

Being an only child

"What's it like to spend a lifetime without brothers and sisters?" asks Joanna Moorhead.



A Sam Thompson, aged 10

When my mum's friend had a baby, it made me think about being an only child for the first time. I thought, would I like to have brothers and sisters? But to be honest, my friend's sister looked quite annoying – he was always having to watch her and I decided I was better off on my own. There are lots of good things about being an only child. I have privacy, and I like that; some of my friends have to share a bedroom and I know that will never happen to me. Plus I get time on my own with Mum and Dad, and that's very special.



B Jasmine Weller, aged 13

I always felt a bit different from other kids, and just thought it was something about me. Then I made friends with three other people who are all only children. I suddenly realised that they felt a lot like me. We all need to spend quite a lot of time on our own, and some of our friends with brothers and sisters find that strange – they think we don't like them or something. However, there are pluses, too. I think it's good to be able to entertain yourself sometimes, and my mum says I've got a great imagination.



C Bethany Shaw, aged 15

One of the bad things about being an only child when you're young is the reaction you get from other people. They think you're spoilt – you see that look in their eyes. And then you have to prove you're not spoilt, although you know you're not and nor are most only children. In general, I think the negatives outweigh the positives, but on the other hand it's all I've known and I'm OK with it.



D Leah Mitchell, aged 29

I went away to school when I was seven, and the hardest thing I found was making friends. Because I was an only child, I just didn't know how to do it. The thing is that when you're an only child, often there aren't any other children at a gathering. I found being an only child interesting, in that it gave me a place at the grown-ups' table and gave me a view into their world that children in a big family might not get. And I know it has, at least partly, made me into the person I am: I never like the idea of being one of a group, for example. I'm not comfortable with being one of a gang.



E Laura Arnold, aged 36

I know some only children feel stifled by their parents' constant demands and worries, but that wasn't my experience. I found being an only child enriching, which I think is mainly because we get on so well. I've got two children now and I do find that scary. The problem is I've absolutely no experience of this kind of situation; nothing in my past has prepared me for having to divide myself between the needs of these two little people, and the guilt is hard when I feel I've not been there enough for one of them. And on a practical level, things like sibling rivalry are going to be a whole new ball game.

Reading and Use of English Part 7

EXAM ADVICE

-  You are going to read a newspaper article about people who have no brothers or sisters. For questions 1–10, choose from the people (A–E). The people may be chosen more than once.

Read the questions, then quickly read the texts. When you find the part of a text which matches the question, underline it.

Which person

realises that the positive relationship they had with their parents isn't shared by all only children?

1

thinks people make a judgement about only children which is mistaken?

2

thinks they developed a better understanding of adults because of being an only child?

3

finds their present circumstances a challenge?

4

says that only children have needs which can be difficult for others to deal with?

5

realised at a particular point that they were happy being an only child?

6

was unaware that their reactions to being an only child were not unique?

7

had problems as a child because they lacked a necessary skill?

8

says they accept their situation because they don't know anything different?

9

mentions a positive benefit of spending a lot of time alone?

10