

Reading

Task 1

You are going to read an article with contributions from four people to an online sports magazine. For questions 11–20, choose from the people A–D. The people may be chosen more than once.

Which person/people:

- 11 argues that competitions cannot be constructive?
- 12 presents a comparison between two groups of parents?
- 13 suggests discussions about competition should take a new direction?
- 14 offers an example of a competitive culture?
- 15 supports their point of view by research-based evidence?
- 16 advises parents to move away from the competitive winning culture?
- 17 argues that we should help children to steer clear of any competitions for as long as possible?
- 18 exemplifies a supportive environment that encourages development?
- 19 questions the justification for involving children in competitions?
- 20 offers an example of personal experience to support their viewpoint?

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Task2

Read the article again and answer the questions in your own words.

- 21 What do you understand by 'schools may get side-tracked by competitive parents'? (line 23)
- 22 Explain 'To deflect disappointment, some parents ...'. (line 4)
- 23 What does the contributor mean by 'I grew up with a burning ambition to compete'? (line 49)
- 24 Look at paragraph D and explain 'it would be a futile effort to try to stop them.' (line 47)
- 25 What does the contributor mean by 'wildly-exaggerated'? (line 18)

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Competition: a good thing or a bad thing?

A

I don't like the word "competition"; it places too much pressure on kids to be their best and can also cause unnecessary stress. They might feel disappointed if they don't measure up. To deflect disappointment, some parents often keep their children away from competitive situations altogether while others may think a shelf full of participation trophies is the only thing that matters. In my opinion a little bit of healthy competition can be good for kids. It would create a good setting for the child to learn how to be a team player. Of course, this is true, if the competition is constructive. We, parents, should use cooperative games to teach children problem solving and other important life skills. The most important thing that they need to learn is that they shouldn't concentrate on winning but on improving their own individual performance.

B

I think the value that competition can bring into a child's life has been wildly exaggerated. A lot of parents may think it is crucial to teach their children to compete in order to prepare them for the reality of modern life, and research shows that an astonishing number of parents agree with that kind of mentality. Even schools may get side-tracked by such competitive parents, however, it is not the best way to raise children. Admittedly, competition is unavoidable; as adults we compete with each other in different situations and for various things such as jobs, and relationships, but when it comes to children, we need to protect them. They will have plenty to worry about later on; by engaging them in competitions we would only place them under unnecessary pressure.

C

I was raised to believe that competition was the driving force for progress in society. I never viewed competition as 'unhealthy'; to me it was not an obstacle it was an opportunity. However all of that changed when I started raising my own kids. Unfortunately, competitions are used by many parents to place constant pressure on children – encouraging them to spend countless hours in after-school clubs and to enter any competition they find. We shouldn't expect all kids to excel at everything they do, or to love competitions, or learn from their mistakes when they lose, or expect them to be resilient. Such expectations are not realistic and may result in a negative self-evaluation.

D

I think it is high time we changed our focus and prioritised skills such as team work and cooperation. Naturally, children feel the need to compare their strength and skills to others, therefore it would be a futile effort to try to stop them. Take me for example, as a child I grew up with a burning ambition to compete and win. That's why we should design games and activities that accommodate competitiveness in a healthy environment, but participation has to take priority especially for young ones. Children need to feel happy and confident to take part in an activity without fear of losing. They need to learn to be proud of themselves for taking part in an activity, trying their best even when they weren't particularly interested in it, or felt they weren't good at it. They need to learn to strive for cooperation rather than competition.