

Real + Virtual = Real

Most people belong to real-life communities, such as (1) _____. Many people also belong to virtual communities, which are (2) _____.

Recently, technological advances have made it easier for people to mix their real lives with their virtual lives.

"Augmented reality" mixes the real world with the virtual world.

Augment means, "to add something to something else to try to improve it".

So, to augment reality means (3) _____. In this case, the virtual world adds something to reality. This can be done by using a computer to add something, such as a virtual image or words, to something real that you are looking at. Imagine a camera that can capture an image of a tree and then tell you what kind of tree it is. This technology exists. It is called "image recognition."

(4) _____ can work with almost anything, including people. Imagine taking a picture of someone you have just met at a party. Using a wireless internet connection, your camera can send that image to the Internet. There, the image of that person's face can be compared to millions of other images of faces. Some of those images will probably match the image of the person you just met. And some of those images will also probably have the person's name attached to them. (Think of all the pictures of yourself on social media sites.) Almost instantly, you will know that person's name and probably even more information about them.

Now imagine wearing a special pair of glasses that have a miniature computer attached to them. These are called "wearable computers." The glasses have a tiny display, or screen, close to your eye that allows you to see what you would see on a regular computer monitor. These glasses can also function like a camera. So if you look at a tree while wearing these glasses, the name (5) _____

_____ will appear on the tiny screen. And if you look at a person, the name of that person – and probably other information about her – will also very likely appear on the screen.

Such sneaky behavior may never become socially acceptable, but the technology exists for it. This is how augmented reality makes it possible for real-life communities to mix with virtual communities.