

READING TEST

Part 1: Read and answer the sentences with True and False.

There is a plethora of research on the potential harm of the Internet. However, new research suggests that spending time online could be good for the mental health of older people. A study conducted by researchers from New York University found that regular Internet use could reduce the risk of dementia in those over 50. Study co-author Dr Virginia Chang explained why there could be a link between being online and better mental health. She wrote: "Online engagement may help to develop and maintain cognitive reserve, which can in turn compensate for brain aging and reduce the risk of dementia." The study concluded that "regularly using the internet may be associated with cognitive longevity". Researchers analyzed data from an American health and retirement study. This research involved questioning 18,154 adults over the age of 50 every two years for 16 years. All of the participants were dementia-free at the start of the research. Everyone was asked about their physical and mental wellbeing, and about how long they spent interacting with the Internet. The researchers discovered that those who used the Internet for up to two hours a day were half as likely to be diagnosed with having signs of dementia as those who were never online. The research also found that excessive Internet use (of 6 to 8 hours a day) may exacerbate the risks of developing dementia.

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| 1. The article says there is a dearth of research on Internet harm. | True / False |
| 2. Being online could be good for the mental health of older people. | True / False |
| 3. Being online could offset the effects of the aging of the brain. | True / False |
| 4. A study said being online could help us be more intelligent. | True / False |
| 5. Over 18,500 participants took part in a study. | True / False |
| 6. The research looked at 16 years' worth of data. | True / False |
| 7. Two hours of Internet use could halve the onset of dementia. | True / False |
| 8. being online for six hours reduces the risk of getting dementia. | True / False |

Part 2: Read the match the sentences.



In December 2016 Edgar M. Welch drove six hours from his home to Washington DC, where he opened fire in a pizzeria with an assault rifle. He had previously read an online news story about the restaurant being the headquarters of a group of child abusers run by Hillary Clinton. He decided to investigate for himself; fortunately, no one was hurt.

The story about Hillary Clinton is one of the most famous examples of the growing phenomenon dubbed 'fake news'. The conspiracy theory about the pizzeria began to appear on websites and social networks in late October, before the US election. This was quickly denounced by publications such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. However, many people thought that these papers were themselves lying for political ends and instead of disappearing, the fake story snowballed. Tweets from 'Representative Steven Smith of the 15th District of Georgia' claimed that the mainstream media were telling falsehoods. Even though both this name and district were invented, the message was re-tweeted many times. A YouTube refutation of the *New York Times* article got 250,000 hits.

Fake news stories can be hard to control for several reasons. Many people mistrust established news sources and others just don't read them, so the debunking of a fake story by a serious newspaper or TV channel has limited effect. In addition, the internet is very hard to police. When users are caught misusing one media platform, they simply go to another one or start up a website themselves.

There are also various reasons why people create fake news. Some have political motives, to belittle or incriminate their opponents. Other websites, like The Onion, deliberately publish fake news as satire – humorous comment on society and current affairs. Another group is in it for the profit: many people clicking on entertaining fake news stories can bring in a lot of advertising revenue. One man running fake news sites from Los Angeles said he was making up to US\$ 30,000 a month in this way. There are also those, like the small-town teenagers in Macedonia who wrote fake news stories about Donald Trump, who seem to be motivated partly by money and partly by boredom.

So, what can we do to stop fake news spreading? First, make sure that the websites you read are legitimate, for example by looking carefully at the domain name and the About Us section. Check the sources of any quotes or figures given in the story. Remember that amazing stories about famous people will be covered by the mainstream media if they are true. Only share stories you know are true and let your friends know, tactfully, when they unknowingly share fake news. Together we can turn around the post-truth world!

- 1..... Paragraph 1
- 2..... Paragraph 2
- 3..... Paragraph 3
- 4..... Paragraph 4
- 5..... Paragraph 5
- 6..... Not used

- a. Why fake news is hard to stop
- b. How we can try and control fake news
- c. Motives for creating fake news
- d. The financial rewards of fake news
- e. An example of a fake news story
- f. How a fake news story can grow