

Ideas for IELTS Topics

Ideas, Opinions and Vocabulary for
IELTS Writing Task 2

Band 6.5 to 9

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From Simon: *Thank you for buying this ebook. By paying for it, you are helping me to continue developing free IELTS materials for the website ielts-simon.com. Good luck, I hope you find these materials useful.*

Who is this book for?

Many students have no ideas or opinions about IELTS writing topics. Even if your grammar is perfect, you will not get a high IELTS score if you do not know what to write. This book is for students who want to go into the writing exam feeling confident that they have excellent ideas, opinions and vocabulary for as many topics as possible.

How do you get an IELTS score of 7 or higher?

The key to a high score is not grammar, it is not your use of words like “moreover” or “in addition”, and it is not your use of phrases like “this is a controversial issue nowadays”.

To get a high score you need to use good ‘topic language’ (words and phrases that are related to the question topic). You need good ideas in order to answer the question well.

How should you prepare for IELTS Writing Task 2?

There is an enormous amount of advice on my website ielts-simon.com. Here is a summary of what I suggest:

- ***Spend more time preparing than testing.***
When you test yourself, you find out what your level is, but you do not learn anything new. You will not improve if you only write test essays. Before writing an essay, study the topic and prepare your ideas, opinions and vocabulary.
- ***Steal my ideas!***
If you only use the vocabulary that you already know, you will not learn anything new, and you will not improve. Practise linking my topic ideas together to write ‘perfect essays’. See the website for examples of how to do this.
- ***Use this book together with the website.***
The website ielts-simon.com contains lessons and videos that show you how to use the ideas from this book. You can speak to me there if you have any questions.

Contents

1. Advertising	Positives, negatives, opinions	Page 5
2. Animal Rights	Testing on animals, vegetarianism, zoos	6
3. Cities	Urbanisation, negatives of city life, pedestrian areas	8
4. Crime	Police and crime prevention, punishments/prisons, rehabilitation, capital punishment, community service, crime in the media	9
5. Education	Benefits, studying abroad, technology in education, education in developing countries higher education, home-schooling, bad behaviour in schools, corporal punishment, single sex education, streaming (grouping children according to ability)	11
6. Environment	Global warming, impact of humans on the environment, solutions to environment problems, waste/rubbish, litter, recycling, nuclear power	17
7. Family	Family size, working parents: negative effects on children, divorce, care for old people	20
8. Gender (Males and Females)	Gender and education, gender and work, women's and men's role in the family	22
9. Genetic Engineering	Positives, negatives, genetically modified foods	23
10. Global Issues	Problems in developing countries, how to help developing countries, immigration, multi-cultural societies, globalisation	24
11. Government and Society	What governments can do, public services, censorship, video cameras in public places, smart cards, disabilities	27

12. Guns and Weapons	Gun ownership and possession, police and guns, arms trade, nuclear weapons, armed forces	29
13. Health	Diet, exercise, governments' role, state health systems, private healthcare, alternative medicine, stress	31
14. Housing and Architecture	State housing, old buildings, modern/green buildings	34
15. Language	English as an international language: positives and negatives	35
16. Money	Money and society, consumerism	36
17. Personality	Happiness, success, nature or nurture	37
18. Sport and Leisure	Professional/competitive sport, sport salaries, sport and politics	38
19. Television, Internet, Phones	Positives, negatives, opinions, Internet, newspapers and books, mobile phones	40
20. Tourism	Positives, negative effects on environment, future of tourism	43
21. Traditional vs. Modern	Losing traditional skills, traditional customs	44
22. Transport	Traffic problems, traffic solutions, public transport, road safety	45
23. Water	Importance of clean water, water supply, water and politics, water should be free, bottled water	46
24. Work	Same job for life, self-employment, unemployment, unemployment benefits, work/life balance, technology and work, child labour	48

1. Advertising

Positives of Advertising

Advertising is a key part of modern business.

Companies need to tell customers about their products.

Advertisements inform us about the choices we have.

Advertising is a creative industry that employs many people.

Without advertising we would have less choice.

Without advertising there would be higher unemployment.

Advertising is a form of modern art.

People enjoy adverts.

Negatives of Advertising

Advertising manipulates people.

It aims to persuade people that buying a product will make them happier.

Advertisers focus on selling a brand image.

They use glamorous, successful people.

We now live in a consumer culture.

We are persuaded to follow the latest trends.

We are encouraged to associate certain brands with a higher status.

Advertisers often aim their marketing at children.

Children can easily be influenced by advertisements.

Children put pressure on parents to buy them things.

Opinions about Advertising

Advertising should be regulated.

Advertising aimed at children should be controlled or even banned.

Unhealthy foods should not be marketed in a way that attracts children.

Products that can be a risk to health should display warnings.

In some countries it is illegal to advertise cigarettes on television.

Warnings must be displayed on cigarette packets.

However, advertising is necessary in free market economies.

It creates demand for products.

Governments should only censor false information or products that are harmful.

2. Animal Rights

Arguments for Animal Testing

Animals are used in important scientific research.

It is necessary to do medical tests on new drugs.

Animal testing helps to advance medical and scientific knowledge.

Many important medical discoveries involved experimentation on animals.

Researchers aim to minimise the suffering that animals experience.

Testing for the cosmetics industry is now banned in many countries.

Arguments against Animal Testing

The benefits of research using animals do not justify the suffering caused.

There are alternative methods of research.

The lives of animals should be respected.

Humans have no moral right to do experiments on animals.

Arguments for Vegetarianism

Vegetarians do not eat foods that are produced by killing animals.

Many people choose a vegetarian diet for moral or health reasons.

A healthy diet is possible without eating meat.

It is unnecessary to kill animals for food.

A vegetarian diet may reduce the risk of diseases like cancer.

Many people question the treatment of animals in factory farms.

Arguments against Vegetarianism

Vegetarians do not eat a balanced diet.

In many cultures, meat is the main ingredient in traditional meals.

Meat-eaters argue that animals are below humans in the food chain.

It is completely natural for us to kill them for food.

Our aim should be to improve farming methods.

Farms should produce organic food.

Positives of Zoos

Zoos play an important role in wildlife conservation.

They can help to protect endangered species.

Zoos allow scientists to study animals and their behaviour.

Zoos are educational, interesting and fun.

Children, in particular, enjoy learning about animals.

Zoos provide job opportunities.

Negatives of Zoos

Zoo animals are kept in artificial environments.

They are kept in cages or have limited space.

Zoo animals rely on humans.

They lose the freedom to hunt for food.

The best way to save endangered species is by protecting natural habitats.

Some people believe that zoos are unethical.

Zoos exhibit animals with the aim of making money.

We have no right to use animals for entertainment and profit.

3. Cities

Reasons for Urbanisation

People move to cities in search of job opportunities.

Cities offer greater employment possibilities and a higher standard of living.

People migrate to cities from the countryside.

Traditional activities like farming need fewer workers nowadays.

Negatives of City Life

Life in cities has its drawbacks.

The cost of living is higher than in rural areas.

Some people do not manage to find work.

Housing is usually much more expensive.

Homelessness and poverty are common in cities.

There is a gap between the rich and poor.

Life in cities can be extremely stressful.

There are problems like traffic congestion and crime.

Cities lack a sense of community.

People do not even know their neighbours.

Cities are sometimes described as “concrete jungles”.

Pedestrian Areas

Pedestrian zones in city centres can improve the local environment.

Banning cars encourages people to walk or cycle.

Many European cities have built bicycle lanes.

Dependence on cars is linked to health problems like obesity.

People who walk or cycle regularly are generally healthier.

Pedestrian areas are safer and more attractive for both residents and tourists.

4. Crime

Police and Crime Prevention

The job of the police is to catch criminals.

They must also prevent crime and make communities safer.

There should be an increase in the number of police officers on the streets.

Police officers should be seen as part of the community.

They should be involved with education and prevention.

The police should be in close contact with schools.

They should focus on young people who have dropped out of school.

These teenagers may become involved with gangs.

Punishments / Prisons

Fines are used as punishment for minor crimes.

If the crime is more serious, prison is the most common punishment.

Some criminals pose a threat to society.

They are put in prison to ensure the safety of other citizens.

Negatives of Prisons

Criminals are put together.

They make friends with other offenders.

Many prisoners re-offend when they are released.

A criminal record makes finding a job more difficult.

Rehabilitation

Another aim of prisons is rehabilitation.

Prisoners receive education or vocational training.

Prisoners should learn personal skills and specific job skills.

Punishment could make prisoners' behaviour worse.

Rehabilitation aims to make them better citizens.

Rehabilitated prisoners are less likely to re-offend.

Capital Punishment

Supporters say that capital punishment deters crime.

Fear of the death penalty stops people from committing offences.

The death penalty shows that crime is not tolerated.

It is a form of revenge.

The cost of imprisonment is avoided.

The offender cannot pose a threat to others.

Against Capital Punishment

Innocent people could be wrongly convicted and executed.

Crime rates are not necessarily reduced.

Many criminals do not think they will be caught.

Capital punishment is not a good deterrent.

Executing prisoners creates a violent culture and encourages revenge.

We have no right to take another human life.

Community Service

Community service is a way to reform offenders.

It could be a solution to prison overcrowding.

It avoids the cost of imprisonment.

It makes offenders useful in their local communities.

They are required to clean streets or talk to school groups.

Offenders repay their community.

They avoid the negative influence that prison can have.

Against Community Service

Community service is not a sufficient punishment.

Criminals should be locked up, away from their victims.

Crime in the Media

Crime is one of the main subjects of most news programmes.

The mass media focus on violent and sensational crimes.

This leads to fear of crime among the public.

Sensational stories attract more viewers or readers.

The media report crime stories in order to increase their audience.

5. Education

Benefits of Education

Education gives people knowledge and skills.

People with qualifications are more likely to find work.

They can earn a higher salary.

They can contribute positively to society.

Schools aim to teach young people moral values such as tolerance and sharing.

Schools prepare children to be members of a society.

Benefits of Studying Abroad

Foreign institutions may offer better courses.

Many students want to attend a prestigious university.

The best universities employ teachers who are experts in their fields.

Qualifications gained abroad can open the door to better job opportunities.

Living abroad can broaden students' horizons.

Overseas students are exposed to different cultures and customs.

They become more independent.

They are responsible for cooking, cleaning and paying bills.

They will learn a foreign language.

Drawbacks of Studying Abroad

Living and studying abroad can be difficult.

Students have problems with paperwork such as visa applications.

The language barrier can be a problem.

Students have to find accommodation and pay bills.

Studying in a foreign language is challenging.

Living alone in an unfamiliar culture can cause homesickness.

Technology in Education: Advantages

Technology is a powerful tool to engage students.

Technology can make lessons much more interesting.

Students can do research using online resources.

Students can study at their own pace.

Adults can take distance learning courses.

Students can study whenever and wherever they want.

Students also learn skills which are useful for their future jobs.

For example, they learn to write reports using a word processor.

Technology in Education: Disadvantages

People rely too much on computers.

Young learners do not become proficient in some basic skills.

They use word processors with spell-checkers.

Their handwriting and spelling may suffer.

People should be able to write a letter by hand.

Technology is no substitute for a real teacher.

Learners need a structured course.

An experienced teacher knows what materials to choose.

Computers are expensive to maintain and can be unreliable.

Technology in Education: Opinion

Institutions should supplement traditional teaching with the use of technology.

Technology is part of everyday life.

It can enhance a teacher's lessons.

Students can use online resources to help with homework.

Students must still learn to write by hand.

They should still use traditional sources of information such as books.

Education in Developing Countries: Problems

Children often have to work from an early age.

There are no schools in many areas.

Families do not have access to books or computers.

Literacy rates are often low.

People in developing countries need knowledge and skills.

Education is the key to improving the economy of these countries.

Education in Developing Countries: Solutions

Developed countries could help developing nations by providing money.

They could invest in schools and technology.

They could supply the funds to build schools and pay for teachers.

Children need to have access to free schooling.

Computer equipment could be donated.

The Internet can expose students to a world of knowledge and information.

Governments should make education compulsory for all children.

They should encourage parents to send their children to school.

Governments of developed and developing countries must work together.

Higher Education: Advantages (also see “Benefits of Education”)

There are many benefits to going to university.

A degree can open the door to better employment prospects.

Economies are becoming increasingly knowledge-based.

Most jobs require specific knowledge and skills.

Skilled workers are needed for sectors such as information technology and engineering.

Repetitive manual jobs are now done by machines.

Many factories have moved to developing countries.

Higher Education: Disadvantages

A healthy economy needs a wide range of workers.

Some manual workers will always be needed.

A university degree is not necessary for many service professions.

Practical training is more important in some industries.

In the UK, for example, there is currently a shortage of plumbers.

Their services are therefore becoming more and more expensive.

Advantages of Home-Schooling

Some parents decide to educate their children at home.

Some families live in isolated areas with poor transport.

Other parents are not satisfied with local schools.

Parents can respond to what their children need and how they learn best.

One-to-one lessons allow much faster progress.

The child can work at his or her own pace.

Discipline problems are avoided by home-schooling.

Disadvantages of Home-Schooling

Most parents do not have the time to educate their children at home.

One parent would need to give up work.

School subjects are normally taught by up to ten different teachers.

Most parents do not have the necessary knowledge or resources.

Private tutors are expensive.

Children will miss out on the social experience that school offers.

At school, children learn how to get on with each other.

Home-schooled children may lack social skills.

Schools offer a better overall educational experience.

Bad Behaviour in Schools: Causes

Bad behaviour is due to a lack of structure and discipline.

There are too many children in some classes.

Large classes are difficult to manage.

Many disruptive students come from an unstable family background.

Other parents are too lenient and spoil their children.

Some children are used to getting whatever they want.

Schools can do very little if they are not supported by parents.

Bad Behaviour in Schools: Solutions

Schools need a clear code of conduct.

Schools need a clear set of rules about behaviour.

They need to create a positive working atmosphere.

Teachers must have the power to punish disruptive students.

Schools should remove difficult children from lessons.

Schools need to work closely with parents.

Discipline could be lacking at home.

Parents must support the school rules.

They should take responsibility for their children's behaviour.

Corporal Punishment: Opinion

Corporal Punishment is not a good idea.

Physical punishment is a way of controlling children using fear.

This does not promote trust between adults and children.

Children who are punished physically may become shy or resentful.

Corporal punishment creates an atmosphere of fear and anger.

Single Sex Education: Advantages

Some people believe that male and female students should go to separate schools.

This is often for religious or cultural reasons.

Discipline problems might be avoided by separating boys and girls.

Boys and girls may learn in different ways and have different needs.

Students at single-sex schools often get better exam grades.

Single-Sex Education: Disadvantages

Separating boys and girls is unnecessary.

It is unhealthy in terms of children's social development.

Many coeducational schools are extremely successful.

A mixed-sex environment is more representative of real life.

Coeducational schools provide children with better social skills for adult life.

Advantages of Streaming (grouping children according to ability)

Some schools separate students according to their academic ability.

Teachers can work at the right speed for their students.

Teachers can plan more suitable lessons.

High-level groups may progress faster.

Lower level groups can benefit from a slower pace.

Some teachers and parents support streaming for these reasons.

Disadvantages of Streaming

Grouping by ability may have a negative impact on students.

Children do not want to be seen as less intelligent than others.

Streaming could damage students' self esteem.

They may lose motivation.

Students from wealthier families tend to be better prepared.

Children from poorer families may receive less support from parents.

Mixed ability classes encourage everyone to achieve their potential.

6. Environment

Global Warming

Gases such as carbon dioxide trap heat from the sun.

This causes global temperatures to rise.

This process is known as the greenhouse effect.

Human activity is a major factor in the rise of the greenhouse gases.

Factories and vehicles produce emissions and exhaust fumes.

Many developing countries are becoming industrialised.

The number of cars on our streets is growing.

Cheap air travel is allowing more people to fly.

Effects of Global Warming

Global warming will have a significant impact on our planet.

Rising temperatures will cause melting of the polar ice caps.

Sea levels will rise.

We can expect more extreme weather conditions.

Flooding and droughts may become more common.

Impact of Humans on the Environment

The increasing world population is putting pressure on natural resources.

Fossil fuels like oil and gas are running out.

We are destroying wildlife habitats.

We have cut down enormous areas of rainforest.

This has led to the extinction of many species of animals and plants.

Solutions to Environment Problems

Governments could introduce laws to limit emissions from factories.

They should invest in renewable energy from solar, wind or water power.

They could impose “green taxes” on drivers and airline companies.

Government campaigns should promote recycling.

Natural areas and wild animals should be protected.

Individuals should also try to be greener.

We should take fewer flights abroad for holidays.

We should take public transport rather than driving.

We should choose products with less packaging.

We should recycle as much as possible.

Waste / Rubbish

The amount of waste we produce has increased.

This problem is a result of our consumer culture.

Products are not made to last.

If something breaks, we throw it away and buy a new one.

Advertisers encourage us to buy the newest fashions.

Packaging is an important part of selling.

Most foods are sold in non-biodegradable plastic packaging.

The amount of household waste is growing.

This waste ends up in landfill sites.

Litter

People do not think about the consequences of dropping rubbish.

They assume that somebody is paid to clean the streets.

Plastic packaging does not break down easily.

Most of the litter seen on streets is fast food packaging.

Recycling and Other Solutions

Companies should make goods that last longer.

They should not use so much packaging.

Governments should be stricter about waste produced by companies.

They should put legal limits on packaging.

Consumers should avoid buying over-packaged products.

We should recycle and reuse useful materials.

There are collection banks for glass, paper and plastic bottles.

Households can use several rubbish bins to separate waste.

Recycling saves energy and raw materials.

Nuclear Power: Positives

There are several benefits to building more nuclear power stations.

Fossil fuels like oil and gas are running out.

Nuclear power is a relatively sustainable energy source.

It can be used to produce electricity without wasting natural resources.

It could replace the use of natural resources like coal, oil or gas.

Nuclear power stations are cleaner than fossil fuel power stations.

They could help to reduce carbon emissions that cause global warming.

The risks of accidents are being reduced.

Nuclear Power: Negatives

Opponents of nuclear power worry about the safety of power stations.

The building of new nuclear power stations is unpopular.

Nobody wants to live near one.

Nuclear waste disposal is a significant problem.

There is currently no way to decontaminate radioactive material.

People worry that terrorists could steal radioactive materials.

It is safer to produce energy from solar, wind or water power.

7. Family

Family Size

Families in many countries are not as large as they used to be.

We tend to live in small nuclear families rather than large extended families.

Parents tend to have fewer children.

Young children are no longer expected to work.

Nowadays both parents often work.

It costs so much to bring children up.

It is more difficult to raise a large family.

Working Parents (also see “Gender” topic)

Children and their parents seem to be less close nowadays.

Parents spend less time with their children.

Women traditionally stayed at home to cook, clean and look after children.

Nowadays both parents often work full time.

Children may be left alone, or with nannies or babysitters.

Busy parents have less contact with their children.

Many families no longer eat meals together.

Children spend more time with friends or surfing the Internet.

Negative Effects on Children

The lack of closeness in families can have a negative effect on children.

Many parents have no idea how their children spend their time.

Friends, television and the Internet become the main influences on children's behaviour.

Teenagers are influenced by peer pressure.

Some of them join gangs.

Juvenile delinquency is on the increase.

Parents should be more involved with their children's upbringing.

Young people need positive role models.

Divorce

In the past, divorce was unacceptable.

It was considered to be embarrassing for a family.

People stayed together for religious or family reasons.

Divorce is more socially acceptable nowadays.

It has become much more common.

Divorce can be extremely stressful.

Lone parents may face financial difficulties.

Many single parents have to rely on benefits paid by the state.

Divorce can have a negative effect on children.

Children from single-parent families are more likely to get lower grades or drop out of school.

The rise in divorce rates may be connected to some social problems.

Care for Old People

Caring for elderly people was traditionally the responsibility of families.

Adults had to look after their elderly parents.

A woman's job was to stay at home taking care of her family.

Nowadays, fewer elderly people are looked after by their relatives.

Residential homes provide care for large numbers of elderly people.

Some families are unable to look after elderly relatives.

Families tend to be smaller these days, and women often have full-time jobs.

Care homes provide a professional service for senior citizens.

Nurses are better trained than family members.

Care for Old People: Opinion

The best form of care for the elderly depends on the family situation.

It depends on whether family members have the time and resources.

We all have a responsibility towards the older people in our society.

Governments should invest money in facilities and training for care workers.

8. Gender (Males and Females)

Gender and Education

Men and women should have access to the same educational opportunities.

Males and females should be accepted onto courses according to their abilities.

It is wrong to discriminate against students because of their gender.

Gender should be irrelevant in education.

Students' achievements should depend on hard work and individual merit.

In the UK, there are similar numbers of male and female students in higher education.

Gender and Work

Men and women should have access to the same professional opportunities.

Both men and women should be able to pursue a career.

They should earn equal salaries.

They should be employed according to their abilities, qualifications and experience.

Traditionally, women have been restricted to certain roles.

They were often employed as secretaries or receptionists.

Nowadays, a range of occupations is available to both sexes.

Career success depends on individual merit.

Women's and Men's Role in the Family

Some people argue that a mother should not work.

She should stay at home and bring up her children.

The father should be the breadwinner of the family.

Others believe that both parents should share these responsibilities.

Working women can take maternity leave during and after pregnancy.

Many mothers continue to work after this period.

Many fathers and mothers share their parenting and domestic responsibilities.

They contribute equally to childcare, cooking and cleaning.

Some women may have better career prospects than their husbands.

Paternity leave and “househusbands” are becoming more common.

Traditional gender roles are gradually changing.

Families can divide roles and responsibilities in the most convenient way.

9. Genetic Engineering

Positives of Genetic Engineering

Genetic engineering is the practice of manipulating the genes of an organism.

It is used to produce crops that are more resistant to insects and diseases.

Some genetically modified crops grow more quickly.

Some drugs and vaccines are produced by genetic engineering.

It may become possible to change humans' genetic characteristics.

Scientists may use genetic engineering to cure diseases.

Inherited illnesses would no longer exist.

Genes could be changed before a baby is born.

It could also be possible to clone human organs.

We could all have replacement body parts.

Humans could live longer, healthier lives.

Negatives of Genetic Engineering

There are ethical concerns about human genetic engineering.

Parents might want to choose their children's characteristics.

This would be unnatural.

It would be unacceptable in most religions.

Soldiers could be cloned from the genes of the strongest people.

Clones might be used like robots to do certain jobs.

Clones might even be developed just for organ replacements.

Society and human evolution would change completely.

Currently, human genetic engineering is prohibited.

Genetically-Modified (GM) Foods: Advantages

Farmers can produce crops that grow bigger and faster.

Some GM crops are more resistant to disease or insects.

This could be important for food production in developing countries.

Faster growing cereals, fruit and vegetables will mean more profit.

GM foods can be modified to look perfect.

They may be more attractive to customers.

Genetically-Modified (GM) Foods: Disadvantages

There may be risks involved in the genetic engineering of foods.

GM crops might change whole ecosystems.

Food chains could be broken if crops are resistant to predators.

Organic foods are produced without chemicals or genetic modification.

Organic farming may be slower and more expensive.

However, the environment is not damaged by fertilisers or pesticides.

10. Global Issues

Problems in Developing Countries

Developing countries face a range of problems.

Standards of healthcare and education are low.

Life expectancy is usually lower than in developed countries.

There is a lack of infrastructure, employment and good quality housing.

Many people are forced to live in poverty.

Food, drinking water and basic medicines are in short supply.

How to Help Developing Countries

The best form of help for developing countries is development aid.

Richer nations can help by investing in long-term projects.

Governments and charities can help by building new houses and schools.

Globalisation may also help developing countries.

Multi-national companies are creating jobs in developing countries.

On the other hand, many people emigrate to find work in richer countries.

They often send money back home to their families.

This money helps to improve the standard of living in developing countries.

Immigration

Some people move to another country in search of a better life.

Many immigrants come from less developed countries.

Richer, industrialised countries may offer opportunities for employment.

Free healthcare and schooling are available in some developed countries.

Other people migrate to a foreign country to improve their academic qualifications.

Positives of Immigration and Multi-Cultural Societies

From an economic perspective, immigration can be extremely positive.

Many immigrants have skills that are needed in the country they move to.

Immigrants who find work contribute to the economy of their new country.

Many immigrants send money home to help family members.

Immigration also creates cultural diversity.

People of many different nationalities learn to live together.

This can help people to become more open-minded and tolerant.

Negatives of Immigration

Some people believe that immigrants take jobs that should go to local people.

Some immigrant workers work longer hours for less money.

Companies might pay lower salaries to immigrant workers.

Unemployment rates could rise if there are too many immigrants.

Opinions about Immigration

Immigration can help the economy of a country.

It can create multi-cultural societies.

However, immigration needs to be controlled.

In many countries, immigrants need visas or work permits.

Governments should stop companies from exploiting immigrant workers.

Foreign and local workers should have the right to equal pay and conditions.

Positives of Globalisation

Business is becoming increasingly international.

Multi-national companies do business across the world.

Companies like MacDonald's can be seen on high streets in most cities.

Goods are produced in one country and sold in many others.

A global economy means free trade between countries.

This can strengthen political relationships.

Globalisation can also create opportunities for employment.

It encourages investment in less developed countries.

It could reduce poverty in the developing world.

Negatives of Globalisation

Globalisation is not always beneficial to everyone.

Companies can move to countries where labour is cheap.

This creates redundancies, or job losses.

Employees cannot be confident that they have stable jobs.

Companies sometimes exploit their employees in developing countries.

Global trade creates more waste and pollution.

The Future of Globalisation

There should be global regulations for salaries and working conditions.

Governments should impose laws to protect the environment.

11. Government and Society

What governments can do

Governments provide public services like healthcare and education.

They support people who are living in poverty or unable to work.

Governments raise money by taxing working people.

They can spend money on resources and campaigns.

They can introduce new laws.

They can impose taxes.

They can raise people's awareness of issues (e.g. climate change/healthy eating).

They can influence people's habits and opinions.

They can create jobs.

They can regulate the activities of companies such as banks.

They can provide resources for schools.

They are also responsible for the security and well-being of their citizens.

They control armed forces and police forces.

Public Services

Governments pay the salaries of public sector workers like police officers and teachers.

The necessary money is raised by taxing people's income.

Free education and healthcare may be provided by the state.

Some governments control public transport systems and even TV channels.

In other countries, these services are provided by private companies.

Some people believe that competition between private companies is good.

It helps to improve quality while bringing prices down.

Other people think that essential services should be free.

Governments should pay for them.

Censorship: Opinion

Governments can censor what the public sees or reads in the media.

To a certain extent censorship is necessary.

We should use censorship to protect children from violent images.

Some computer games involve killing people or committing crimes.

The Internet also needs to be controlled.

Many websites show pornography and violence.

There should be age limits for websites and computer games.

Parents need to take responsibility for checking what their children watch.

It is impossible for governments to control everything we see.

Video Cameras in Public Places

The use of CCTV is becoming widespread.

Video cameras have been installed in many public places.

They are supposed to protect us and deter criminals.

Many people think that this surveillance violates our privacy.

The authorities could build databases with our pictures and identities.

We should not be treated like criminals.

Smart Cards: Positives

Governments will probably introduce a digital identification card system.

Smart cards will have benefits and drawbacks.

They could help to reduce crime.

They could hold personal information, such as DNA.

Digital bank cards could contain fingerprint information.

It would be very difficult for criminals to use a stolen card.

It would be easier for police to identify people and catch criminals.

Smart Cards: Negatives

Many people are worried about losing their privacy.

Governments could store all our personal and medical information.

This information could be used by insurance companies.

Employers could check our health records.

People with Disabilities

People with disabilities should be treated the same as everybody else.

They should have the same rights as other people.

They should have access to the same jobs as other citizens.

Discrimination against disabled people is illegal in many countries.

Ramps and lifts for wheelchairs should be installed in public buildings.

Support teachers can be employed to help children with learning difficulties.

12. Guns and Weapons

Why guns should be legal:

In some countries, people are allowed to own firearms.

Individuals have the right to protect themselves.

People can use guns in self defence.

This deters criminals.

Why gun ownership should be illegal:

There is a risk of accidents with guns.

The number of violent crimes increases when guns are available.

Criminals may be armed.

The police then need to use guns.

Suicide rates have been shown to rise when guns are available.

Guns create violent societies with high murder rates.

Why police should use guns:

Many criminals use weapons.

The threat of a gun can deter criminals.

Police officers can force a criminal to surrender.

It is easier to arrest someone and avoid physical violence.

The police may shoot violent criminals in self defence.

They can protect the public.

They can shoot an escaping criminal who poses a serious danger to the public.

Why police should not carry guns:

There is a risk of accidents and mistakes.

The police might shoot an unarmed criminal or an innocent person.

Accidents can happen in public places.

There are several alternatives to guns (e.g. tear gas, sprays and electric shock weapons).

Only special police units should use guns.

Arms Trade: Positives

The export of arms, or weapons, is an extremely controversial issue.

Governments of rich, industrialised countries sell arms to each other.

This industry creates jobs and wealth.

The trade of weapons may improve relationships between governments.

Arms Trade: Negatives

Weapons may be used in conflicts and wars.

The supply of arms could be responsible for deaths.

Governments are promoting war in order to make a profit.

Rich countries can influence the politics of other nations.

Nuclear Weapons

Nuclear weapons are capable of destroying whole cities.

A nuclear war between two countries would destroy both countries.

Nuclear weapons are used as a deterrent.

They prevent wars from starting.

Nuclear Weapons: Opinion

Nuclear weapons should be prohibited.

Governments should limit the production of nuclear weapons.

There is a danger of nuclear weapons being obtained by terrorists.

Nuclear weapons cannot be used against terrorist organisations.

Armed Forces: Positives

Armed forces provide security and protection.

They deter military attack by another country.

They can also be used to maintain peace within countries.

They can be used to give the police extra support.

Soldiers are also used to help in emergency situations, such as after a natural disaster.

Armed Forces: Negatives

Armies require a lot of funding from governments.

Too much money is spent on weapons and military technology.

This money could be spent on schools, hospitals and other public services.

13. Health

Diet

The human body requires a balanced diet.

An unhealthy diet can cause various health problems.

Obesity, diabetes and heart disease are on the increase.

Many people nowadays rely on fast food or pre-prepared meals.

These foods often contain too much fat, salt and sugar.

They are cheap to buy and very easy to prepare.

Many young people have grown up on a diet of convenience foods.

Populations in developed countries are increasingly overweight.

Exercise

Regular exercise is essential in maintaining a healthy body.

Exercise burns calories and helps to build healthy bones and muscles.

Doctors advise exercising at least three times a week for 20 minutes.

Most people nowadays lead a sedentary lifestyle.

We tend to walk less and do desk jobs.

Most adults relax by watching television.

Children play video games rather than doing outdoor sports.

In the past, people were more active in their jobs and at home.

Governments' Role

Governments have a significant role to play in reducing obesity.

More and more people, including young children, are seriously overweight.

They are at risk of heart disease and diabetes.

This situation will increase the burden on hospitals and taxpayers.

Hospitals rely on the government for money and resources.

Governments should promote a healthy diet and regular exercise.

There should be more time for sport on school timetables.

Unhealthy junk food should be banned from school menus.

People need information about what foods contain.

Food packaging must show the food's nutritional content.

The British Government recommends eating five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.

State Health Systems: Advantages

Good healthcare should be available to everyone for free.

State healthcare is paid by the government using money from taxes.

Everyone has access to the same quality of care and treatment.

Private healthcare is unfair because only wealthy people can afford it.

The National Health Service in the UK provides free healthcare for every resident.

Private Healthcare: Advantages

State hospitals are often very large and difficult to run.

Private hospitals have shorter waiting lists for operations and appointments.

Patients can benefit from faster treatment.

Many people prefer to pay for a more personal service.

Patients have their own room and more comfortable facilities.

Alternative Medicine: Positives

People are increasingly using alternative medicines to treat illnesses.

For example, acupuncture can be used to treat backache.

Herbal medicines can be used to treat allergies or viruses.

Many patients report positive experiences with these treatments.

Some traditional cures have been used for hundreds of years.

Alternative Medicine: Negatives

Many alternative medicines have not been tested scientifically.

They may have no beneficial effects at all.

They may cause unknown side effects.

People should trust the opinions of qualified doctors.

An illness could get worse without treatment from a doctor.

Stress

Modern lifestyles are increasingly stressful.

People work long hours with strict deadlines.

Our busy lifestyles mean we have less time to relax.

Unemployment is a major cause of stress.

Children may be affected by their parents' relationship problems.

Tests and exams can also cause stress.

How to Reduce Stress

Stress can be reduced by taking regular exercise and eating a healthy diet.

It is also important to get sufficient sleep and make leisure time a priority.

People should work less overtime and take regular holidays.

Schools have started to employ psychologists.

They can offer emotional support to students.

They can help students to cope with exam stress.

14. Housing and Architecture

State / Council Housing

In some countries the government provides state or council housing.

This helps people who cannot afford to buy their own house.

It can be argued that state housing creates dependence on the government.

People should not rely on the government to look after them.

People have no incentive to earn money and buy their own home.

Council properties are often made with cheap, poor-quality materials.

Old Buildings

Historic buildings are part of a country's heritage.

They should be protected.

Old buildings are often considered to be works of art.

They give character to cities and attract tourists.

They show us how people lived in the past.

We identify countries by architectural symbols like the pyramids in Egypt.

Governments should spend money on looking after historic buildings.

They need regular repairs and maintenance.

New buildings should be designed to complement them.

Modern / Green Buildings

Modern buildings should be designed to be environmentally friendly.

They should use less energy and produce less waste.

Modern insulation can make houses more energy-efficient.

Solar and wind power can be used to generate electricity.

Rainwater and waste water can be recycled and used to flush toilets.

Modern glass buildings take advantage of natural light.

15. Language

English as an International Language

English is widely used around the world.

It is becoming a global second language.

It is the dominant language of technology, science and international business.

International business meetings are regularly held in English.

The most important textbooks and journals are published in English.

The ability to speak English is a necessary skill in the modern world.

Negatives of English as an International Language

If one language is dominant, other languages may disappear.

The dominant language brings its own culture.

American culture has become popular around the world.

Other cultures may be damaged.

As an alternative to English, a new global language could be invented.

It would have no nationality or culture attached to it.

This could help to promote international peace and understanding.

Esperanto is an example of a language that was invented with this aim.

16. Money

Money and Society

Society has become increasingly materialistic.

People aspire to earn more money.

They want a bigger house or a better car.

We connect wealth and material possessions with happiness and success.

Brands like 'Armani' or 'Mercedes' are status symbols.

Advertising creates new desires and needs.

It persuades us to buy the latest styles.

Positives of Consumerism

Consumerism creates employment.

It helps to reduce poverty.

It encourages innovation and creativity in business.

We live in a global economy.

We have a better quality of life.

Negatives of Consumerism

Consumerist societies create more waste.

They use more natural resources.

They cause damage to the environment.

Consumerism creates a "throw-away" culture.

Advertisers tell us who we are and what we want.

Wealth does not lead to happiness.

Materialism causes greed and crime.

We should return to traditional values like sharing.

17. Personality

Happiness

Happiness means different things to different people.

It can be described as a feeling of pleasure or enjoyment.

People enjoy spending time with family and friends.

Hobbies, sports and games can be a source of fun and enjoyment.

Some people see money as a source of happiness.

Other people define happiness as something deeper.

In order to be truly happy it is necessary to live a good life.

We need to feel that we are doing something useful with our lives.

Some people get a sense of achievement from their work.

Others find happiness in bringing up their children.

Religion or a sense of purpose can also be a source of happiness.

Success

People define success in different ways.

Some people get a sense of achievement from raising a family.

For others, success is defined by wealth or status.

We often think of rich and famous people as being successful in life.

Millionaires like Bill Gates are considered to be successful.

They have risen to the top in their chosen professions.

For some, being successful means achieving personal or professional goals.

They see success as the result of hard work.

Success in any field requires long-term planning and effort.

Nature or Nurture

Some people believe that our personalities are determined mainly by genetics.

We inherit our abilities and talents from our parents.

Others think that our education and upbringing are more important.

We develop according to the influences around us.

Our personalities and achievements depend more on nurture than nature.

Many people argue that we control our own destinies.

We can shape our own personalities.

By working hard we can achieve any goal that we put our minds to.

Many successful people are “self-made”.

We are not limited by our genetic characteristics or upbringing.

18. Sport and Leisure

Arguments against Professional / Competitive Sport

Sport has become a business.

Professional sport encourages people to compete for money.

Many sports stars are only concerned about money and fame.

Some athletes take drugs in order to win at any cost.

Competitors are often selfish and rude.

They are not good role models for children.

All sports should be amateur.

Sports should be leisure activities rather than jobs.

People should do sporting activities for enjoyment and health reasons.

Taking part is more important than winning.

Arguments for Professional Sport

Professional sports are the same as any other business.

Many people are employed in the sports industry.

People should be able to use their talents to earn a salary.

Sports stars entertain millions of people.

Money is necessary to improve facilities and train athletes.

The level of professional sport is much higher than that of amateur sport.

Arguments for Competitive Sport

Competition is a natural instinct in humans.

In daily life we compete to get jobs or the highest grades.

Sports are a safe form of competition.

Competition is healthy because it pushes us to give our best.

Competitors and fans can release energy and aggression.

Supporters of teams feel a sense of belonging to a community.

Opinion: professional sport salaries are too high

Sports professionals earn too much money.

They do not provide a vital service.

Football players, for example, earn enormous salaries by simply kicking a ball.

We could all live happily without professional football.

Life would be difficult without doctors, engineers and other vital professionals.

Society does not seem to value these professions as highly as professional sport.

Sports salaries should be compatible with the wages most people earn.

Opinion: professional sport salaries are fair

It is fair that the best professionals earn a lot of money.

Sport is a multi-million-pound industry.

There is a large audience of sports fans.

Sports on television attract many viewers.

Sports stars have dedicated hours of practice to developing their fitness and skills.

Only the most talented among them will reach the top.

A sports career may only last 10 years.

Sports fans are willing to pay to support their teams.

Sport and Politics

Some people think that sport and politics should remain separate.

Governments are involved in the hosting of sporting events such as the Olympics.

These events attract investment and create jobs.

The Olympic Games are an advertisement for the host nation.

They attract huge numbers of visitors and sports fans.

Wealthy countries tend to hold these events.

Developing countries should be given the chance to become hosts.

19. Television, Internet, Phones

Positives of Television

Watching television is a good way to relax.

It is many people's favourite way to wind down after a hard day at work.

Television programmes can be entertaining and enjoyable.

Viewers have access to a huge variety of entertainment channels.

Television brings the best comedians, musicians and actors into our homes.

Programmes can also be informative and educational.

News coverage makes the public aware of events around the world.

Documentaries can make learning more interesting.

Negatives of Television

Television is having a negative impact on society.

Some people link violence on television with crime rates in the real world.

Children copy the behaviour they see on the screen.

Children are less healthy because they spend less time playing.

Advertisers direct their marketing at children.

Most programmes do not require much thought.

Watching TV is a waste of time.

Opinions about Television

Television has many benefits.

However, it can be addictive.

Children should play outside rather than sit in front of a screen all day.

Behaviour shown on TV can influence people.

Parents should choose carefully what their children watch.

Children should not be exposed to violence, swearing or sexual images.

Advertising during children's programmes should be strictly controlled.

TV companies should make more positive, educational programmes.

Positives of the Internet

There are many advantages to using the Internet.

It gives us instant access to information on almost any subject.

Shops and other services are now available online.

People can buy goods and services from the comfort of their homes.

The Internet is starting to replace other forms of entertainment.

It has revolutionised communication.

We can keep in touch by e-mail or instant messenger services.

Video messaging is becoming common for business meetings.

Negatives of the Internet

Many websites contain offensive content.

Some sites show violent or sexual images.

Parents find it difficult to control what their children see online.

They do not always know who their children are chatting to.

With so many websites it is difficult to search for good information.

Criminals increasingly use the Internet to steal people's money.

Internet Compared to Newspapers and Books

Newspapers and books are now published online as well as in print.

We can read the news in any language from any country in the world.

It costs nothing to publish or access information on the Internet.

The Internet allows anybody to publish their own writing.

Newspaper articles and books are written by professionals.

Professionals produce better quality writing than amateurs.

People still buy newspapers and books because they are portable.

People do not like reading from a screen.

Positives of Mobile Phones

The mobile phone is the most popular gadget in today's world.

Mobile phones have revolutionised the way we communicate.

We can stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues wherever we are.

Users can send text messages, surf the Internet, take photos and listen to music.

Mobiles have also become fashion accessories.

Negatives of Mobile Phones

Mobile phones can be a problem in some public places.

Ringing phones cause disturbances in cinemas and school lessons.

Some people are not aware that others can hear their conversations.

Mobile phones may also interfere with electronic equipment.

Their waves could cause damage to our brains.

Mobile phones can also be a dangerous distraction.

Using a phone while driving reduces the driver's concentration.

Mobile phones are a popular target for thieves.

Opinion about Mobile Phones

The benefits of mobile phones outweigh the drawbacks.

We need to use these phones with care.

20. Tourism

Positives of Tourism

Tourism is a popular leisure activity.

People go on holiday to relax and have fun.

Tourists can experience different cultures.

They can sunbathe on beaches or go sight-seeing.

Travelling abroad opens our minds.

We can learn to speak other languages.

The tourist trade is vital for some economies.

It creates employment in services like accommodation, transport and entertainment.

Some areas rely on tourism for their income.

Tourists spend money.

Tourism attracts investment from multi-national companies.

It helps to improve the standard of living.

Low-cost airlines are making it cheaper to travel abroad.

Negative Effects of Tourism

Tourism can have a negative effect on the natural environment.

The building of facilities and infrastructure can destroy the habitat of wild animals.

Beautiful beaches are spoilt by the building of hotels.

Tourism creates pollution and waste.

It puts pressure on local resources.

Local traditions and cultures may be endangered.

A rise in the cost of living affects local people.

The price of goods, services and housing may increase significantly.

The Future of Tourism

Governments should introduce laws to protect natural environments and local cultures.

Tourism should have a low impact on wildlife.

Renewable resources like solar or water power should be used.

Waste should be recycled.

Local businesses such as farms should be supported.

21. Traditional vs. Modern

Losing Traditional Skills

Because of industrialisation and global trade, many traditions have disappeared.

Global advertising encourages everyone to buy the same products.

Most products are now made in factories.

Machinery has replaced skilled human labour.

Factory work is boring and leaves people feeling unfulfilled.

Goods are produced very quickly and in large numbers.

Products are cheaper, which means that more people can buy them.

Examples

Clothes are mass produced in standard sizes.

People wear similar clothes, rather than traditional costumes.

Jeans and T-shirts are now worn throughout the world.

Historic buildings took skilled craftsmen years to build.

Modern concrete, steel and glass buildings are built in only weeks or months.

There are fewer people who can create hand-made goods.

Traditional Customs

Traditional customs are still important during weddings and religious festivals.

People wear traditional costumes and eat special foods.

It is important to maintain our different cultural identities.

We should celebrate festivals, teach traditional skills and protect historic places.

22. Transport

Traffic Problems

Traffic congestion is caused by commuters travelling to work.

Most people live in the suburbs outside city centres.

Commuters tend to travel at the same time of day.

They tend to travel alone.

Cars and road space are not used efficiently.

This causes traffic jams during the rush hour.

Traffic Solutions

In order to reduce traffic we should change our working habits.

The Internet can now be used to connect people.

More people could work from home.

Meetings can be held as video conferences.

Workers could be given flexible timetables.

Another solution would be to tax drivers.

Workers should share their cars and travel together.

In London, for example, there is a congestion charge.

This helps to raise money for better public transport.

Public transport needs to be reliable and efficient.

Positives of Public Transport

We need to reduce our dependence on cars.

Parking a car can be extremely difficult in big cities.

Well-designed transport systems are comfortable and convenient.

Modern public transport can be fast and cheap.

Public transport can help to reduce pollution in cities.

Investment in buses and trains will ease traffic congestion.

Buses can be given special lanes to avoid traffic.

Negatives of Public Transport

Public transport is often slow and unreliable.

Metro systems and trains are often dirty and crowded.

People feel like “sardines in a can”.

Cars are much more comfortable.

Road Safety

Driving while tired or drunk is extremely dangerous.

Mobile phones can be a dangerous distraction for drivers.

They draw the driver's attention away from the road.

The use of phones while driving has been banned in many countries.

Punishments are becoming stricter.

Television campaigns are used to remind people to drive safely.

Speed cameras have become more common.

Speed bumps are another form of traffic calming.

Many streets are designed with the aim of slowing traffic down.

23. Water

Importance of Clean Water

Water is an essential natural resource.

Humans need access to clean, safe drinking water in order to live.

Poor water quality is a major cause of disease and death in some countries.

Water usually needs to be treated before we can drink it.

Developing countries often lack the means to treat and supply water to citizens.

Developed countries tend to have much better sanitation.

Citizens have access to clean tap water.

Drinking water is not contaminated by sewage or waste water.

The supply of clean water would improve public health in many developing countries.

Water Supply

Urban life would be impossible without water supply systems.

These systems are massive engineering projects.

Many professionals are involved in their planning, construction and maintenance.

The supply and distribution of water are major concerns.

Water is becoming scarce in some countries.

Areas that suffer droughts often need to import water.

As populations grow, there is more pressure on water supplies.

This could lead to a water crisis.

Water and Politics

The supply of water is also an important political issue.

Huge amounts of water are needed for agriculture and industry.

The irrigation of crops accounts for a large proportion of water use.

A water crisis could lead to political conflicts or even wars.

Argument: water should be free

Some people believe that water should be free for everyone.

Governments should supply water to all homes at no cost.

Private companies should not be allowed to profit from this natural resource.

Money from taxes can be used to pay for water supply systems.

Argument: water should not be free

If water is free, people take it for granted.

They do not think about how much water they waste.

They leave taps running while washing or brushing their teeth.

If we have to pay for water, we will use it more responsibly.

Water supply systems are extremely expensive.

Investment is needed to maintain and improve them.

Private companies may provide a better service than governments.

If they provide an efficient service, they will make more money.

They will repair leaks to avoid losing money.

Bottled Water: Opinions

Some people carry bottles of water wherever they go.

For example, they take bottles of water to work or to the gym.

They believe that bottled water is healthier than tap water.

They also argue that it tastes better.

However, other people believe that we should consume less bottled water.

Plastic water bottles add to litter and waste problems.

Companies should not be able to make a profit from water.

It is unethical to make money by selling packaged water.

There is no difference in quality between bottled and tap water.

24. Work

The benefits of staying in the same job for life:

Employees have a stable career with one employer.

They have a good pension and health insurance.

Their salaries gradually increase.

They may be promoted within the organisation.

They demonstrate loyalty.

Experienced staff can be trusted with more responsibility.

They become part of a team.

There is a clearly defined path for development.

The benefits of not staying in the same job:

People often change jobs in order to further their career.

Another company may offer a promotion or a higher salary.

People who change jobs can gain experience.

They can learn different skills.

Changing jobs is interesting and challenging.

People can retrain in a different occupation.

In a fast-changing world workers need to be flexible.

People need to develop a range of experience and skills.

Self-employment

Nowadays, it is easy to set up a company.

The Internet provides a global marketplace.

Self-employment offers greater freedom than working for a company.

However, there are risks to starting a new business.

Self-employed people may face financial difficulties.

Many businesses fail to make a profit.

There is less stability in self-employment.

There are no benefits like pensions, sick pay and holiday pay.

Self-employment involves hard work, long hours and total responsibility.

Unemployment

Unemployment is a big problem for individuals, communities and society.

Some people are unable to find a job.

They may not have the sufficient level of education or qualifications.

They may find themselves homeless.

Unemployment causes frustration and stress.

Jobless people may become involved in crime as a means to get money.

The unemployed need careers advice.

Governments need to provide vocational courses and retraining.

Unemployment Benefits: Positives

Some governments pay unemployment benefits in order to help jobless people.

Unemployed people need financial support until they find a new job.

By claiming benefits they can continue to pay for their homes.

The benefits system helps to reduce poverty, homelessness and crime.

Unemployment Benefits: Negatives

Some people claim benefits rather than working.

They become dependent on the government.

They are not motivated to find a job.

The benefits system is a burden on taxpayers.

All citizens should work to earn a living and support themselves.

Receiving benefits affects people's self esteem.

Work / Life Balance

It is important to achieve a balance between work time and leisure or family time.

Too much work can result in stress and poor health.

"Workaholics" may neglect their families and friends.

People need to take regular holidays.

Companies should not expect employees to work overtime.

Nowadays, many people work part-time or have flexible working hours.

Technology allows people to work from home.

Many companies provide childcare facilities.

A good work/life balance can raise job satisfaction.

Happy, healthy workers are more productive.

Technology and Work

Internet, fax and mobile phone technologies have revolutionised working life.

Workers can communicate via e-mail, online networks and video conferencing.

Technology can connect workers in different countries.

It gives people more freedom.

It can also save time and money.

Some people believe that offices could disappear in the future.

Virtual online offices may replace them.

Child Labour

In some countries, children are exploited.

They do repetitive jobs for very low pay.

Children are often used in agriculture and factory work.

The employment of children is prohibited in other countries.

Many people think that children should be free to enjoy their childhood.

Governments should make education a priority.

They should build new schools.

They should supply the resources to educate children.

Children need to be given the knowledge and skills for adult life.



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