

TOPIC 1: Relationships and social networks



Individual long turn



dreamstime.com



1. Compare and contrast the two pictures.
2. Comment on the importance of personal encounters.
3. Evaluate the benefits and downsides of social media networks.

Useful vocabulary (see Topics 8, 14, 15, 18 and 20)

Types of family structures: nuclear, extended, single parent, blended, foster, adoptive, ...

Members: (grand)parents, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, (grand)child(ren), (grand)son/daughter, stepson/daughter, half-brother/sister, twins (twin brother/sister), cousin, father/mother-in-law, son/daughter-in-law, brother/sister-in-law, ... close/distant relatives, immediate family, an only child, ...

Marital status: married, single, engaged, divorced, ... married couple (husband and wife), unmarried man (bachelor), unmarried woman (single woman), fiancé(e), ...

Relations

Pros: take after sb., is the very image of sb., enjoy each other's company, get on well with sb., have a lot in common, keep in touch with sb., have quality time together (and apart), fall in love with sb. (fall for sb.), ...

Cons: not interested in sb.'s opinion/ideas, no time to talk about/discuss important issues, drift apart, lose touch with sb., fall out (quarrel) with sb., break up (end) a relationship, ...

Social networks: Facebook (Messenger), Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, WeChat, Pinterest, Snapchat, Skype, Vine, LinkedIn, ...

Social media vocabulary and phrases: check out an app(lication), start a blog, save document files in the cloud (cloud computing), social networks are available in multiple languages, enable users to connect with friends and relatives across borders, on an e-reader (device) you can store books, scroll through your newsfeed to see a meme (funny picture with words), use streaming media to watch live (sports) events, trolls should be reported because they harass people on social media, vloggers release videos which may go viral (a lot of people watch and share them), ...

Social media vocabulary

Advantages: stay connected/communicate/stay in touch with family members and friends through messaging/video chats/photographs; meet people from around the world (and make friends worldwide) without leaving the comfort of your flat/house/home; learn about news, current/future events; be in control of your feed (news stream provided over Internet); there is the opportunity to show off talents like your sense of humour or by creating photos/videos/pieces of music; educate yourself on various topics; attend live lectures/online classes; interact with others who share similar interests/ideas/opinions; employers find employees and vice versa; people are mobilized to vote in elections/change their opinions/help others (do social good through crowdfunding sites), ...

Disadvantages: too much use can result in lower interaction with family members/friends/co-workers/fellow students; overuse/addiction can affect people's mental health, i.e. they may feel unhappy/anxious/frustrated and isolated as their own life is not as "perfect" as of those portrayed in many feeds; fake news is spread rapidly; for some the pressure to look perfect and succeed may become unbearable; some are distracted from doing homework/hanging out with friends; children/teens may become a target for predators (individuals who commit sexual abuse) and hackers; victims of online bullying/cyberbullying/cyberharassment are scared/angry/depressed and may even commit suicide; inappropriate (improper) photos/videos/posts/comments made online by a student can cause problems (for him/her) years later; for chatting/communicating/updating the social status a lot of time is needed, ...

Model answer

Looking at the two pictures, the most conspicuous (noticeable) detail is that the first picture is a cartoon, whereas the second picture is a photograph. Both pictures show some kind of family life.

The cartoonist ridicules the silly behaviour of a nuclear family, whose three members are glued to their phones (look at their eyes!) – without paying attention to their meals or each other's company. He definitely mocks the trend in today's society to overuse social networks.

The extended family in the picture on the right is shown from the angle of a photographer. There are two children together with their parents, their grandparents and probably their aunts and uncles. All of them seem to enjoy the garden party immensely.

To my mind, relationships are important at any age, but personal encounters are especially important for young people. They create a sense of belonging when there are family gatherings such as the one in the picture on the right or when some friends meet after school/university lectures or work. In addition, stable relationships with partners promote self-esteem and influence mental and physical health. In general, it can be said that humans are social beings who need much warmth, love and care from the very beginning – throughout their whole lives.

Nowadays many people rely on social media networks in order to stay in touch with family members, friends and even business partners. Actually, that is not bad in itself! On the contrary, there are many other benefits: as a businessman/woman you need not leave your firm to settle a contract abroad, you can even have several conferences a day without being in a hurry for you are not jetting from one city to another; as a student you can take part in live lectures although sitting in your own study; moreover, everybody can interact with others who share similar interests, for example, photography and post the results in tweets or memes.

Nevertheless, social network users should be aware of the downsides: children and teens may become targets for predators and hackers, if they do not pay attention; they may also become victims of cyberbullying. In order to prevent this, parents and teachers should guide them along –

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especially when they are still minors under 12 (pre-teens). Grown-ups should also be careful not to spend too much time chatting and updating their social status. Besides, the lifestyles presented in some posts and blogs are curated (selected) and filtered, so any attempt to measure up can lead to disappointment or jealousy in a relationship. Therefore it is necessary to share real-life experiences with your partner (family/friends) and not only emoticons on social networks.



Paired activity

Your school has decided to launch a peer project on the topic “How to use social media responsibly”.

Discuss the following initiatives with your partner and rank them according to their importance:

- invite (media) experts
- establish a code of conduct at your school
- ask parents to monitor their child’s social media use
- form a group that helps “social media addicts”
- start offline activities at school

Model dialogue with useful phrases and questions

Introduction:

A: Our school (headmaster/headmistress) has decided to launch (start) a peer project on “How to use social media responsibly”.

B: I’ve heard about it. I think there are different initiatives possible and we are supposed to find the best ones.

Main part:

A: What about inviting some media experts?

B: That would be an excellent idea, but we could also invite some other experts, for example, psychologists. They could inform us about recent trends/the latest developments (in) ... /the best ways how to deal with social media responsibly.

A: What do you think of establishing a code of conduct at our school?

B: Mmh, is it really necessary to establish a code of conduct? I’m wondering who should work out the code and what the guidelines might be?

A: In my opinion, a code of conduct is absolutely necessary because a student of our school must act within the law and must show respect for the rights and dignity of others. The representatives of each class/form could/should work out some/the most important rules and all the pupils will have the chance to agree/disagree or even make suggestions for improvement.

- B: I see what you mean, but let's discuss the other points first. Should parents be invited at all or is this going to be too complicated (for all participants)?
- A: To my mind, parents should take their share of responsibility and they should be asked to monitor their child's social media use./Actually, I don't think that parents should be asked to .../I am strictly against the involvement of parents at the beginning/at all ...
- B: How about forming a group that helps pupils who overshare on/overuse social media? Wouldn't that be a good idea?
- A: That's a good approach, because it would also relieve the parents.
- B: The youngsters could meet at school in the afternoons and some older pupils (or even teachers) would be there to encourage them to use technology meaningfully.
- A: What do you think about starting offline activities at school?/Would offline activities be a good idea?
- B: Any idea would be good in order to free children and teens from their addiction and to promote access to new activities, such as sporting performance or chess.

Conclusion:

- A: Having talked about five initiatives, we have come to the conclusion that inviting experts comes first. Then we agreed upon forming a group for overusers as this would relieve parents. Starting offline activities at school comes in third place – the other two rank fourth and fifth. They are less important to us.
- B: I fully agree with you and think that parents should fulfil(l) their duties at home. For us at school, a code of conduct would be a last resort, whereas the other three seem to be extremely helpful in the project.



Additional tasks

- a) Make a list of offline activities that can be done at school/at home.

Look at:

Topic 5 *Types of sports, People, Equipment, Places, Pros and cons of sport*

Topic 6 *Educational institutions, Subjects, People, Facilities, Pupils' activities, Students' activities, Teachers' activities*

Topic 8 *Free time and leisure activities, Expressing likes and dislikes, Benefits of leisure activities*

Topic 13 *Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Literature, Theatre, Cinema, Music*

Topic 14 *Types of media, Newspaper/magazine sections and terms, Mass media*

Topic 15 *Forms of communication*

Topic 18 *Personal development/career, Family and friends, Hobbies/interests, Health/fitness, Adventure/travel*

Topic 20 *Youth culture/trends*

- b) What advice (no pl.!) would you give to social media addicts?

Look at: a)

TOPIC 2: Home and neighbourhood



Individual long turn



flickr.com

1. Compare and contrast the two pictures.
2. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living in rural and urban areas.
3. Speculate about future living trends.

Useful vocabulary

Types of homes: (semi-)detached house, terraced/row house, town/country house, block of flats, high-rise building/apartment block, skyscraper, concrete-steel building, penthouse, three-stor(e)/multistor(e)y building, mansion, manor house, farm house, cottage, bungalow, (fully-furnished) flat/apartment/studio, bedsit, condo(minium), mobile home, (log) cabin, ...

Features: (front/back) garden, hedge, (stone) fence, house made of bricks/stone/wood/concrete/pre-fabricated parts, half-timbered house (has wooden beams in the brick and plaster walls), thatched/tiled/metal/green roof, (rooftop) terrace/patio, balcony, porch, conservatory (greenhouse), basement/cellar, attic/loft, shed, garage, elevator/lift, ...

Rooms: hall, living room/sitting room/lounge, dining room, bedroom, (fitted) kitchen, bathroom, lavatory (toilet), study, pantry/larder, utility room, ...

Locations: urban/residential/rural/industrial/commercial area/district, in (down)town, pedestrian area/zone, in the city/suburb/village/neighbourhood/country, within city limits, on the outskirts, commuter/satellite town, on the coast/at the seaside/on the riverside, within walking distance/in the (immediate) vicinity, on campus/on the university (college) grounds, slum, ghetto, port, (health/ski/seaside) resort, on the main road, near the motorway/freeway/thoroughfare, in a side/back/one-way street, close to a river/nature reserve/wood/historic site, ...

Describing locations

Pros: calm, quiet, cosy, spacious, peaceful, charming, fascinating, picturesque, scenic, mystical, provincial, remote village, attractive, impressive, luxurious, lively, bustling market town, vibrant, touristy street, get a panoramic/breath-taking view of ..., the apartment has an exceptional/a fantastic view of ..., contemporary building, cosmopolitan city, conveniently located, ...

Cons: desolate/rundown/deserted/abandoned house, isolated, dull, bleak, creepy, ugly, horrifying, boring, noisy, congested, crowded, to be in a traffic jam, litter on the lawn/beach, polluted, dirty, contaminated, ...

Living in rural areas

Pros: have a place of your own, large/spacious home and garden; cost of living is generally lower; enjoy the peace and quiet/unspoilt nature/rolling hills in the distance; more privacy, not many (noisy) people in the neighbourhood, opportunity to become part of a closer community; not much crime; keeping pets/animals is a lot easier than in towns; can grow your own food more easily; less stress, walks in the countryside will improve your wellbeing, ...

Cons: driving a car is a necessity, shops/restaurants/a shopping mall/hospital/may be far away, children of school-age/students may have to take a bus or rely on their parents to drive them; limited job opportunities; entertainment may be farther away; have to get used to the peace and quiet of the countryside, ...

Living in urban areas

Pros: better professional opportunities/educational facilities/medical facilities; have more chances to meet different kinds of people coming from various cultures; due to public transport, it is easier and cheaper to move around; easy access to entertainment and shopping; there are more events (e.g. festivals, baseball games, concerts, exhibitions, art openings), ...

Cons: high living expenses (due to high rents or property prices); flats and houses tend to be smaller than in the country; parking may be difficult; lack of personal relationship; people may feel stressed; fewer green spaces; crime rates tend to be higher; the increased number of vehicles and industries causes air pollution; other problems: water and noise pollution, too much waste because of overcrowding and improper waste management, ...

Living trends: by 2050 two-thirds of the world population will live in urban areas; opposite trend because of the coronavirus pandemic: many people have moved to suburbs, small towns or rural areas; e-commerce will continue to grow; increase in heatwaves; rising sea levels; coastal adaptation is necessary; cities must become more eco-friendly; houses and flats have to be adapted – they will become smarter; companies will build corporate-managed homes; diverse family structures; residents of suburbs have a mix of both areas, ...

Model answer

Both photos show some interesting types of houses. In the first case, the central focus is a thatched stone cottage, which is typical of the Cotswolds, a hilly region in the west of England. In the second case, you take a look from the rooftop terrace of a high-rise building at a modern US town.

In both pictures there are adjacent buildings. Near the old house there are two others, but you can only see their roofs because of the stone fence and the hedges that block the view. In the second picture many multi-storey buildings can be seen, as well as a lot of plants – maybe some weed as well in the metal containers in the foreground.

On closer inspection, you may realise that there are no people in both photos. Nevertheless, the open gate in the first picture suggests that the owner(s) has (have) just come home, whereas the lounge chairs on the terrace on the right-hand side give the impression that the residents are going to come back later on, probably for a sundowner or to relax in the evening sun after a stressful day.

Whether you prefer a house in a remote part of a country or an apartment in a hustling and bustling city is a very personal matter. There are advantages and disadvantages in both areas. At first, let me

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explain some disadvantages of rural neighbourhoods. Mostly you will need a car and in case you have a family, you have to be aware that your (teenage) children need a lift ever so often. Moreover, there are limited job opportunities in the country, but if you are able to do remote work on some days of the week, the stress level will be reduced. Today many people prefer living in rural areas as they can have a spacious house and a big garden with lots of plants. They can keep as many pets as they like because their neighbours are usually far away enough. Nevertheless, there is the chance to become part of a closer community and make friends for a lifetime.

If you decide to live in an urban area, your living expenses will be higher and your home will be smaller. You may ask yourself whether it is necessary to have a car as there is the chance to use public transport. Besides, environmental issues, like air and noise pollution, will become more important to you. On the other hand, there are many advantages, such as better professional opportunities, many educational facilities for (your) children and probably a hospital round the corner. If you love entertainment and shopping, a city will be your ideal living space.

To my mind, living in the suburbs of a town would be ideal and – according to the latest trends – many residents have fled the big cities due to Covid-19. Of course, this might not be relevant for the future because, in general, people tend to migrate from rural to urban areas as they become richer. For many young adults, who prefer urban life to rural life, cities need to become more eco-friendly. This entails that homes become smarter – by installing and controlling solar panels, heat pumps, ventilation systems, triple-glazed windows with special blinds etc.

New forms of cooperation and co-existence could also bring about changes in the way houses and flats are built in urban areas; for example, companies may rent their own corporate-managed homes to employees and their families; cheap, practical, modular and mass-produced micro units may become attractive to singles or nuclear families, whereas extended or patchwork families may establish co-living communities in bigger apartments. All in all, the fight against pollution and climate change will have to be waged in both urban and rural areas!



Paired activity

A youth magazine wants to find out about young people's ideal lifestyles and future living conditions. A prize is offered to the writer of the best article on this topic.

Discuss the predetermined aspects with your partner and decide on the three most important ones:

- ideal home
- surroundings
- aspired workplace
- leisure facilities
- infrastructure

Model dialogue with useful phrases and questions

Introduction:

A: What a good idea that a youth magazine wants to find out about young people's ideal lifestyle and future living conditions. We could both write articles, but let's talk about the important aspects first.

Main part:

B: Shall we start off with the ideal home or with the future workplace? Both are important issues.

A: I would prefer to talk about our future professions because if you do not have a job, you need not talk about your own home.

B: Okay, go ahead.

A: If I pass the Matura, I will enrol in the natural sciences (law/philosophy/economics) faculty of the University of Vienna. After my bachelor, I want to spend a year in ... to improve my knowledge of ... in order to become a What is your intention?

B: After my leaving exam I will start a gap year in order to travel and think about what I might want to do for a living/spend half a year in ... to help the people there/stay abroad for some years, ...

A: This is certainly a good idea and you will acquire valuable life skills. Besides, it is going to look great on your CV (Curriculum Vitae).

B: I hope so. How do you feel about settling down in your/our home town (after some years)?/What about your future dreams/ideas?

A: Right now it is hard for me to make a decision – maybe I will be satisfied with a small flat in the centre. You know, I don't like to do much housework, but I would love to have my own home (in the fourth/fifth/sixth ... district). Actually, you cannot stay with your parents for the rest of your life!

B: I fully agree with you! Tell me about your ideal home.

A: Well, I would like to live in the centre/on the outskirts of ... together with .../on my own and I would prefer to live in a flat/my own house, ... It should be spacious/have a big balcony/garden, ...

B: Wow, I hope you can make your dream come true.

A: Thank you. Is it important to talk about the surroundings or shall we turn to the other two aspects?

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- B: I am of the opinion that our surroundings affect the way we think and feel. As I like jogging/cycling/biking, ... I'd prefer a large park near my home/I'd like to have a view from my balcony over/of ... There should be no motorway nearby for I hate noise.
- A: From what I hear, you want to live in a beautiful and quiet environment with proper infrastructure. I fear your apartment or house will cost a load of money.
- B: You are right! I want to invest a lot of money in my future dream home, probably I'll need a loan, too. By the way, there should be good access to public transport/a bus stop/a railway station within walking distance/a hospital/a primary (an elementary) school that is not more than half an hour away by car, ... As I love shopping, there should be a mall round the corner/nearby/within easy reach, ...
- A: Are you just as selective/particular/fussy, ... about leisure facilities?
- B: I already told you that I like jogging, ...but from time to time I prefer a fitness studio with an excellent trainer/a large swimming pool with an outdoor pool in summer and an indoor pool in winter,... Besides, let's not forget about cultural events (e.g. theatre performances, operas, ...).
- A: I'm afraid you have to marry a millionaire or make that kind of money yourself.
- B: Haha, you will see!

Conclusion:

- A: Finally, would you agree that the three most important aspects are our future workplaces, the ideal homes we are going to look for and the appropriate surrounding areas?
- B: I totally agree with you because an ideal home without its natural surroundings would not be ideal for me.
- A: Shall we write the article together?
- B: We do that and if we win, we'll share the prize.

Negative answer:

- B: I am sorry, but I can't agree! In my opinion, the three most important aspects are ..., but we can agree to disagree and write two different articles to the youth magazine and let the editorial staff decide.



Additional tasks

- a) Draw a plan of your ideal flat/apartment/house and describe it.
Look at:

Topic 2 *Types of homes, Features, Rooms, Describing locations*

- b) Describe your current home and talk about the advantages and disadvantages of the accommodation and its surroundings.

Look at:

Topic 2 *Types of homes, Features, Rooms, Describing locations, Living in rural and urban areas*