Functional Skills English Level 2

Mock Test 2

Total marks: 64

Pass mark: 38 out of 64

Time allowed: 2 hours

Reading 24 marks | Writing 40 marks | Total 64 marks | Time: 2 hours

You will need: pen, pencil, ruler, rubber. Dictionary allowed for Reading section.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Text 1 — Online News Article

Screen Time and Young People: Are We Losing a Generation?

A landmark study published by the Royal College of Paediatrics has found that teenagers in the UK now spend an average of 7.4 hours per day on screens outside of school, up from 4.8 hours in 2018. The research, which tracked 12,000 young people aged 13–17 over three years, links excessive screen use to rising rates of anxiety, poor sleep quality, and declining physical fitness.

Dr James Whitfield, who led the study, describes the findings as "deeply concerning but not surprising." He explains: "The adolescent brain is still developing, and the constant dopamine stimulation from social media creates patterns that closely resemble addictive behaviour. We are seeing children who cannot concentrate for more than eight minutes without checking their phone."

However, not all experts agree that screens are inherently harmful. Professor Lisa Okafor, a digital sociologist at UCL, argues that "demonising technology ignores the genuine benefits — creative expression, global connection, and access to educational resources that previous generations could only dream of." She points to research showing that moderate social media use (under two hours daily) is associated with higher wellbeing scores than no use at all.

The government has responded by announcing a consultation on banning smartphones in schools for under-16s, following similar measures in France and Australia. Critics call this a "sticking plaster" that fails to address the root causes of digital dependency, including parental modelling and the deliberately addictive design of social media algorithms.

What seems clear is that the conversation has moved beyond simple "screens good or bad" debates. The real question, experts suggest, is how we help young people develop a healthy, intentional relationship with technology rather than a passive, compulsive one.

Source: BBC News online, February 2025

Text 2 — School Policy Document

Riverside Academy — Student Digital Device Policy

1. Scope — This policy applies to all students in Years 7–13 and covers all personal digital devices including smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, and earbuds/headphones.

2. During Lessons — All personal devices must be switched off and stored in bags. Smartwatches must be set to 'school mode' (no notifications). Teachers may permit device use for specific learning activities. Unauthorised use will result in confiscation until end of day.

3. Break and Lunch — Phones may be used in designated 'phone zones' (6th form common room, outdoor courtyard) only. All other areas remain phone-free to encourage face-to-face interaction. Photography of other students without consent is prohibited.

4. Consequences — First offence: device confiscated until end of day. Second offence: device held in school office for parental collection. Third offence: student required to hand in device to reception each morning for two weeks. Persistent breaches may result in a permanent ban.

5. Wellbeing Support — Students who feel unable to manage without their device may access support through the pastoral team. The school counsellor offers 'digital detox' workshops every half-term.

6. Exceptions — Students with medical devices (e.g., insulin monitors connected via smartphone) must have a Device Exception Form (DEF-01) completed by their parent and approved by the SENCO.

7. Parental Responsibility — Parents are asked to avoid contacting students by phone during school hours. In emergencies, contact the school office who will relay messages immediately.

Text 3 — Online Forum Post

RE: Should we take our kids' phones away?

Posted by: DadOfThree_NotInsane | 14 March 2025

Right, I'll probably get slaughtered for this, but here goes. Last month I took my 14-year-old's phone off him. Completely. Cold turkey. And you know what happened? For three days he acted like I'd removed a vital organ. Tears, rage, the lot.

Then something weird happened. He started reading again. Actual books. He came downstairs and asked — ASKED — if he could help with dinner. He slept ten hours a night instead of five. By week two, he told me he felt 'less stressed but kind of bored.' I told him boredom is where creativity lives.

Now before you all pile in with 'but what about staying in touch with friends' — yes, I get it. His social life took a hit initially. But his real friendships actually got stronger because he had to make effort. Call people. Arrange to see them in person.

Am I saying every parent should do this? No. My kid, my call. But if your teenager is moody, exhausted, struggling at school, and glued to a screen sixteen hours a day, maybe — just maybe — the phone isn't helping.

He gets it back next month with strict limits. Two hours max, no phone in bedroom after 9pm, and I have the password to everything. Non-negotiable.

Flame me if you want. I've got my kid back.

Section A — Reading

11 questions • 24 marks

Question 1 (1 mark)

According to Text 1, how many hours per day do teenagers currently spend on screens outside of school?

- A) 7.4 hours
- B) 4.8 hours
- C) 8 hours
- D) 2 hours

Question 2 (2 marks)

Dr Whitfield says the findings are "deeply concerning but not surprising." What evidence does he give?

- A) Social media creates addictive patterns and children cannot concentrate for more than eight minutes
- B) Children are spending too much money on apps
- C) Schools are not teaching digital skills
- D) Parents are not monitoring usage

Question 3 (2 marks)

Professor Okafor disagrees with the negative view. What three benefits of technology does she identify?

- A) Creative expression, global connection, and access to educational resources
- B) Entertainment, socialising, and gaming
- C) Job skills, communication, and coding
- D) Speed, convenience, and cost savings

Question 4 (2 marks)

In Text 2, what happens if a student breaches the phone policy for a third time?

- A) They must hand in their device to reception each morning for two weeks
- B) They are permanently excluded from school
- C) Their parents are called immediately
- D) They receive an after-school detention

Question 5 (2 marks)

According to Text 2, why does the school ask parents not to contact students by phone during school hours?

- A) Because direct contact during lessons undermines the policy
- B) Because the school does not allow phones on site
- C) Because it distracts teachers from their work
- D) Because the phone signal is weak inside the building

Question 6 (2 marks)

In Text 3, the writer says his son "acted like I'd removed a vital organ." What technique is this and what effect does it have?

- A) Hyperbole — it exaggerates the son's reaction to emphasise how dependent he was on the phone
- B) Simile — it compares the phone to a body part
- C) Metaphor — it suggests the son was physically ill
- D) Personification — it gives the phone human qualities

Question 7 (2 marks)

What is the purpose of the short sentence "I've got my kid back" at the end of Text 3?

- A) It creates a powerful emotional conclusion that summarises his entire argument
- B) It shows he was worried his son might leave home
- C) It is a command telling other parents what to do
- D) It introduces a new point about parenting

Question 8 (3 marks)

Compare the tone and language of Text 1 and Text 3.

- A) Text 1 uses formal, balanced language with statistics and expert quotes; Text 3 uses informal, personal language with humour and anecdote
- B) Both texts use formal academic language throughout
- C) Text 1 is emotional and biased; Text 3 is neutral and factual
- D) Both writers rely entirely on statistics

Question 9 (2 marks)

Text 1 describes the proposed phone ban as a "sticking plaster." What does this metaphor suggest?

- A) It is a superficial fix that covers the problem without treating its underlying causes
- B) It will heal the problem over time
- C) It is a medical solution supported by doctors
- D) It protects children from harm effectively

Question 10 (3 marks)

How do Texts 2 and 3 differ in their approach to managing young people's phone use?

- A) Text 2 takes an institutional approach with graduated consequences and support; Text 3 takes a personal parental approach based on direct action
- B) Both recommend removing phones completely
- C) Text 2 is lenient while Text 3 is strict
- D) Both focus on punishment rather than support

Question 11 (3 marks)

Using evidence from all three texts, evaluate whether restricting young people's access to technology is the best solution.

- A) Restriction alone is insufficient — Text 1 shows moderate use has benefits, Text 2 combines restriction with support, Text 3 shows restriction works alongside re-engagement
- B) All three texts agree banning phones completely is the only answer

■ C) None of the texts support any form of restriction

■ D) Only Text 3 offers any practical solution

Section B — Writing

Complete both writing tasks.

Writing Task 1 — Formal (24 marks)

The headteacher of a secondary school has asked for views on managing students' use of mobile phones.

Write a formal letter to the headteacher explaining your view on whether phones should be restricted or banned, considering the impact on learning and wellbeing, and suggesting practical measures.

Write approximately 300–400 words. Use an appropriate format for a formal letter.

Writing Task 2 — Informal (16 marks)

Your younger cousin (aged 13) has just got their first smartphone and is excited about joining social media.

Write a message to your cousin giving advice on using social media safely and healthily, explaining benefits and risks, and giving practical tips for managing screen time.

Write approximately 200–250 words.