

READING: Skimming a text

Dealing with online trolls

A It's always best to avoid trolls – both the ugly creatures in fairy stories and the equally ugly (on the inside at least) kind who spread their nasty comments by using a computer keyboard. If you look at the comments section of any online newspaper, you will find the second type at work, leaving shocking and unpleasant messages on all sorts of subjects.

B As a society, we value free speech, and, of course, there's a thin line between strong disagreement and messages that are completely unacceptable. But, basically, if someone's main goal is to spread hate and lies, to upset or embarrass someone, or even to scare the person, that person is a troll. Unfortunately, if you use social media, you are sure to have personal experience of trolling sooner or later. Trolls need victims, and they will find them in any online space where people communicate in public.

C If (or when) you meet one, remember that the ability to make you react is like food to a troll – so don't feed them! Trolls are not sensible people. They don't actually want a reasonable discussion, so there's no point at all in trying to have one. It may be tempting to insult or threaten trolls, but they will like this – it is "playing their game," and they are more likely to continue with it than stop. They are only trying to upset you, and if you don't give them a response, they have failed.



D Always remember that the troll is the one with the problem, not you. It's obvious that nobody who hides behind a keyboard to write things he or she would never dare say face to face can be a happy and secure person. In fact, newspaper reports of people who have been taken to court for threatening or inappropriate trolling almost always seem to describe sad and lonely lives. Trolls make us furious, but sympathy would probably be a more appropriate emotion.

- 1 Read the title and look at the pictures. What do you think the article will be about?
 - a People who post unpleasant messages online.
 - b What to do if your computer is broken.
 - c Workers who spend most of their time at a computer.

- 2 Read the first sentence of each paragraph. Which of A–D do you think will make these points?

- 1 It's usually best not to reply to trolls. _____
- 2 We should probably feel sorry for trolls. _____
- 3 You should try not to have contact with trolls. _____
- 4 It can sometimes be difficult to decide if someone is actually a troll. _____

- 3 Read the sentences. Write T for true sentences, F for false sentences, and D when the article doesn't give you enough information to be sure.

- 1 The word "troll" has more than one meaning. _____
- 2 Most comments on online newspapers are written by trolls. _____
- 3 People can sometimes seem rude when they express strong opinions. _____

- 4 It is possible to use social media sites without seeing messages from trolls. _____
- 5 Only very intelligent people become trolls. _____
- 6 Trolls don't like it if you post angry replies. _____
- 7 Trolls always make a great effort to keep their names secret. _____
- 8 Trolls are often unhappy people. _____

- 4 Complete the sentences with your own ideas.

- 1 I thought Maria was a vegetarian, but, actually, _____
- 2 Philippe told everyone he was a pilot, when he was actually _____
- 3 Sara's house doesn't have four bedrooms. In fact, _____
- 4 I thought polar bears lived in the Antarctic, but, in fact, they _____
- 5 I didn't expect Raj to have many Twitter followers, but, in fact, _____
- 6 The doctors thought she had the flu, but, actually, _____