

# Are you sure you have all the facts?

Learn to speed read Media articles for factual information.

## It's SO over: cool cyberkids abandon social networking sites

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From uncles wearing skinny jeans to mothers investing in ra-ra skirts and fathers nodding awkwardly along to the latest grime record, the older generation has long known that the surest way to kill a youth trend is to adopt it as its own. The cyberworld, it seems, is no exception.

The proliferation of parents and teachers trawling the pages of Facebook trying to poke old schoolfriends and lovers, and traversing

the outer reaches of MySpace is causing an adolescent exodus from the social networking sites, according to research from the media regulator Ofcom.

The sites, once the virtual streetcorners, pubs and clubs for millions of 15- to 24-year-olds, have now been over-run by 25- to 34-year-olds whose presence is driving their younger peers away.

Although their love of being online shows no sign of abating, the percentage of 15- to 24-year-olds who have a profile on a social networking site has dropped for the first time – from 55% at the start of last year to 50% this year. In contrast, 46% of 25- to 34-year-olds are now regularly checking up on sites such as Facebook compared with 40% last year.

Overall, 30% of British adults have a social networking profile, against 21% in 2007 when Ofcom first did the research. Half the UK's online population have a Facebook profile and spend an average of nearly six hours a month on the site compared with four hours in May 2008.

"There is nothing to suggest overall usage of the internet among 15- to 24-year-olds is going down," said Peter Phillips, the regulator's head of strategy. "Data suggests they are spending less time on social networking sites."

James Thickett, director of market research at Ofcom, said that while older people seemed to be embracing social networking sites, Facebook and MySpace remained immensely popular with children under 16.

"Clearly take-up among under 16-year-olds is very high... so we cannot say for certain whether this is people in a certain age group who are not setting up social networking profiles or whether it's a population shift which is reflecting people getting older and having a social networking profile that they set up two years ago," he said. "The main point is the profile of social networking users is getting older."

The arrival of the 25- to 34-year-old age group, meanwhile, also appears to be behind the explosion in usage of Twitter.

There's good news: there are only really three kinds of question that get asked about Media texts in the exam. Sometimes these are asked separately, sometimes blended together. How the questions are worded will depend on which exam you're doing, but it all still comes down to these three types.

We're going to tackle one question a week. We'll give you a text to read, the low-down on the question and advice on how to answer it. This week:

### What does this text tell us about its topic?

#### 1 Straightforward questions of this type often go like this:

**QUESTION:** List eight findings from the Ofcom research mentioned in the article.

#### SUGGESTED ANSWER:

1. 55% people aged 15-24 with a social networking profile at the start of 2008.
2. 50% people aged 15-24 with a social networking profile at the start of 2009.
3. 46% people aged 25-34 regularly checked up on sites like Facebook in 2009.
4. 40% people aged 25-34 regularly checked up on sites like Facebook in 2008.
5. 30% British adults with a social networking profile in 2009.
6. 21% British adults with a social networking profile in 2007.
7. People with a Facebook profile spent an average of nearly six hours a month on the site in 2009.
8. People with a Facebook profile spent an average of four hours a month on the site in 2008.

#### TIPS:

➤ Instead of "List" you might find it written as "Find and write down" a number of items from the text.



➤ If you're asked to find eight things there will usually be eight marks available – one for each. There are no extra marks for extra items; do the eight and move on to questions worth more.

## 2 The next level up can look something like this:

**QUESTION: Find and write down one fact and one opinion that are important in the writer's argument about changing uses of Facebook and explain why they are important.**

**SUGGESTED ANSWER:**

The fact the writer focuses on most is the drop by 5% of people aged 15-24 who have a social networking profile. This is important because the writer is arguing that Facebook is finished as a place for "cool cyberkids" to hang out online.

It is the writer's opinion that this 5% drop has been caused by the increased number of older adults having a Facebook page, making it "uncool" for the younger generation. This is important because it makes it sound like a battle between the generations and therefore more important than the facts in this article really are.

**TIPS:**

➤ See this answer? You've been asked for one fact and one opinion, so give one fact and one opinion.

➤ The key question words are "fact", "opinion", "why/important". Repeat them in your answer to help the examiner find what s/he is looking for.

## 3 A similar question at Higher tier might look like this:

**QUESTION: What are some of the facts and opinions used in the text to**

**support the writer's views about changing use of Facebook?**

**SUGGESTED ANSWER:**

The writer's views about changing use of Facebook are that it's no longer cool with young people, that it has been taken over by older people and that this is a normal part of the process with youth trends.

Some facts that can be used to support these views:

- A 5% drop between 2008 and 2009 in people aged 15-24 with a social networking site profile.
- A 4% increase from 2008 to 2009 in people aged 25-34 regularly checking up on sites like Facebook.

Some opinions that can be used to support these views:

- "the older generation has long known that the surest way to kill a youth trend is to adopt it as its own."
- "The sites... have now been over-run by 25- to 34-year-olds whose presence is driving their younger peers away."

**TIPS:**

➤ Always check how many marks the question is worth. This is the number written in brackets after the question. If it's worth most of the marks, spend most of the time on it.

## 4 Some exams have more in-depth questions with many more marks attached to them. They can go something like this:

**QUESTION: From your reading of the article, outline the important points made**

**in this article about how use of Facebook and other internet sites is changing.**

"Outline" means describe each key point briefly. Questions like this are usually worth more marks than the "list" or "find and write down" questions.

**SUGGESTED ANSWER:**

The use of Facebook and other social networking sites has changed between the research first done by Ofcom in 2007, and the research reported in this article that was done in 2009. The first thing that has changed is the number of young people aged 15-24 who have a profile page on Facebook or other social networking sites. This number has dropped from 55% in 2008 to 50% in 2009. One reason given for this in the article is that they are being driven out by older users.

The second change is Facebook use by people aged 25-34. From 2008 to 2009, the number of people in this age bracket who regularly checked their Facebook profile went up, from 40% to 46%. In the article, the author suggests this might not be to do with changing use. He says it might just be young people growing older and keeping their Facebook pages going.

The number of British adults of any age with a Facebook profile is the next change. This has increased from 21% in 2007 to 30% in 2009. The amount of time people spend on Facebook has also gone up: from four hours a day in May 2008 to nearly six hours a day in 2009. One of the people quoted in the article adds that although Facebook might not be so popular with 15-24 year olds now, they are still spending at least as much time on the internet.



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**3**  
minutes

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