Friends and creativity

[1]_____ We are social animals, and research has shown that strong friendships are associated with living longer, being healthier, having better memories, being able to deal better with problems, and feeling more relaxed. Not having close friends tends to make people anxious and increase stress.

[2]_____ They think and act in ways which are familiar to us, and we can understand their thoughts and feelings more easily. However, these similarities don't challenge the way we think, so the brain functions more automatically.

[3]_____ Why? Mixing with people from a different place, generation, culture or background gives our brain a workout because we have to process new complex information which is unpredictable. Doing this regularly makes us better at producing complex and surprising information; in other words, we can think more creatively.

[4]_____ Joining clubs outside school or volunteering are great ways to meet people from different backgrounds and age groups. Interestingly, the friends don't even have to be real. Books, plays and films, which encourage us to imagine what it is like to be another person, can have the same effect on our brains because they enable us to see things from different perspectives.

[5]_____ They can also help us become more open-minded and develop as people. When we stop thinking of people who are different from ourselves as 'others' and consider them to be friends instead, then we are closer to creating a more tolerant society.

The point of the article is to ...

a. persuade people of the advantages of having creative friends.

b. advise readers to make friends with people who are similar to them.

c. inform people about the benefits of having more varied friendships.

Match topic sentences a–f to gaps 1–5 in the text. There is one extra topic sentence.

a Now, researchers have found that friends who are very different from ourselves can dramatically increase our creativity.
b More diverse friendships aren't, of course, just good for our creativity.
c Generally speaking, our friends have similar likes, values and personalities to our own.
d Friendships are perhaps more important than family.
e Friends are good for us.
f So, how do you go about having a wider range of friends?

Read the article again and answer the questions with full sentences.

1 How can strong friendships improve our lives?

2 Why is mixing with people who are different to ourselves good for us?

3 Why are books, plays and films good for our brains?

4 How can we help society become more tolerant?