

Student A

PAIR DISCUSSION

You are going to read an opinion article. You have to respond to the problem raised and discuss it with a partner arguing either in favour of the topic (pros) or arguing against it (cons). If you are **Student A**, you argue **for**. If you are **Student B**, you argue **against**.

You have **5 minutes** to read the text and prepare for the discussion.

The discussion should take up to **5 minutes**.

You are expected to:

- give a short summary of the text (**Student A**),
- address the problem focusing on your assigned perspective: **Student A** focuses on the pros of banning mobile phones in school and **Student B** focuses on the benefits of allowing mobile phones in school,
- relate your points to personal experience, evidence, or prior knowledge,
- comment, agree/disagree, expand or challenge your partner's ideas,
- summarise and conclude your discussion (**Student B**).

NO 1.



Phones in classes: Lithuanian schools consider ban

As European countries introduce strict rules on mobile phones in schools, Lithuania isn't imposing universal bans. Nor are there any common guidelines on whether schools should ban phones from classrooms or integrate them into teaching. Schools make their own decisions – some see harm in phones, others see benefits.

Students at Herojus School in Kaunas bring not only textbooks to literature classes, but also laptops. However, they have to leave their mobile phones in a box before classes begin and can take them back only before heading home. This is the ninth year of the school's policy.

"We try to show them that mobile phone use is a hard-to-see but serious addiction to fight. It is also a distraction during the education process," says Dovilė Pelegrimė, founder of Herojus School. Restricting the use of mobile phones, she adds, helps children develop habits of being technology-free and communicating face to face.

By contrast, in Kaunas Saulės Gymnasium, phones are near the students even during lessons. The school does not impose any restrictions, even encourages their use for completing tasks.

"They are almost adults, 15-19 years old, and we have agreements, they are conscious individuals," says Sonata Drazdavičienė, the school principal.

UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report on Education recommends using phones in the classroom only when they are needed for learning. In Latvia, phones will be banned for students in forms 1–6 from this spring. Mobile phones have been banned in schools in the Netherlands since last year, and bans have already been adopted in Italy and France.

The Lithuanian parliament drafted a proposal for schools to draw up rules on mobile phone use in 2022, but it was voted down. This year the Seimas has taken another step toward banning the use of mobile phones in schools for non-educational purposes.

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NO 2.



AI takes a seat in the modern classroom

'What can I help with?' stays on the screen. While working on a math assignment, junior Caleb Morello prompts an Artificial Intelligence (AI) program to break down the steps involved in a problem he's struggling with. In less than a second, Caleb is met with a detailed breakdown of every step.

A 2023 survey administered by the college testing nonprofit ACT found that 46% of students in forms 10 to 12 use AI services like Chat GPT, Dall-E 2, Bing Chat and others. As artificial intelligence technology continues to develop and grow in popularity, students and teachers around the world are learning to navigate its place in the educational setting.

"I see AI tools helping students in the classroom and education," CTE teacher and Animation club sponsor Andrew Nourse says. "In general, we are becoming more online based, and there are more digital and AI tools that could help, but also, I think they can harm students in terms of creativity and individuality. There are pros and cons."

"I've seen AI used in two different ways," student Morello says. "I've seen it used as a helper. For example, you can't call anyone at the moment, or your parents can't help you, or you're not at school, and you need help with something, you can use AI to teach you. But there's also the case where some people just finish assignments with it. They say, 'do this for me' and then copy and paste a few things."

There are several ways that AI tools can be and are being utilised in the classroom setting. A 2024 report co-written by Harvard's Centre for Digital Thriving, Common Sense Media, and Hope Lab reported that help with schoolwork was the third most popular use for AI among 14- to 17-year-olds.

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NO 3.



Teenagers are choosing to study over Saturday jobs

The pressure of exams and lack of opportunities mean fewer young people are taking on Saturday jobs than ever before in the UK, a new report suggests. Only one in five has a part-time job while at school.

"Exams were my priority," says Rebecca North, 18. "I didn't feel that I could set time aside to work as well as revise, do school and still have time for hobbies and socialising." She says the last two years have been stressful and she worried that a part-time job would threaten her grades.

Tyger, 16, admits: "I'm too lazy to study and work at the same time" and adds he has spent most of his spare time focusing on playing sport.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills comments that people like Rebecca and Tyger may be harming their chances by focusing on academic courses or sport instead of getting work experience. "It seems that young people are actively shunning the idea of working while studying, as the fear of not doing well haunts our society. Yet this could be a short-sighted tactic, as we know from employers that experience of the world of work is their number one 'ask' when recruiting." Millions of young people are lacking the experience of the world of work that will help them find jobs in the future. "Work is important. Studies are important. One shouldn't exclude the other," says Fiona Kendrick, Commissioner at UKCES. "It's about getting a good balance to give yourself the best chance."

"We look for graduates who haven't just got a fabulous degree, we need rounded people coming to work," says Helen Webb, HR Director at the retailer Co-op. She says one of the best ways to get the broad experience so many employers are looking for is to get part-time work while studying.

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NO 4.



Almost everyone now shops in store?

As the cost of living remains a concern for many households, supermarkets continue to compete fiercely for customers. Rising prices over the past two years have shaped shopping habits, influencing where and how people choose to buy their essentials. The UK's second-largest supermarket recently reported that online sales, which had gone over 20% at the height of the pandemic, have now settled at 13%. While food sales remain strong, other areas, such as clothing and fuel, have been doing less well. According to chief executive Simon Roberts, more than 87% of all food purchases still take place in physical stores.

One reason for this is that supermarkets have worked hard to make in-store shopping more attractive. By lowering prices to compete with online retailers and enhancing customer service, they have encouraged shoppers to return. Many people appreciate the ability to see and choose fresh products themselves, while improved store layouts and faster checkout options make the experience more convenient.

This shift highlights an ongoing balance between online and in-store shopping. While online shopping offers convenience, allowing people to order groceries and other products from the comfort of their homes, traditional stores provide advantages that online retailers struggle to match. Shopping in-store allows customers to inspect products firsthand, compare quality, and make spontaneous decisions. Many also enjoy the social aspect of browsing aisles and interacting with staff. On the other hand, online shopping saves time and provides home delivery, along with the ability to compare prices across multiple retailers with just a few clicks. Still, delivery fees, delays, and concerns over product quality make some shoppers hesitant to abandon physical stores entirely.

Ultimately, the choice seems to depend on individual priorities. As both online and physical stores continue to evolve, we can only observe whether the balance between the two will remain.

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NO 5.



A whole different wiring system: the extreme athletes who pushed limits in 2024

Endurance athletes often seem like they have “a whole different wiring system,” ultrarunner Brendan Leonard tells CNN Sport. “I think everyone understands the motivation of just finding something that you think can’t be done or a person that you think you can’t beat and then chasing them.”

Let’s recap on some of the greatest feats in endurance sport from 2024.

Russ Cook set out to run the entire length of Africa, covering over 10,000 miles in 352 days. His journey demonstrated extraordinary stamina and mental resilience, inspiring others with his personal growth. However, it came at a high cost – injuries and illness, being robbed at gunpoint, lost in the rainforest, and facing diplomatic problems while crossing borders.

Jasmin Paris is the first woman to finish the exhausting Barkley Marathons, a race known for its tough landscape and secretive rules. Although she suffered from swelling and many injuries, showing how much these races can damage the body, her success proved that endurance is not limited by gender.

Cyclist Lachlan Morton broke records by riding over 8,800 miles around Australia in just over a month. His achievement shows resilience, determination, and incredible capacities. Still, he struggled against brutal headwinds, extreme temperatures, dangerous traffic, and even had a run-in with a kangaroo.

German surfer Sebastian Steudtner may have set a new world record by riding a 28.57-meter wave in Nazaré, Portugal. His accomplishment reflected unbelievable technical skill, but the risks were immense – big wave surfing remains one of the most dangerous sports, where a single mistake can have life-threatening consequences.

Each of these athletes accomplished something extraordinary. While their achievements inspire admiration, they also raise a question – how far should one go in pursuit of greatness, and is it truly worth risking one’s health and safety for the sake of breaking records?

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NO 6.



Should Marks Be Based on Excellence only or Efforts Also Matter?

What kinds of marks do you generally get in your classes? Are you satisfied with them? Do you think your marks accurately reflect your learning?

Adam Grant, a guest essayist and psychologist at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, argues that too many students today wrongly expect to be rewarded for their effort rather than the quality of their work. He is convinced that excellence is what matters most. Would you agree?

Grant writes: "High marks are for excellence, not grit. In the past, students understood that hard work was not sufficient; an A required great work. Yet today, many students expect to be rewarded for the quantity of their effort rather than the quality of their knowledge."

Recent surveys show that two-thirds of college students believe that "trying hard" should be a factor in their marks, and a third think that they deserve at least a B for showing up at most classes. Many parents and educators argue that assessing effort alongside performance is not about handing out unearned rewards but about recognizing perseverance and strategy in achieving excellence. While results matter, understanding how effort translates into learning can help students build resilience and develop their productive work habits. Ignoring effort entirely risks discouraging students who may be on the right track but need better guidance on how to improve.

Grant's response to such arguments is that "teachers and parents owe kids a more balanced message. There's a reason we award Olympic medals to the athletes who swim the fastest, not the ones who train the hardest. The ideal response to a disappointing mark is not to complain that your diligence wasn't rewarded. Trying harder isn't always the answer. Sometimes it's working smarter, and other times it's working on something else altogether."

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NO 7.



SpaceX Crew Completes First Trip Around North and South Poles

A SpaceX Dragon capsule carrying four space tourists splashed down off the coast of California on Friday. This was the first crewed mission to fly a polar orbit around the Earth, passing by both the North and South poles. This is also the first splashdown in 50 years in the Pacific Ocean. The last people to return from space to the Pacific were three NASA astronauts assigned to the 1975 Apollo–Soyuz mission.

The flight was privately funded by billionaire Chun Wang, who served as commander for the crew's training and spaceflight mission.

Supporters hail this milestone as a symbol of human progress and the democratisation of space. Private space travel, they argue, is no longer a far-fetched dream but a fast-developing industry that can inspire innovation across multiple fields — from advanced engineering to environmental monitoring. “Every mission helps us learn more,” SpaceX representatives said. “What seems like luxury now could lead to everyday applications tomorrow.”

Critics are far from convinced. Space tourism, they argue, is an extravagant pursuit for the ultra-rich, with little benefit to the wider public. Each launch comes with a massive environmental footprint — from rocket emissions to the resources required for training and safety. They also question whether such travel risks turning space exploration into just another elite adventure. “It’s exploration for some, exclusion for most,” said one ethicist.

As more private space flights are planned, the debate about space tourism will likely continue. Some believe it marks the start of a new chapter in space exploration, where private companies help bring new ideas and progress. Others ask if this kind of travel is really about exploring space or just giving rich people a new kind of adventure. With serious problems on Earth like climate change and poverty, they say, we should focus on solving these issues first.

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- comment, agree/disagree, expand or challenge your partner's ideas,
- summarise and conclude your discussion (**Student B**).

NO 7.



SpaceX capsule splashes down after first crewed polar orbit flight

A SpaceX Dragon capsule carrying four space tourists splashed down off the coast of California on Friday. This was the first crewed mission to fly a polar orbit around the Earth, passing by both the North and South poles. This is also the first splashdown in 50 years in the Pacific Ocean. The last people to return from space to the Pacific were three NASA astronauts assigned to the 1975 Apollo–Soyuz mission.

The flight was privately funded by billionaire Chun Wang, who served as commander for the crew's training and spaceflight mission.

Supporters hail this milestone as a symbol of human progress and the democratisation of space. Private space travel, they argue, is no longer a far-fetched dream but a fast-developing industry that can inspire innovation across multiple fields — from advanced engineering to environmental monitoring. “Every mission helps us learn more,” SpaceX representatives said. “What seems like luxury now could lead to everyday applications tomorrow.”

Critics are far from convinced. Space tourism, they argue, is an extravagant pursuit for the ultra-rich, with little benefit to the wider public. Each launch comes with a massive environmental footprint — from rocket emissions to the resources required for training and safety. They also question whether such travel risks turning space exploration into just another elite adventure. “It’s exploration for some, exclusion for most,” said one ethicist.

As more private space flights are planned, the debate about space tourism will likely continue. Some believe it marks the start of a new chapter in space exploration, where private companies help bring new ideas and progress. Others ask if this kind of travel is really about exploring space or just giving rich people a new kind of adventure. With serious problems on Earth like climate change and poverty, they say, we should focus on solving these issues first.

Student A

PAIR DISCUSSION

You are going to read an opinion article. You have to respond to the problem raised and discuss it with a partner arguing either in favour of the topic (pros) or arguing against it (cons). If you are **Student A**, you argue **for**. If you are **Student B**, you argue **against**.

You have **5 minutes** to read the text and prepare for the discussion.

The discussion should take up to **5 minutes**.

You are expected to:

- give a short summary of the text (**Student A**),
- address the problem focusing on your assigned perspective: **Student A** focuses on the positive impact of streaming on cinemagoing, and **Student B** focuses on the negative effects of the growing practice of streaming,
- relate your points to personal experience, evidence, or prior knowledge,
- comment, agree/disagree, expand or challenge your partner's ideas,
- summarise and conclude your discussion (**Student B**).

NO 8.



Is Streaming Helping or Hurting Theatres?

As streaming continues to reshape how we watch films, recent findings suggest a surprising relationship between streaming and cinema. However, the question arises: Is streaming truly helping or hurting the cinema industry?

According to the survey conducted by Roku and the National Research Group (NRG), 61% of streaming viewers have attended at least two films in theatres over the past six months, and 74% have been at least once. This data suggests that streaming and cinema can coexist, with avid streamers also being active cinemagoers.

Interestingly, high-frequency streamers, those watching at least 20 hours of streaming content per week, are more inclined to visit cinemas monthly (32%) than their low-frequency counterparts (27%). This correlation indicates that a passion for streaming does not negate the big screen; in fact, it may complement it.

Streaming viewers do appreciate certain elements that only cinemas can provide. They believe that some movies, such as the blockbuster hit "Oppenheimer," need to be seen on the big screen. The immersive visual and audio experience remains the biggest draw for cinemagoers.

Despite the positive connection between streaming and cinema attendance suggested by the survey, there are concerns about the long-term impact of streaming on the theatre industry. The 2024 box office is \$3 billion behind 2023, indicating a decline in cinema revenue. Furthermore, only 34% of consumers express a desire to see new releases in theatres, with the majority willing to wait for a film's digital access. This growing lack of moviegoing interest suggests that, while streaming might keep some audiences interested in cinema, it might not be enough to sustain the industry in its traditional form. As the convenience and affordability of streaming continue to improve, do you think the traditional theatre experience will become just a special occasion or would remain a regular outing?

Student B

PAIR DISCUSSION

You are going to read an opinion article. You have to respond to the problem raised and discuss it with a partner arguing either in favour of the topic (pros) or arguing against it (cons). If you are **Student A**, you argue **for**. If you are **Student B**, you argue **against**.

You have **5 minutes** to read the text and prepare for the discussion.

The discussion should take up to **5 minutes**.

You are expected to:

- give a short summary of the text (**Student A**),
- address the problem focusing on your assigned perspective: **Student A** focuses on the positive impact of streaming on cinemagoing and **Student B** focuses on the negative effects of the growing practice of streaming,
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The discussion should take up to **5 minutes**.

You are expected to:

- give a short summary of the text (**Student A**),
- address the problem focusing on your assigned perspective: **Student A** focuses on AI art as a new form of creativity and **Student B** focuses on human art as a more genuine form of creation,
- relate your points to personal experience, evidence, or prior knowledge,
- comment, agree/disagree, expand or challenge your partner's ideas,
- summarise and conclude your discussion (**Student B**).

NO 9.



AI art: The end of creativity or the start of a new movement?

Artificial intelligence is now generating paintings, images, and sculptures, some selling for thousands of dollars. Does this require us to rethink our definition of art? Will AI replace human creativity, or can it enhance our artistic potential?

In the early 20th century, Marcel Duchamp challenged traditional art by submitting a porcelain urinal for exhibition. He argued that anything chosen and labelled by an artist could be art. Similarly, AI-generated artworks are disrupting the art world. Philosopher Alice Helliwell questions how Duchamp's radical piece can be accepted while AI-generated works are dismissed, as neither is made by an artist's hand.

Throughout history, artistic movements have reflected their cultural era – Turner's industrial landscapes captured the rise of industry, while Da Vinci's fascination with science shaped his art. AI follows the same pattern. The creators of Ai-Da, a robot artist, suggest that AI-generated art reflects modern fears of technological dominance. Rather than ending art, AI may lead to an artistic transformation, expanding how we create and perceive art.

The invention of photography in the 1800s offers a parallel. Some artists saw cameras as a threat, arguing that photographs would replace traditional painting. Instead, photography became a catalyst for change, pushing artists toward abstraction and reshaping modern art. AI could have a similar impact, not replacing human creativity but driving new artistic movements.

Art has long been considered a uniquely human endeavour, tied to emotion and intent. AI seems to be challenging this idea. If machines can be programmed to learn styles, compose images, and generate unique artworks, is their process a form of creativity? The rise of AI in art may not mark its end. It may be a shift toward new ways of seeing, thinking, and making. And there is another 'but'. AI developers seem to be using human creators' content.

Student B

PAIR DISCUSSION

You are going to read an opinion article. You have to respond to the problem raised and discuss it with a partner arguing either in favour of the topic (pros) or arguing against it (cons). If you are **Student A**, you argue **for**. If you are **Student B**, you argue **against**.

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