



ACT Scaling Test 2014

Writing Test

DIRECTIONS TO CANDIDATES

The time allowed for this test is **2 hours 30 minutes**.

You are required to write approximately 600 words, discussing the major issue raised in the material provided in this booklet. You should develop a clear argument, and you should feel free to agree or disagree with any opinion expressed in the material.

You should begin by reading and thinking about the material provided. Your first task is to select an aspect of the issue that you wish to write about, and to consider possible titles for your piece of writing.

The material on the next two pages is to assist you in developing your persuasive argument about the issue. You do not have to refer to any of the material specifically.

The time allowed for the test gives you plenty of time for thinking, planning, drafting, re-drafting and editing your piece of writing. For the last stage of this process, you may find the checklist on the last page of this booklet helpful.

You must make a serious attempt and write more than 200 words.

Pens and biros only (not pencils) may be used for writing the final version. Loose paper will be provided for notes, plans, rough drafts, etc.

Since examiners will take into account only what is written in the answer book, make sure that you leave yourself sufficient time to write out the final version of your piece of writing.

DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD.

Social Media

Social media are the networks and virtual communities in which people create, share or exchange information and ideas. Such web sites allow users to develop profiles of their background and interests, communicate with friends and strangers, and share thoughts, photos, internet links and music.

Social media differ from traditional or industrial media in many ways, including their quality, reach, frequency, usability and immediacy.

Social media have introduced substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organisations, communities and individuals.

In their book *Networked: The New Social Operating System* Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman describe social media as being used to document memories, learn about and explore things, advertise oneself and form friendships. For Rainie and Wellman everyone can become a content provider in a networked world. Networked individuals can reach wide audiences in ways that can positively affect their social standing and gain political support, as with the Egyptian revolution of 2011.

The neuroscientist Baroness Susan Greenfield has expressed concerns that modern technology, and in particular social networking sites and video games, may have a negative impact on child development, and may lead to medical conditions such as autism and dementia.

Read carefully the material on these two pages.

Write about 600 words, giving your point of view on the major issue raised in the material.

You need not refer to any of the material specifically, but you must deal with the major issue in it. Do not summarise the material.

Give your piece of writing a clear title.

You should assume you are writing to an intelligent adult audience.

Scripts of significantly more than 600 words will not be read in full.

Supporters of social media say that online communities:

- promote increased interaction with friends and family;
- rapidly disseminate useful ideas and information;
- facilitate social and political change; and
- offer teachers, librarians, and students valuable educational opportunities.

Critics of social media say that the sites:

- inhibit face-to-face communication;
- spread false and potentially dangerous information;
- waste time and promote inactivity;
- alter the brains and behaviour of children; and
- offer opportunities for criminal activity.

There are many instances where people write very personal things about themselves or other people in social media without realising that absolutely anyone can be reading those comments, including their parents and their employer.



Sherry Turkle, in her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, argues that social media bring people closer and pushes them further apart at the same time. One of the main points she makes is that there is a high risk online of treating persons like objects. When people are electronically networked their expectations of each other tend to be lessened. According to Turkle, this can cause a feeling of loneliness rather than being together.

Some psychological effects of social media

The vilification and bullying that takes place on social media can cause significant psychological harm. Some research studies have shown that social media are creating new social problems for children and teenagers.

Social media addiction

The 'World Unplugged' study conducted in 2011 claimed that for some users quitting social networking sites is comparable to quitting smoking or giving up alcohol. Another study conducted in 2012 by researchers from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business found that drugs like alcohol and tobacco were less addictive than social networking sites. A 2013 study in the journal *CyberPsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* found that some users actually decide to quit social networking sites because of their feeling of getting addicted.

Chomsky argues that social media are superficial

When Jeff Jetton asked the eminent linguist and political activist Noam Chomsky what he thought of people communicating through electronic devices rather than face to face, Chomsky described such communication as very shallow and superficial. According to Chomsky a kind of stimulus hunger is cultivated by the rapidity and the graphic character of video screens.

Chomsky claims there is now much less reading done by young people as a result of the popularity of social media.

In his blog at *Cyborgology*, Nathan Jurgenson has criticised the comments of Chomsky on social media. Rather than being shallow and superficial, Jurgenson has argued that social media and the internet give a voice to disadvantaged groups and developing countries. According to Jurgenson, social media have been very important for protestors against dictatorships in the Middle East, and for protest such as the Occupy Movement in developed countries.



“I blame the internet.”

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

- Quality of thought and content
- Structure and organisation
- Expression, style and mechanics

WHAT THE EXAMINERS WILL LOOK FOR

- Your choice of an aspect of the major issue directly related to the material presented
- The coherence of your persuasive argument
- The quality of your evidence or supporting arguments
- The control of language and form, including clarity, precision and appropriateness for the target audience

SOME THINGS YOU MIGHT CONSIDER BEFORE HANDING IN YOUR PIECE OF WRITING

- Have I given my work a clear and accurate title?
- Does the work have a clear organisation and structure?
- Have I read over the piece of writing and edited the final copy for spelling, punctuation and sentence structure?
- Are there places in which my handwriting would be difficult to follow and should be tidied?
- Are all the alterations I have made clear to the reader?

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Acknowledgements

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