

Unit 05: It's an online world

READING 01 A blog post on social networking sites

Read the text below, then answer the questions (1–6) using a maximum of four words. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

“62% of all Facebook users update their status every single day” – that’s what an online article I read the other day said. You are not impressed? Then let me fill you in on the magnitude of this for a second.

Facebook has currently got 850 million users. About 20 months ago it “only” had 400 million fans. But that’s not what I mean. What’s really mind-blowing is that if every active Facebook user updated their status once a day for about a year, all these single updates would amount to a total of approximately 290 billion updates altogether. Can you believe that? I know, we are only talking about status updates – but we are talking about 290 BILLION of updates!

What I’m personally really amazed by is the popularity of Facebook and other social networking sites. Most of the people using Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn or other sites like that will tell you that they are usually with multiple social networking sites. Instead of focusing on their preference, they feverishly try to keep up with answering their mails, chatting, posting news on their walls, accepting invitations to all sorts of quizzes, playing games and checking their alleged friends’ status updates on various websites. There are more and more people spending hour after hour every day doing almost nothing but that. Their fascination with the seemingly endless possibilities of these networks seems to be on the increase rather than the decrease lately.

But when did that happen? Seriously, can you tell me when we started using Facebook or similar sites as a way of socialising instead of meeting our friends for real? After all, chatting online lacks many of the aspects that make actual personal contact so much fun. Just think about watching your best friend crack up about a joke you just told them or giving them a hug after they got some bad news. There is nothing better than singing along with your favourite song or watching a really bad film and making fun of it.

It’s not as if I lived in a world without the internet. I have got an Facebook account too, but I hardly ever use it. To be honest, I find it quite tedious to follow every single post on my wall and react to it. Plus, I don’t really get the hype. Most things people write are downright stupid and provide only plain information. I could not care less about Maggie having just eaten her second yoghurt or Stan having caught the flu and sneezing every five seconds. More often than not I would like to tell them to get a life instead of spending it posting messages no one wants to read anyway.

What I do know, however, is that with the advent of the internet a lot of aspects of our lives have undeniably changed, with communication probably adapting to the new conditions the most. Are all these changes to our advantage? I’m not so sure.

0	What does the writer of this blog try to impress the reader with?	<i>the magnitude of Facebook</i>
Q1	Which number does the author refer to as mind-blowing?	
Q2	What is typical of users of social networks like Facebook or Twitter?	
Q3	Which development of the users' fascination with those networks can be observed recently?	
Q4	What are social networking sites commonly used for?	
Q5	According to the blog, what is <u>one</u> example illustrating the benefits of face-to-face contact?	
Q6	What is the problem with Facebook posts?	

READING 02 Distance education

Read the text below, then choose the correct heading (A–H) for each paragraph (1–5). There are two extra headings you should not use. Write your answers in the boxes provided at the end of the task. The first one (0) has been done for you.

Distance education

(0) _____

Distance education is a kind of formal learning in which both teachers and students are not in the same place. It may be synchronous or asynchronous. If distance education is synchronous, teaching happens at a particular time and location. In the case of asynchronous distance education, students may choose when and where they want to receive the instruction, provided they have internet access. In general, distance education can be accomplished through e-mail, the internet, CD-ROMs, audio or video transmission or mail and post offices.

(Q1) _____

The number of institutions offering distance education programmes is constantly increasing. Both traditional and virtual universities as well as two-year junior colleges and even private organisations make such programmes available. Virtual universities, which are on the rise, only offer no-campus programmes. Although most of them hold the same kind of accreditation as traditional universities, people interested in distance education should still make sure the programme they have chosen is accredited.

(Q2) _____

The application procedures for enrollment into distance education programmes are very similar to those common for on-site programmes. To be accepted in a distance education programme, people generally have to fulfill the basic requirements of good scores on various admission tests such as the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), the GRE (Graduate Record Examination) or the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Records of their educational performance as well as letters of recommendation, statements of purpose and application essays very often also have to be submitted.

(Q3) _____

There are various reasons why people decide to enroll in distance education programmes. The most common reasons are of professional, logistical and familial nature. In terms of professional reasons, people cannot get away from their jobs to embark on their studies. Those who cannot afford to attend a college that is away from their home choose distance education programmes due to logistical reasons, and those who have child-care or other family-related obligations have got familial reasons.

(Q4) _____

Most people who have successfully chosen and attended a distance education programme have done a lot of research in order to find a programme that suits them. Before enrolling, plenty of questions have to be clarified:

- Will I have enough time and room to study?
- Will my family members be able to support me?
- Why do I want to study – do I need a degree to enhance my future possibilities, or do I just want to learn a new skill?

- How much will the programme cost?
- Do I have the equipment I need to fulfill all the requirements (e.g. in the case of web-based learning)?

(Q5) _____

The impact distance education can have on a student's financial situation might vary considerably. While room, board and travel usually do not have to be paid for in distance education, the actual academic fees very often are the same as in traditional learning programmes. Costs related to residency on campus in the course of face-to-face meetings have to be included in the budget. The same applies to all the learning materials students will need and have to purchase throughout their studies.

A	What about accreditation?
B	What is distance education?
C	Why choose distance education?
D	Who is granted admission?
E	What about the costs?
F	Who offers distance education?
G	What are the advantages of virtual universities?
H	What are the basic requirements?

0	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
B					

VOCABULARY 03 Going virtual

You are going to read a text about virtual life. Some words are missing from the text. Choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) for each gap (1–7) in the text. Write your answers in the boxes provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

Going virtual

(0) ... studies have shown that there might be numerous benefits to spending time in a virtual world, provided that the person (Q1) ... does not lose touch with reality. Experts in brain development (Q2) ... have discovered that people deal better with many real-life scenarios if they have gone over them in their minds repeatedly. Thus, spending some time in a virtual reality could result in an increase in a person's actual (Q3) ... , such as better sportsmanship or improved social skills.

Thus, psychiatrists as well as therapists have started to reap the (Q4) ... of the multitude of available scenarios the virtual world offers. Their patients can face fears and phobias, while knowing that they are perfectly safe and therefore practice taking different (Q5) ... to problematic situations. The more frequently they are introduced to such forms of therapy, the more comfortable they become with similar situations in real life.

Furthermore, this technology has been adopted by universities and other educational institutions in order to prepare their students for worldly scenarios they will (Q6) ... in their professional lives. This includes business meetings, giving speeches in front of crowds, conflict management, and negotiations. By (Q7) ... their students with in-depth training, schools believe that they can ensure a more capable and efficient generation of future employees or employers.

0	A Recent	B Latest	C Modern	D Contemporary
Q1	A involved	B convoluted	C affected	D concerned
Q2	A study	B research	C investigation	D exploration
Q3	A abilities	B facilities	C aptitudes	D capacities
Q4	A aids	B paybacks	C benefits	D assistances
Q5	A tactics	B approaches	C attitudes	D methods
Q6	A come upon	B bump into	C struggle	D encounter
Q7	A offering	B showing	C providing	D obtaining

0	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
A							

Answer key

READING 01 A blog post on social networking sites

- 0** the magnitude of Facebook
Q1 290 billion status updates
Q2 member of several networks/with different social networks/follow various websites
Q3 is on the increase/fascination is increasing
Q4 socialising
Q5 watching friends laugh/giving friends a hug/singing along favourite song/having fun together/making fun of films
Q6 downright stupid/give plain information/tedious to follow

READING 02 Distance education

0	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
B	F	D	C	H	E

VOCABULARY 03 Going virtual

0	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
A	D	B	A	C	B	D	C