

TWO-SIDED ESSAY

OUTLINE

Introduction	
<p>Nowadays, social networks have become a common means of communication for people both young and old. The use of these networks has skyrocketed in the last decade, with most people in Hong Kong now using websites such as Facebook or apps such as WhatsApp. Such networks were unavailable ten years ago. However, there is a debate as to whether these networks do in fact enhance our social interaction. This essay will examine both sides of the argument before coming to a conclusion.</p>	<p>Start by ‘painting a picture’ of the general context and say that you will discuss both points of view in your essay. You do not need to give your own opinion at this stage, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some people say social networks are good, some say they’re bad.
Main Body	
<p>In the first instance, it is clearly the case that social media does allow people to widen their circle of friends. Many users of Facebook, for example, have upwards of 500 friends, and some even have more than 1,000. Some of these online friends they might never have met before, but they are still able to communicate with them all across the globe. These friends are immediately contactable, so if a user is feeling lonely there is always someone to talk to.</p>	<p>Give a first argument in support of the idea and an example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social media gives us a larger circle of friends, e.g. Facebook.
<p>Moreover, social networks allow people to interact with people they would not ordinarily come into contact with. This can be seen in the rising popularity of online dating sites and apps. Many people now use these apps to look for a boyfriend or girlfriend, and despite the criticisms leveled against these networks, it cannot be denied that they have been used to form the basis of many successful relationships, both online and in the ‘real’ world.</p>	<p>Give your second argument and support it with an example, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media allows us to meet different kinds of people, e.g. online dating
<p>However, these advantages do not necessarily eclipse the negative, anti-social tendencies of social networks. Indeed, critics of social networks would not deny that one can expand one’s circle of friends by logging onto these sites, but they would question the quality of such ‘friendships’. After all, can one really be close to 1,000 people at the same time? Surely it’s better to invest in five or six deep friendships than hundreds of superficial ones.</p>	<p>Give your first counter-argument and support it with an example, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of friendships diminishes, e.g. we can’t keep deep friendships on Facebook
<p>Critics would also point to the fact that social networks can be very dangerous places. In recent years, there have been lots of examples of cyber-bullying, where teenagers have been abused online. This is a serious problem and a girl in the UK recently committed suicide because of abuse from her so-called “friends”. In this way, social networks can be seen as negative forces for social cohesion.</p>	<p>Give your second counter-argument and support it with an example, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social media can lead to social problems, e.g. cyber bullying
Conclusion	
<p>In conclusion, it is clear that social networks are not going away and their popularity looks set to increase even more in the coming years. However, the fact that it is popular does not mean that it is a positive force for society. Social networks turn “friends” into “followers” and encourage relationships without commitment. It is incumbent upon all of us to use social media only in addition to forming real, face-to-face friendships.</p>	<p>Summarise the main argument and give <i>your opinion</i> about it. Which side do you find most persuasive?</p>