when it comes to trend in fashion. In the past, there were much fewer opinion leaders, thus children would value their parents' advice much more than today. Also, since children today have more teachers as their sources of information, they naturally have values different from their parents'. The better education a child receives, the more difficult it will be for parents to convince or persuade him or her.

Although parents still play an important role in their children's decision making process, they have to face the fact that their influence has been considerably declined due to the rapid social and technological changes. As information of all kinds becomes much more easily available, making wise decisions without parents' help is no longer something impossible. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 47: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is important to know about events happening around the world, even if it is unlikely that they will affect your daily life. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

When watching news, we usually pay more attention to what we think is closely related to our daily lives. Grown-ups are interested in politics and economics; students are fond of sports and entertainment. However, some people today suggest that we should also be well informed about events that seem to have nothing to do with our lives, and I think their point makes sense in many aspects.

Since all the things in the world are connected with one another, we honestly cannot say that something can never affect our daily lives. What does life in the United States look like might not concern us before we decided to study there, but knowing the country's history and modern culture will definitely help foreign students get along well with local classmates and teachers. The relationship between the governments of two nations also seems to be irrelevant to our lives, yet it could turn out to influence the chance we get visa from embassies. Life is full of unexpected occasions. Something which had nothing to do with us yesterday may become the decisive factor that can determine our future in a matter of hours. Being well informed helps people get well prepared for any possibility. From this perspective, people watching news related to their daily lives only are short-sighted and will be unprepared for the ever changing society.

Besides getting ready for changes, people should also watch news, even if it does not affect their daily lives, for social purposes. Love affairs of celebrities could not possibly bother us from any perspective, yet they are very popular topics that are brought up during normal conversations. The beauty of chatting about such kind of topics is that they are not part of our life, so there is no need to worry about offending someone or making others feel uncomfortable. Thanks to these topics, people can start an interesting conversation and have a good time together. This can bring them not only good moods but promising future as well. Teachers can relate well to students by knowing much about their favorite entertainers and athletes; employees can have a closer relationship with their bosses by discussing the sport games they both like. Sometimes, our life can be affected positively by seemingly irrelevant things because we know how to make good use of them.

Life is full of surprises and we should be prepared for any circumstances. Being well informed about what is happening around the globe, no matter it seems to have something to do with us or not, gives us advantages to adapt and to fit in. Something that important can certainly be considered necessary. (Written by Zirui Wang)

TPO 48: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Because modern life is very complex, it is essential for young people to have the ability to plan and organize. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Our lives today are hectic—there is always so much work to do, yet the time is forever limited. Being capable of multitasking, therefore, becomes one of the necessary qualities that people need to survive and thrive in this competitive society. That means, without the ability to plan and organize, no success can be achieved these days.

Being able to make good use of time and resources helps people get attention and opportunities at work. Even before they became permanent employees of a company, recruit managers would have already started testing them on their ability of handling several tasks at once. They would be required to participate in group discussions, or they would be given an over-whelming amount of work to finish in a very short time. A successful business requires extremely high efficiency. People who can deliver that get hired, and employees who cannot guarantee that get fired.

At schools, colleges and universities, students are not leading a more leisurely life by any means. They need to deal with countless exams, papers, experiments and presentations to maintain high GPAs, and things will become even tougher if they happen to have a plan to study abroad. Planning to study abroad means they should also handle tests like TOEFL, GRE or SAT simultaneously. Without the ability to plan and organize well, students cannot even keep healthy due to the lack of sleep, not to mention being admitted by their dream schools.

Even when people get back home on weekends, they need organizational skills to keep a good relationship with families and friends. Not being able to show up frequently will sometimes make our parents upset about us; hanging out with friends too little will probably make us isolated; if we have both parents and children or friends and lovers, then our chances of making people whining can increase dramatically. That is why many of us never feel truly rested after a long weekend. Even during our leisure time, the ability to plan our schedules skillfully remains crucial.

Since we are living in a world more complex than ever before, the ability to plan and organize becomes increasingly important to everyone. Without it, there can be no success at work, at school and in daily life. (Written by Zirui Wang)

1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Advertising is the main cause of people's unhealthy eating habits.

Advertising can be seen everywhere in today's society and it seems to have powerful influence on everyone. Some people even attribute a lot of their unhealthy eating habits to the prevalence of various food advertisements; however, I believe they have gone too far to think so.

One of the most common unhealthy eating habits is binge eating, which clearly has little to do with any advertisement, since no advertisement encourages people to binge eat. What makes people consume more food than they are supposed to could be anything scrumptious that is so hard to resist or just the persuasion from our friends and families. Also, when we feel extremely upset or cheerful, food can be something we rely on for distracting ourselves from pressure or having a celebration. It is obvious that advertisements are not involved under these circumstances.

Another popular eating habit that harms people's health is going on very strict diets for losing weight, and this again is not caused by commercials. Actually, this form of eating habit is more common among women. For many of them, being slimmer means being more beautiful and attractive, and that will make them more confident in life and at work. That is why some of them are willing to sacrifice by eating as little as possible in exchange for "better looks". In this case, they are actually motivated by their own desire for beauty and the better outcomes it might bring.

Finally, I would like to talk about irregular meal schedules, which are mostly seen among people who are too busy to pay attention to any advertising claims. Doctors cannot always eat at regular hours because they need to operate surgeries or whenever their patients need them to be present; journalists skip their meals from time to time when they follow up important news events; teachers cannot even drink water if they are in the middle of a lecture no matter when. These people suffer from hunger occasionally or even frequently because of their jobs, and they will never blame it on the influence of any advertisements.

It is not hard to see that advertisement is not even a cause for three most popular unhealthy eating habits people have today. How come it is the only main cause?

2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Movies and television shows made in foreign countries are usually more interesting and popular than those made in our home countries.

Throughout life, people inevitably watch movies and television shows and they tend to find some more interesting than the others. Some like foreign movies and TV programs, while others are more fond of domestic ones. After doing careful observation and analysis, I realize viewers' preference depends on their ages.

Younger generations (people under 50) are usually more interested in movies and television shows made abroad. To most of them, studying or working in a foreign country are part of the plan or at least a possibility, so they may take watching these movies and shows as an opportunity to have a taste of foreign languages and cultures. Plus, since knowing more about foreign countries helps them commend attention during normal conversations, imported perspectives indeed interest them more than domestic ones. As for movies and TV programs produced by their fellow countrymen, unless they have been proved to be extremely well made and popular internationally, few young people would be interested in watching one. It is just like that people hardly visit those famous tourist attractions in their hometowns unless they need to take someone around. It seems that people, especially young ones, do not take things that are easily available seriously.

Aged people (people older than 50), however, tend to prefer just the opposite of what young people like. Most elderly people would avoid watching movies or television programs made by foreigners not only because they have no intention to work or study abroad, but also because they are not proficient enough in a foreign language, and even if they are, they might still not be able to comprehend the plots due to their relatively poor understanding about foreign cultures. No one wants to waste time on things beyond their comprehension. That is why most aged people would rather watch local news that they think has a lot more to do with their daily lives. Information that they care about the most, like the food price changes in the local market or the schedule of central park renovation, could only be accessible in domestic programs, not in a foreign movie.

It is clear that young people and aged people have different views toward life, and thus their preferences on movies and TV shows will never stay the same.

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? If people want to truly enjoy their vacations, they should leave their cellphones home.

Cellphones now play an increasingly important role in modern life, for they have brought us so much convenience. However, some people claim that we should not take our phones with us all the time because they tend to keep us occupied and make it hard for us to enjoy wonderful moments in life, like a vacation. I cannot agree with them. As far as I am concerned, our vacations will be unimaginable without cellphones.

Cellphones were invented mostly for making phone calls and sending messages, and that means staying in touch with people we care about no matter where we are. Going on a vacation comes with expenses, and that money has to be earned by having a job. Leaving our cellphones home makes it impossible to know whether our bosses or clients need our help or service, and if we fail to provide what they need, our career development becomes less promising. I honestly do not see why that can make us enjoy our vacations more.

Most cellphones today are smart phones in which there are a lot of applications that we can use to have a convenient and enjoyable trip. We can use our cellphones to check whether there is any room available in a hotel that we want to live in; we can also rely on the GPS map in our cellphones to navigate ourselves in a unfamiliar city; even things like making a reservation in a famous restaurant requires no more than a few taps on the screen. Bringing our cellphones with us on a vacation will only make it a more pleasant experience, not the opposite.

Not only that, but our cellphones can also help us get by the boring hours we spend on a train or bus. People who refuse to take their phones on a trip sound like they hate to be occupied, but the truth is that we sometimes actually want to be occupied, for that makes time go faster. Not every one is a big fan of chatting with strangers on a train, and here is when our cellphones come in handy. Playing a video game, listening to a brilliant song, or chatting with friends on line could keep us busy and make traveling by oneself a lot easier.

Cellphones are not the reason that makes a vacation unpleasant, and instead, they, in most cases, are indispensable to having an enjoyable good journey.