

The Impact of Social Media

Reading Passage, Comprehension & Practice Questions

The Impact of Social Media

Before you read, think about these two questions: **How many times a day do you check your social media accounts?** And **do you think social media makes people's lives better or worse?** Keep your answers in mind as you read the article below.

Reading Passage: Always Connected — But at What Cost?

Imagine waking up and reaching for your phone before you even get out of bed. For millions of people around the world, this is already their daily reality. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X — which was formerly known as Twitter — have completely changed the way people communicate, share information, and see themselves. But while these platforms offer real benefits, they also bring some serious challenges that are worth thinking about.

On the positive side, social media has made it much easier to stay in touch with friends and family, especially those who live far away. It has also given ordinary people a powerful voice. A teenager in Lagos or a student in Bogotá can now share their ideas with the entire world in seconds. In addition, small businesses have found that social media is one of the most effective and affordable ways to reach new customers. A bakery in Warsaw, for example, might post a short video of freshly baked bread and attract hundreds of new visitors to their shop within a day.

However, the picture is not entirely positive. Research suggests that spending too much time scrolling through social media can affect people's mental health. Many users, particularly young people, compare their own lives to the carefully edited images they see online, which often leads to feelings of inadequacy or loneliness. There is also the growing problem of misinformation — false or misleading news stories that spread incredibly quickly on these platforms. If people cannot tell the difference between real and fake information, it could have serious consequences for society.

So, what should we do? Most experts agree that the answer is not to delete all our accounts and disappear offline completely. Instead, they recommend setting clear limits on screen time and being more critical about the content we consume. If people learn to use social media more mindfully, it might become a genuinely positive force in their lives rather than a source of stress.

Key Vocabulary in Context

Word / Phrase	Part of Speech	Definition	Example Sentence
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platform	noun	A website or app that allows people to communicate, share content, or do business online.	Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world.
affordable	adjective	Not too expensive; easy to pay for.	Social media advertising is affordable even for very small businesses.
scrolling	verb (present participle)	Moving up or down through content on a screen, usually with your finger.	She spent an hour scrolling through her feed without realising how much time had passed.
inadequacy	noun	The feeling that you are not good enough or do not have enough.	Seeing perfect photos online can cause feelings of inadequacy in some users.
misinformation	noun	False or incorrect information, especially when it spreads widely.	Misinformation about health topics can be very dangerous if people believe it.
consequences	noun (plural)	The results or effects of an action or situation, often negative ones.	Ignoring climate change could have serious consequences for future generations.
mindfully	adverb	In a careful and aware way, paying attention to what you are doing.	If we use technology mindfully, it can improve our lives rather than harm them.
misleading	adjective	Giving the wrong idea or impression; making people believe something false.	The article was misleading because it only presented one side of the story.

Reading Strategies & Comprehension Tips

Skimming for the Main Idea

Read the first sentence of each paragraph quickly without stopping. This will give you the main idea of the whole article in under a minute. Notice that this article follows a classic **advantages → disadvantages → solution** structure, which is very common in opinion and magazine articles.

Scanning for Specific Details

If a question asks about a specific place or name — for example, Warsaw or Lagos — scan the text quickly for capital letters. Proper nouns like city names and people's names are easy to spot and can help you find the right section of the text fast.

Understanding Cause and Effect

This passage contains several cause-and-effect relationships. Look carefully for linking words such as *which leads to*, *because*, *as a result*, and *if*. For example, the third paragraph explains that comparing yourself to

edited images *leads to* feelings of inadequacy. Being able to follow these connections will help you answer inference questions correctly.

Making Inferences

The writer never directly says that social media is bad. Instead, they present both sides and suggest a balanced approach. Ask yourself: **What is the writer's overall opinion?** The answer is not stated directly — you need to use the evidence in the text to work it out.

Common Reading Pitfalls & Traps

Trap 1: Confusing the Writer's View with a General Fact

The passage says "*Research suggests that spending too much time scrolling can affect mental health.*" Be careful — this is a reference to research findings, not an absolute proven fact stated by the writer. In exam questions, watch for options that say the writer *proves* or *states as certain* something that is only *suggested*.

Trap 2: Assuming "Negative = No Solution"

Some students read the third paragraph about mental health problems and misinformation, and incorrectly conclude that the writer thinks social media is entirely harmful. However, the final paragraph clearly offers a solution. Always read the **whole text** before choosing your answer.

Trap 3: Misreading Examples as Main Points

The bakery in Warsaw and the teenager in Lagos are *examples* used to support a larger point — they are not the main ideas of their paragraphs. In multiple choice questions, distractors sometimes focus on these small details to mislead you. Always ask yourself: *Is this the main point, or just an example?*

Trap 4: The Word "formerly"

The passage says X "*was formerly known as Twitter.*" The word *formerly* means *in the past* or *previously*. It does **not** mean *formally* (in an official or serious way). These two words look similar but have very different meanings — be careful not to confuse them.

Quick Summary

Now read the passage carefully and complete **Exercise 1 (Multiple Choice)** and **Exercise 2 (Fill-in-the-gap dropdown)** below.

The Impact of Social Media – Practice Test

B1 | Reading Comprehension Exercises: Multiple Choice & Fill-in-the-Gap Dropdown (20 Questions)

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 What is the main idea of the passage?

- A** Social media is only harmful and should be avoided by everyone.
- B** Social media has both benefits and challenges, and people should use it more carefully.
- C** Small businesses are the biggest winners from social media platforms.
- D** Young people should delete their social media accounts immediately.

2 According to the passage, what was the former name of the platform now called X?

- A** Instagram
- B** TikTok
- C** Twitter
- D** Facebook

3 According to the passage, how has social media helped small businesses?

- A** It has allowed them to hire more employees from other countries.
- B** It has provided them with free products to sell online.
- C** It has given them an effective and affordable way to reach new customers.
- D** It has helped them open physical shops in different cities.

4 What example does the passage use to show how ordinary people now have a powerful voice on social media?

- A** A business owner in London sharing their products online.
- B** A teenager in Lagos or a student in Bogotá sharing their ideas with the world.
- C** A journalist in New York posting breaking news stories.
- D** A teacher in Warsaw uploading educational videos.

5 According to the passage, what is one negative effect of social media on mental health?

- A** People spend too much money buying products they see advertised online.
- B** Young people compare their lives to edited images online, leading to feelings of inadequacy or loneliness.
- C** Users are becoming less interested in communicating with friends and family.
- D** People are sleeping less because they stay up late watching videos.

6 What does the passage say about misinformation on social media?

- A** It is only a problem in certain countries.
- B** Social media companies have already solved this problem.
- C** False or misleading news can spread very quickly on these platforms.
- D** Misinformation is less dangerous than other problems caused by social media.

7 What do most experts recommend, according to the passage?

- A** People should delete all their social media accounts immediately.
- B** Governments should ban social media platforms.
- C** People should set clear limits on screen time and think more critically about the content they see.
- D** Schools should teach students how to create social media content.

8 Which of the following can be inferred from the passage about the bakery in Warsaw?

- A** The bakery became famous internationally after its video went viral.
- B** Social media helped the bakery attract more customers quickly and affordably.
- C** The bakery was struggling financially before it joined social media.
- D** The bakery owner was a professional social media influencer.

9 According to the passage, what could happen if people cannot tell the difference between real and fake information?

- A** Social media platforms might lose all their users.
- B** It could have serious consequences for society.
- C** Governments will pass new laws to control the internet.
- D** People will stop using social media altogether.

10 What does the word 'mindfully' suggest about how experts want people to use social media?

- A** They want people to use social media as often as possible.
- B** They want people to think carefully and make conscious choices about how they use social media.
- C** They want people to use social media only for work or business purposes.
- D** They want people to avoid looking at images and only read written posts.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap Dropdown (Questions 11–20)

11 Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X have completely changed the way people ____, share information, and see themselves.

- A** communicate
- B** travel
- C** compete

12 Social media has made it much easier to stay in touch with friends and family, especially those who live far ____.

- A** away
- B** behind
- C** above

13 Social media has also given ordinary people a powerful ____.

- A** voice
- B** career
- C** image

14 Small businesses have found that social media is one of the most effective and ____ ways to reach new customers.

- A** affordable
- B** complicated
- C** traditional

15 Research suggests that spending too much time ____ through social media can affect people's mental health.

- A** scrolling
- B** talking
- C** searching

16 Many users compare their own lives to the carefully ____ images they see online.

- A** edited
- B** shared
- C** created

17 Comparing their lives to perfect images online often leads to feelings of ____ or loneliness.

- A** inadequacy
- B** excitement
- C** confidence

18 There is also the growing problem of ____ — false or misleading news stories that spread incredibly quickly on these platforms.

- A** misinformation
- B** entertainment
- C** communication

19 Most experts agree that the answer is not to delete all our accounts and disappear ____ completely.

- A** offline
- B** abroad
- C** forever

20 Experts recommend setting clear ____ on screen time and being more critical about the content we consume.

- A** limits
- B** rules
- C** goals

Answer Key & Explanations

The Impact of Social Media | B1

Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **B** **Correct Answer: Social media has both benefits and challenges, and people should use it more carefully.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage discusses both the **positive side** and the **challenges** of social media, and ends by recommending that people use it more **mindfully**. This balanced view is the central message of the whole text.
2. **C** **Correct Answer: Twitter**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage states that **X** *"was formerly known as Twitter."* This means Twitter is the old name for the platform that is now called X.
3. **C** **Correct Answer: It has given them an effective and affordable way to reach new customers.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says social media is **"one of the most effective and affordable ways to reach new customers."** The example of *a bakery in Warsaw* attracting new visitors after posting a video illustrates this point.
4. **B** **Correct Answer: A teenager in Lagos or a student in Bogotá sharing their ideas with the world.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage specifically mentions *"a teenager in Lagos or a student in Bogotá"* as examples of **ordinary people** who can now share their ideas with the entire world in seconds thanks to social media.
5. **B** **Correct Answer: Young people compare their lives to edited images online, leading to feelings of inadequacy or loneliness.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage explains that many users, **particularly young people**, compare their lives to *"carefully edited images"* online, which **"often leads to feelings of inadequacy or loneliness."** This is a direct cause-and-effect relationship described in the text.
6. **C** **Correct Answer: False or misleading news can spread very quickly on these platforms.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage describes **misinformation** as *"false or misleading news stories that spread incredibly quickly on these platforms."* The word **incredibly** emphasises how fast this problem can grow.
7. **C** **Correct Answer: People should set clear limits on screen time and think more critically about the content they see.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage states that experts **"recommend setting clear limits on screen time and being more critical about the content we consume."** This is their suggested solution, not deleting accounts entirely.
8. **B** **Correct Answer: Social media helped the bakery attract more customers quickly and affordably.**
✓ **Explanation:** The passage describes the bakery as an example of how social media is an **effective and affordable** tool for small businesses. By posting a short video, the bakery attracted *"hundreds of new visitors to their shop within a day,"* which clearly shows social media helped it reach customers quickly.

9. **B** Correct Answer: It could have serious consequences for society.
✓ **Explanation:** The passage states directly: *"If people cannot tell the difference between real and fake information, it could have serious consequences for society."* This is a **cause-and-effect** relationship clearly described in the text.
10. **B** Correct Answer: They want people to think carefully and make conscious choices about how they use social media.
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says that if people use social media more **mindfully**, it could become a positive force rather than a source of stress. **Mindfully** means being *aware and thoughtful* about your actions, which connects to the advice about setting limits and thinking critically about content.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: communicate
✓ **Explanation:** The passage says social media has changed the way people **communicate**, which means **talk and connect** with each other. *Social media has changed the way people communicate.*
12. **A** Correct Answer: away
✓ **Explanation:** The phrase **live far away** means people who do not live close to you. *It is easier to stay in touch with family who live far away.*
13. **A** Correct Answer: voice
✓ **Explanation:** Having a **voice** here means the **ability to share your opinions and ideas** publicly. *Social media has given ordinary people a powerful voice.*
14. **A** Correct Answer: affordable
✓ **Explanation:** **Affordable** means **not too expensive**, which is why small businesses prefer social media for advertising. *Social media is an affordable way to reach new customers.*
15. **A** Correct Answer: scrolling
✓ **Explanation:** **Scrolling** means **moving up or down through content** on a screen. *Spending too much time scrolling through social media can be harmful.*
16. **A** Correct Answer: edited
✓ **Explanation:** **Edited** means the images have been **changed or improved** to look better than real life. *People compare themselves to carefully edited images online.*
17. **A** Correct Answer: inadequacy
✓ **Explanation:** **Inadequacy** means feeling that you are **not good enough** compared to others. *Seeing perfect images online can cause feelings of inadequacy.*
18. **A** Correct Answer: misinformation
✓ **Explanation:** **Misinformation** refers to **false or incorrect information** that is shared as if it were true. *Misinformation spreads very quickly on social media.*

19. **A** Correct Answer: offline

✓ **Explanation: Offline** means **not connected to the internet**. The passage says we should not disappear offline completely but use social media more carefully. *We don't need to go offline completely.*

20. **A** Correct Answer: limits

✓ **Explanation: Limits** means **a maximum amount** you allow yourself to do something. The passage says setting clear **limits** on screen time is a good solution. *Setting limits on screen time can help improve mental health.*

Score Guide

18–20 Correct	Excellent! You have mastered this topic.
15–17 Correct	Very good! Review the rules you missed.
12–14 Correct	Good start. Re-read the lesson and examples.
0–11 Correct	Study the lesson again before retaking the test.