Digital habits across generations

Read an article about how people at different ages use computers and smartphones to practise and improve your reading skills.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (1–8) with the vocabulary (a–h).

Vocabulary	Definitions
1. ..... to miss out on	a. websites and apps like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
2. ..... addiction	b. in a funny or strange way because it's unexpected
3. ..... constantly	c. different from
4. ..... to be cut off from	d. to not get the benefits of
5. ..... unlike	e. needing something too much or in an unhealthy way
6. ..... social media	f. people who are the first to buy or use new technology
7. ..... ironically	g. all the time without a break
8. ..... early adopters	h. to have no access to

Reading text: Digital habits across generations

Today's grandparents are joining their grandchildren on social media, but the different generations' online habits couldn't be more different. In the UK the over-55s are joining Facebook in increasing numbers, meaning that they will soon be the site's second biggest user group, with 3.5 million users aged 55–64 and 2.9 million over-65s.

Sheila, aged 59, says, 'I joined to see what my grandchildren are doing, as my daughter posts videos and photos of them. It's a much better way to see what they're doing than waiting for letters and photos in the post. That's how we did it when I was a child, but I think I'm lucky I get to see so much more of their lives than my grandparents did.'

Ironically, Sheila's grandchildren are less likely to use Facebook themselves. Children under 17 in the UK are leaving the site – only 2.2 million users are under 17 – but they're not going far from their smartphones. Chloe, aged 15, even sleeps with her phone. 'It's my alarm clock so I have to,' she says. 'I look at it before I go to sleep and as soon as I wake up.'

Unlike her grandmother's generation, Chloe's age group is spending so much time on their phones at home that they are missing out on spending time with their friends in real life. Sheila, on the other hand, has made contact with old friends from school she hasn't heard

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from in forty years. 'We use Facebook to arrange to meet all over the country,' she says. 'It's changed my social life completely.'

Teenagers might have their parents to thank for their smartphone and social media addiction as their parents were the early adopters of the smartphone. Peter, 38 and father of two teenagers, reports that he used to be on his phone or laptop constantly. 'I was always connected and I felt like I was always working,' he says. 'How could I tell my kids to get off their phones if I was always in front of a screen myself?' So, in the evenings and at weekends, he takes his SIM card out of his smartphone and puts it into an old-style mobile phone that can only make calls and send text messages. 'I'm not completely cut off from the world in case of emergencies, but the important thing is I'm setting a better example to my kids and spending more quality time with them.'

Is it only a matter of time until the generation above and below Peter catches up with the new trend for a less digital life?

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Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. More people aged 55 or more use Facebook than people aged 65 or more.	True	False
2. Grandparents typically use Facebook less than their grandchildren.	True	False
3. Sheila feels grateful to social media.	True	False
4. Peter found his own smartphone use affected how he felt about how much his children used their phones.	True	False
5. Peter has changed how much he uses his phone during the working day.	True	False
6. Peter feels that the changes make him a better parent.	True	False

Task 2

Write the phrases in the correct group.

are returning to older technology	are less keen on Facebook	like to keep their phones near them
use social media to find old friends	were the first generation to get smartphones	feel lucky to have the internet in their lives

Teens	Grandparents	Parents

Discussion

Who uses their phone the most among your family or friends?

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