Unit 7: Exercise 9

The article has five paragraphs, A–E. Read the article. Which paragraphs contain the following information? Choose the correct letter, A–E, for each answer.

A Social media has come in for some tough criticism over the years, with a number of commentators believing that it prevents people from being able to successfully communicate face-to-face. There are those that argue that we are raising a generation who are unable to take things seriously and who through playing violent video games have become desensitized to cruelty and lack sympathy for anyone besides themselves. However, are social commentators and parents right to be alarmed by this trend? In the 1930s, there was panic that young people were becoming addicted to the radio, and in the 1980s, the advent of personal stereos meant there were those that panicked about the youth becoming increasingly isolated by wearing headphones all the time. Perhaps, therefore, we should remain suspicious of claims that social media and the wide use of technology is going to lead to a society where people lack the literacy skills of the past and cannot communicate and socialise effectively.

B Firstly, it is perhaps wrong to assume that socialising on the internet replaces real-life interaction. A number of studies have shown that people of all ages who are more active on social media tend to lead the most fulfilling off-screen social lives, too. Other studies have also shown that social media can be beneficial to younger teens who use it effectively to communicate with their friends and classmates. This can enable them, for example, to get better at using humour effectively with their peers. As children of this age don't have the opportunities to meet up with their friends, social media can be an effective way for them to stay in touch with their friends outside of class, strengthening these relationships. The study also illustrated that children in this age group tended to use social media less as they became older and were able to meet up with their friends in real life.

C Nevertheless, there are a number of other concerns that the rise of social media has led to. In the past, we didn't have the issues of a person's right to personal privacy that have arisen due to the increased importance of this phenomenon nowadays. However, a lot of the social media sites that younger people use often delete photos and messages quickly, and many young people have conversations and then delete their images and stories leaving no trace of what they have written on the internet. This is not to say, though, that younger people are always careful, but perhaps at this age it is important to remember that they are learning about the conventions of society, both online and offline. It might be that we worry more about what happens online as we don't understand it as well as they do, and it also doesn't help that the media is often full of scare stories, such as those about cyberbullying. However, although there have been some terrible stories about this, these incidents thankfully don't seem to be as widespread as we may be led to believe.

D We can perhaps say, therefore, that young people are still able to communicate effectively, as they are always communicating online. People can now communicate at speed and respond to their friends instantly. However, educators have become increasingly concerned that the use of shorthand and grammatically incorrect sentences has led to young people becoming less literate. Coupled with this, they are reading less because of the time that they are spending using gadgets and devices. However, studies by educators and linguists have shown that youngsters are aware of the importance of formality and know where and when to use formal language, and that they are not making any more errors than people of the

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same age 20–30 years ago. Young people between the ages of 13 and 16 also seem to be more industrious than a generation ago, with studies showing that students are now able to write essays that are on average six times longer and offer more complex arguments. Computers have opened up students' abilities to gather more information and explore different points of view and therefore write more confidently.

E In fact, the online world gives kids a lot of opportunities to be more creative, as well as to make more friends. For example, when Jenny Johnson, a 14-year-old from the UK, became obsessed with the TV programme Teen Wolf, she decided to start her own blog about it, which has been a huge success, attracting many regular visitors, and has helped her make friends with other school pupils all over the world. Perhaps we should therefore be encouraging children to use the technology they have in the best way possible, rather than telling them to put their gadgets down.

1 evidence of improved academic skills [ ]

2 an example of someone gaining a large online following [ ]

3 an important contemporary principle that wasn't a priority before [ ]

4 ways in which social media can enable people to develop social skills [ ]

5 examples of how teenagers can be responsible users of social media [ ]

6 comparisons of social media use with other activities that became very popular in the past [ ]

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