

Formal letter: responding to an article (1)

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- 1 Do adults generally have a positive or a negative view of teenagers? Why?
- 2 How is your life different from your parents' lives at your age? Do you have a better time than them?
- 3 How do you spend your free time? What do you spend most time doing? Why?

2 Read the letter and answer the questions (1-3).

Dear Nick,
I am writing in response to your article 'Obsessed with themselves' (23rd July), in which you argued that today's teenagers are so concerned with how they appear on social media that they have no time to think about social issues.

As a 17-year-old, I feel this view does not accurately describe myself or my friends. While most teenagers spend a lot of time on social media, many of us think about social issues in our country and the world. We are very aware of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, social inequality and discrimination, and we do what we can to help.

For example, one of my friends volunteers at a night shelter; another regularly visits an elderly lady to help her with household tasks. I myself volunteer at our local food bank, which supplies emergency food to people.

Finally, I would like to say that at school we study social issues from different perspectives. As a result of this and our experience as volunteers, I believe we have a very good understanding of, and deep concern for, social issues.

Yours sincerely,
Katharine Hill

- 1 Who is the letter to?
- 2 Does the writer use informal or semi-formal language?
- 3 In which paragraph does she say why she is writing?

3 Complete the sentences (1-5) with the correct form of the verbs from the box. There is one verb that you do not need to use.

argue assure challenge emphasize expect
focus on recognize

- 1 I feel I must _____ the statement that young people do not respect others.
- 2 In her article of 3rd January, Jane Cole _____ that teenagers should be given more independence.

- 3 I would like to _____ your readers that most teenagers _____ that discrimination of any kind is unacceptable.
- 4 I must _____ the importance of family relationships for young people like myself.
- 5 I _____ that most readers of this newspaper have children or know someone who has.

EXAM STRATEGY

Use semi-formal language when you write to the author of an article. Use full forms (*I am* not *I'm*) and more formal phrases (e.g. *in response to*).

4 EXAM TASK You have read the following article in a newspaper. Write a letter of at least 100 words to the author of the article in which you:

- ▶ explain why you disagree with the author of the article,
- ▶ give an example of a person who is a good role model for you and explain why,
- ▶ mention other people who are good role models for people your age.

30TH SEPTEMBER

Celebrities are a bad influence

Ella Stone

What do you do when your teenager starts being rude to everyone, including her classmates? Do you accept this as normal teenage behaviour or not? This is the dilemma I faced a year ago with my daughter.

I worked out that she was copying this behaviour from a female pop star that she thought was cool. She was not the role model I wanted my daughter to have! Pop stars, footballers, film stars and online celebrities all become role models for teenagers, and not all of them are good ones. Many of them talk only about their wealth and show no compassion for others who are less well off. I fear for our young people if this is the kind of person they want to imitate. How will they learn to respect others if their role models do not?



Writing bank pages 150-151

5 Check your work.

- Have you written about all three points in the task?
- Have you stated your response clearly?
- Have you used appropriate semi-formal language?
- Have you written at least 100 words?

Formal letter: responding to an article

Starting the letter

- ✓ I am writing in response to ...
- ✓ Thank you for the article about ...
- ✗ Congratulations on publishing the article about ...
- ✓ I was interested to read your article about ...

Explain who you are

As a (teenager/17-year-old girl/social studies student), I ...

Stating your response to the article

- ✓ Although I agree with some of what the article says, I must disagree with him/her when he/she says that ...
- ✓ I feel I must challenge the article's claim that ...
- ✓ The article is right to question whether we should ...
- ✓ found the article about (social media) extremely ...
- ✓ I was (horrified/astonished/delighted) by the article about ...
- ✓ I would like to point out that ...
- ✓ I do not think that ..., but I do believe that ...

Giving examples to support your viewpoint

Let me give some examples.
For example, ...
I can think of several people who ...
There have been many occasions when ...
I expect that most people ...

Stating a last point

Finally, I would like to say that ...

Summarizing at the end

Because of this I believe that ...
As a result of ..., it is my firm belief that ...

Finishing the letter

Yours faithfully,

If you don't know the name of the person you're writing to, use *Dear Sir or Madam* or *Dear Sir/Madam*.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I was interested to read your article about the need for more car parking in city centres (*More parking, please!* 17 June), and I am writing to express my views on this controversial topic. I believe that the best solution to the parking problem may be the opposite of what you suggest.

I agree that there are more cars than parking spaces, however I believe the best way forward may be to reduce the number of cars, not to increase the number of spaces. For example, London's congestion charge has been very successful, and other cities should consider the same approach. This would reduce pollution and traffic jams, both of which would be made worse by simply increasing parking provision.

For this proposal to work, we would need to provide good public transport to the city centre. Many people now drive because the bus service is so poor, but better buses would be good for everybody and good for the environment. With fewer cars on the roads, bus journeys would be faster, too.

Finally, a reduction in traffic would make city centres much more pleasant places for shoppers and tourists to spend time in. For many years we have wanted to achieve this, and now we have our chance. If city centres are enjoyable places to be, then I expect more people will visit and more money will be spent, with the added benefit that the local economy will be better off, too.

I look forward to hearing the opinions of your other readers.

Yours faithfully,

Simon Charles

Simon Charles

If you're writing about a newspaper article, refer to the article and the date it was published.

In the first paragraph say why you're writing and give your opinion briefly.

In the second and third paragraphs give more details of your argument.

In the last paragraph make a final comment about your ideas.

Use this phrase to bring your letter to an end.

If you started with *Dear Sir or Madam*, end with *Yours faithfully*. If you used *Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms + surname*, end with *Yours sincerely*.

If you're writing a letter, print your name clearly under your signature.

Expressing your opinion ✓

I completely agree/disagree with ...
In my view/opinion, ...
To my mind/way of thinking, ...
I am (very much) opposed to/in favour of ...

Expressing your attitude ✓

Unfortunately/Certainly/Surprisingly, ...
Obviously/Clearly, ...
It is (unfortunate/not surprising) that ...
I feel strongly that ...

Listing points

Firstly/Secondly/Finally, ...
What is more,/Furthermore, ...
In addition, ...

Use linkers of reason, addition and contrast to connect ideas.

Dear Sir or Madam,

Introduce the main idea in the first paragraph.

In response to your article ('Computer games are a waste of time' 23 December), I accept the fact that some people disapprove of computer games because they do not think they are educational or useful. **However**, playing computer games is an extraordinarily popular hobby around the world. Can something so popular really be pointless?

Use a variety of expressions for introducing your opinions.

In my opinion, playing any game teaches us many useful skills. Computer games are no different. For example, we learn how to think quickly, and how to solve problems.

Give more details of your argument in paragraphs two, three and four.

What is more, we co-operate with other people when we play in teams. These games are often seen as solitary, but in fact many people play online and make friends with other gamers all over the world. In family life, computer games have replaced board games, and children often play with their parents.

Give examples or reasons to support your ideas.

To my mind, playing computer games can be very relaxing – not all games are violent, and some are beautifully designed and highly sophisticated. When you play a game, you do not think about anything else, so it is a very effective way to reduce stress. Everyone needs a way to unwind and relax, and computer games are just as valid as listening to music or reading. **It has been shown that computer games can in rare cases be addictive**, but on the whole the benefits clearly outweigh the disadvantages.

Mention counter-arguments if you like, but don't spend long on them – you need to put your own arguments forward.

Sum up your own opinion in the final paragraph, and end with a final thought on the topic.

In conclusion, I believe that playing computer games can be a rewarding and satisfying hobby, especially as part of a balanced range of free-time activities. I strongly disagree that gaming is 'a waste of time'. Quite the opposite – it gives life a whole new dimension.

Yours faithfully,

Grace Stubbs

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