

Communication

Outcome 1: Written Communication (Reading)

[INTERMEDIATE 2]

Part 1:	Introduction to the section	3
Part 2:	Assessment information for this section	5
Part 3:	Reading	7
Part 4:	Defining the writer's purpose	9
Part 5:	Identifying the source of a text	17
Part 6:	Identifying the target audience	27
Part 7:	Summarising texts	31
Part 8:	Identifying the writer's attitude	35
Part 9:	Evaluating a written communication	39
Part 10:	Summary of this study section	45
Part 11:	Answers to SAQs	49
Appendix A:	Excluded by the system	55
Appendix B:	Stress makes young old before their time	56

Acknowledgements

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The articles 'Excluded by the system' (*The Sunday Times*, 7 May 2000) and 'Fair trade spotlight falls on pricey CDs' (*The Times*, 10 February 2001) are © Times Newspapers Ltd; 'Politicians must seize NHS nettle' (*The Times*, 10 February 2001) is © Katie Grant/*The Times*; 'Fan moves 5000 miles to be nearer Man U' is © *The Daily Star*, 12 February 2001; 'Stress makes young old before their time' is © *The Herald*, 7 October 1999; 'Coming full circle' is © *Personal Computer World*, March 2001. The questions on page 46 (TAI) are © SQA 1999 National Assessment Bank Support Materials D01B11/NAB001.

What this section is about

This study is one of three that together cover all of the skills required to complete the SQA National Unit Communication (Intermediate 2). This Study Section focuses on Outcome 1, which asks you to respond to accessible written communication.

Outcome, aims and objectives of this section

Communication (Intermediate 2)

Outcome 1: Respond to accessible written communication.

Performance criteria

- Identify the purpose of a communication and justify in terms of the main conventions used.
- Identify significant information, ideas and supporting details and provide a basic explanation of their relationships.
- Draw inferences from the communication about the writer's point of view and justify with reference to the text.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the communication in meeting its purpose.

Aims

This Study Section aims to:

- Encourage you to read a range of texts
- Help you to identify purpose and attitude in texts
- Show you the conventions that apply to different writing styles
- Show you how to summarise important ideas and evaluate texts.

Objectives

By the end of this Study Section, you should be able to:

- Identify different types of writing, by describing features of the text
- Identify the writer's purpose, by looking at the content and features of the text
- Identify who'd find the text of interest, and say why
- Summarise the text, including all the main points, and giving a basic explanation of their relationship
- Describe the writer's attitude, and refer to the text to justify your answer
- Evaluate the way in which the writer has met the purpose.

Don't worry if you don't understand all of these ideas yet. The purpose of this Study Section is to help you to develop the skills required to achieve these objectives.

Approximate study time for this section

This Study Section will take you approximately 10–12 hours to complete. This time will vary from individual to individual, depending on other circumstances. Additional time will be required to complete the assessment.

Other resources required for this section

Access to a good dictionary and a good thesaurus is recommended. In addition, buying and reading a broadsheet newspaper such as *The Scotsman*, *The Herald*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, etc., will be useful in allowing you to extend the scope of your reading, and will encourage you to respond to written articles.

How you will be assessed for this section

The assessment for Outcome 1 of the unit Communication (Intermediate 2) asks you to read an unseen, accessible text, and to answer questions covering the following key areas:

- Writer's purpose
- Type of text
- Intended readership
- Summarising the text
- Identifying the writer's attitude
- Evaluating the text in terms of how well it met its purpose.

Your tutor will discuss the details of the assessment with you.

When and where you will be assessed for this section

Assessment for this Unit should normally be done under supervision in your school or college.

What you have to achieve for this section

This Study Section is made up of a mix of the following:

A

Activities. Activities ask you to do something – for example read an article or apply the skills you've just learned to a text. Responses to these activities are often given on the following page.

?

Self Assessed Questions. SAQs enable you to check your understanding of the information that you've just read. You should try all SAQs before moving on to the next part of the Study Section, as they allow you to monitor your own progress. Answers to SAQs are included at the end of the Study Section.

T

Tutor Assignments. Tutor assignments require you to submit work to your tutor, who will mark it and give you feedback. These assignments are important, as they pull together all of the skills covered in the Study Section, and give you a feeling for the main summative assessment(s) associated with the outcome covered in the Study Section.

As you work through this Study Section, you'll come across a mix of these. You should try all Activities, Self Assessed Questions and Tutor Assignments. Only by working through all of these will you have full understanding of the tasks set.

Opportunities for reassessment for this section

You are normally allowed one opportunity to be reassessed if you don't meet the performance criteria at your first attempt. You should discuss this with your tutor.

Purposes in writing

When you're asked to write something, you usually have a reason for writing. You want to achieve something, and your writing is designed to help you to achieve that purpose. Here are some examples of different types of writing you might encounter, and some possible purposes that you may have for writing in these various forms:

Example of writing	Example of purpose in writing
A letter to a pen-pal	To tell him/her what you've been doing.
A letter to an employer	To offer your services; to enquire about job vacancies.
An article in a newspaper	To express a point of view; to raise concern about something; to publicise something.
An e-mail to a friend	To chat about things in general; to invite him/her to a night out.
An essay for school/college	To demonstrate your knowledge of the subject; to pass a course.
A Curriculum Vitae	To 'sell' yourself to an employer; to give information about your skills, education and experience.
Completing a questionnaire	To give information; to help with a survey.
Filling in an application form	To get a job/bank account/loan/driving licence, etc.; to apply for something.
Completing an assessment	To show how well you're doing; to help you pass a course; to check your understanding.
A report	To give information to others; to analyse an issue.
Instructions	To show or tell you (or someone else) how to do something; or what to do.
An e-mail from your boss	To give information or instructions.
Writing a letter to a customer	To answer a query or to quote a price.

Different purposes in writing

As you can see, writing always has a purpose – whether you're writing a short note or a complicated essay, you are doing so for a purpose. This is true of all writers and all writing. People write to achieve a purpose.

Purposes usually fall into one or more than one of the following categories:

- To give information or to inform
- To explain something
- To demonstrate something
- To express a point of view
- To give an opinion
- To argue for a particular case
- To examine a range of views
- To judge the worth of different points of view
- To encourage people to think about things in different ways
- To highlight an issue
- To draw attention to something
- To publicise an issue
- To make people think about something that they normally ignore or are unaware of
- To persuade people
- To try to convince people of a view
- To make people change their opinions
- To win people over to a cause.

These are some of the common purposes that writers have when they write. Many of the purposes in this list are closely related – several mean much the same thing.

Sometimes writers have more than one purpose – sometimes they have two or more purposes in their writing. For example, a writer might want to draw attention to an issue, while at the same time trying to make you change your opinion about it.

How to define a purpose

In the assessment, you'll be asked to define the writer's purpose. Purposes usually begin with the word 'to'. A common mistake is to provide an answer such as the one below (it doesn't matter what the article was, just read the answers):

The purpose of the article was about the possibility of banning smoking in restaurants.

This can't be a correct answer, as a purpose should have a 'to' word in it. A better answer is this one:

The purpose of the article was to inform readers about the possibility of banning smoking in restaurants.

Another good answer would be:

The writer's purpose was to argue that smoking should be banned in restaurants.

Type of writing and purpose

Different types of writing have different purposes. For example, a scribbled note left behind the clock doesn't have the purpose of expressing a point of view; its purpose is usually to give information. Similarly, a letter's purpose is not usually to judge the worth of different views; it is usually meant to give (or ask for) information.



Let's now look at some types of writing. What purposes can you think of for each of these forms of writing? Use the list on page 10 to help you.

Type of writing	Identify two purposes
Newspaper articles	_____ _____
Letters	_____ _____
Reports and 'papers'	_____ _____
Text book articles	_____ _____
Magazines	_____ _____
Pamphlets and leaflets	_____ _____
Notices	_____ _____
Instructions	_____ _____
Charts, diagrams and other graphics	_____ _____
Signs	_____ _____
Advertising	_____ _____
E-mail and Internet pages	_____ _____

How to identify a writer's purpose

As you read a written communication, you should identify the writer's purpose. This allows you to understand the article better.

To identify the writer's purpose, you should look at the following points:

- Introductory paragraph(s)
- Stated purpose
- Implied purpose
- Title or headline
- People quoted
- Pictures, charts and other graphic material.

We're now going to look at each of these points in detail. We shall look at the article 'Excluded by the system' (reproduced in Appendix A on page 55) as an example as we work through these points. This article comes from a newspaper, but the general points that are being made apply to other types of writing as well.

A

Read the article in Appendix A. After reading it, read the points below, and take note of how I've used the methods described to reach the answers.

To help you identify the writer's purpose you should look out for some or all of the following.

Introductory paragraph(s) and closing paragraph(s)

Often the introductory paragraph gives you sufficient information to allow you to work out the writer's purpose. Writers often use the first paragraph to introduce the 'who' of the discussion (the people or topic the article is about) and the 'what' of the discussion (what is happening that makes it worth writing about). Similarly, writers often use the closing paragraph(s) to offer their solutions or answers.

The author in the article in Appendix A uses the opening paragraph to tell us that there is something wrong with an education system that allows a boy to attend school for only three hours a day. From this, we can conclude that the writer's purpose is to discuss what is wrong with this practice.

The writer tells us in the closing paragraph that the Labour Party must look again at its policies. From this, we can say that the purpose is to attack the government's policy on education.

Stated purposes

Many writers state their purpose at the start of the writing, particularly in reports and essays. For example, you might see someone saying 'This report examines the rate of illness among babies from different social classes'; or 'This report compares the fuel consumption of diesel and petrol cars'. Similarly, in essays writers often 'signpost' their work, by explaining in an introduction what the essay will show or discuss.

This doesn't mean that the writer has only one purpose, and you should be aware that other purposes may be possible as well, even if these are not stated.

The article in Appendix A has no stated purpose.

Implied purposes

Implied means suggested but not stated. Many writers don't say what they hope to achieve, but, by 'reading between the lines', we can work out what it is they are trying to achieve. Reading between the lines requires us to think about what the writer means by the words and examples used.

In the article in Appendix A, the writer says, 'He is not taught English or maths because his school cannot provide him with a support teacher.' Reading between the lines, we can infer that the writer would like to see more support teachers, although this isn't stated openly. Therefore, it's possible that *one* purpose of the article is to argue that more support teachers should be employed in schools.

Titles of articles

The title of an article can often tell you what the writer's purpose is. For example, the purpose of an article entitled 'Anger at cost of petrol' is probably to discuss different points of view on the cost of petrol. On the other hand, an article entitled 'Petrol costs help pay for the NHS' is probably intended to allow the writer to defend the cost of petrol.

The title of the article in Appendix A is 'Excluded by the system' and this immediately suggests that the purpose of the article is to discuss exclusions, although we can't tell by the title alone what or who is being excluded.

People quoted

The people or sources the writer chooses to quote from give a clue to the writer's purpose. If a writer quotes from people on different sides of the debate, then you can safely assume that his intention is to discuss a range of views. If the writer only quotes from one side of the argument, then you can assume that the intention is to make a particular point.

In the article in Appendix A, the writer quotes directly from the mother of a boy who has been excluded from school. This suggests that part of the purpose was to make us see things from the excluded boy's point of view. It suggests that maybe we should feel sympathetic towards him.

Pictures, charts and other graphic material

The use of pictures, charts and graphic material can give you a clue to the writer's purpose. For example, a picture of a car engine and a headline saying 'Service charge rip-off' would immediately tell you that the writer was going to discuss the costs of having cars serviced. A picture of a young person smoking a cigarette would suggest that the writer was going to discuss the issue of young people and smoking.

(There is no picture with the article in Appendix A.)

What is the writer's purpose?

Let's pull all of the points together, and make them into one answer.

In the article 'Excluded by the system' the author uses the opening paragraph to tell us that there is something wrong with an education system that allows a boy to attend school for only three hours a day. From this, we can conclude that the writer's purpose is to discuss what is wrong with this practice.

The writer tells us in the closing paragraph that the Labour Party must look again at its policies. From this, we can say that the purpose is to attack the government's policy on education.

The writer says 'He is not taught English or maths because his school cannot provide him with a support teacher.' Reading between the lines, we can infer that the writer would like to see more support teachers, although this isn't stated openly. This suggests that another purpose of the article is to argue that more support teachers should be employed in schools. The title of the article is 'Excluded by the system' and this suggests that the purpose of the article is to discuss exclusions.

The writer quotes directly from the mother of a boy who has been excluded from school. This suggests that part of the purpose was to make us see things from the excluded boy's point of view. It suggests that maybe we should feel sympathetic towards him.

Note

When you sit the assessment you will not be expected to give an answer as detailed as the one here. All you need to do is to identify one or two purposes, and give one or two reasons for each purpose.

Identifying the writer's purpose: summary

Common purposes in writing include:

- To give information
- To express a point of view
- To highlight an issue
- To examine a range of views
- To persuade people.

To help you to identify the writer's purpose in writing a text, you should look at some of the following:

- Introductory paragraph(s)
- Stated purpose
- Implied purpose
- Title or headline
- People quoted
- Pictures, charts and other graphic material.

You should say clearly what the writer's purpose was, and explain how the examples you give help you to identify the purpose.

A good answer will suggest one or two purposes, and be supported by one or two examples for each purpose.



Read the article in Appendix B (page 56) 'Stress makes young old before their time' and answer the following question in about 50–100 words.

What is the writer's purpose in writing this article? Give two reasons for your answer.

What to look for when identifying the source of a text

When you're talking about the source of a text, you usually have to refer to some of the *conventions of the genre*. This phrase simply refers to those features of the text that make clear what type of writing it is. Different written articles have different styles.

These different styles can be broken down into three areas:

- layout
- content
- language.

For example, a text or article from a tabloid newspaper¹ usually has large photos and informal language. Many tabloid newspaper stories are concerned with less important issues.

Broadsheet newspapers² (sometimes called the quality press) usually go into more detail in their stories, have fewer graphics and use a more formal tone.

Let's look at some conventions you are likely to come across.

¹ A tabloid newspaper is so-called because of the size of its pages – typically about A3 in size. *The Sun*, *Mirror*, *Star* and *Record* are all examples of tabloids.

² Broadsheets are so-called as they are much larger than tabloids. Examples include *The Times*, *The Scotsman*, *The Herald* and *The Guardian*.

Type of writing	Conventions: Layout	Conventions: Content	Conventions: Language
Tabloid Newspaper (e.g. <i>Daily Record</i> , <i>Daily Mirror</i> , <i>The Star</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columns and headlines • Large pictures • Fewer words • The paper is smaller than a broadsheet • Generally more graphics than text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories often focus on 'personalities', gossip, showbiz, scandal, etc. • Many stories have a 'human interest' • Important issues discussed in less detail than in a broadsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal language • Easy to read • May be sensationalist • Puns (play on words) often used
Broadsheet Newspaper (e.g. <i>Scotsman</i> , <i>Herald</i> , <i>Guardian</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columns and headlines • Generally fewer graphics used, but some broadsheets use large pictures to illustrate stories • Detailed discussion • Larger than a broadsheet • Requires time and concentration to read • Often uses serif fonts • Writers may be 'personalities', and have their own column, often accompanied by a photograph • Author's name may appear as a byline³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories often focus on politics, international matters, finance, social issues and serious news • Detailed, analytical look at the issue • Some content is column based, where writers give their personal opinion or views on issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal language • Complex sentence structures • Complex vocabulary
Magazines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes wider columns than newspapers • Full colour, usually glossy pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually based on a theme or special interest (e.g. women's magazines, computer magazines, television guides, hobbies, cycling, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May use a specialist language which is appropriate for the readership

(Table continues on next page)

³ A byline is a small subheading, placed after the headline, giving the author's name. Traditionally these were used by the best known writers only. Broadsheets use this feature more than do tabloids.

Type of writing	Conventions: Layout	Conventions: Content	Conventions: Language
Pamphlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually printed on paper about A5 size • Usually comprises a few pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually aimed at giving information on one topic (e.g. a holiday guide to Fife; a healthy eating booklet; a guide to protecting your home from burglars; a booklet advertising products for sale, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually appropriate to the purpose and readership – written so that it will be easy for the target readers to understand. • May be formal (e.g. a guide to preventing crime) or informal (e.g. a holiday leaflet)
Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually printed across the page, not in columns • May have charts, diagrams relevant to the purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually themed on a topic (e.g. Economics for Beginners; Nursery Nursing in Britain; Social Sciences; Mastering Windows 98, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language appropriate to the topic and reader
Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually few if any pictures • Some use of charts, tables and diagrams • Clearly structured, usually in numbered sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed in-depth analysis of the theme • Clearly stated purpose (often called Terms of Reference) • Often includes charts, graphs and similar graphics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal language • Some specialist language • Usually formal tone • Concise and to the point

A₂

On the next four pages you will find a broadsheet article, two tabloid articles and a magazine article. Look over these four examples, and compare the layout, content and language with the conventions identified in the table. Also look in Part 6 of the Outcome 2 section and you'll see examples of reports and essays.

There is no comment given after this activity.

Typical
broadsheet
newspaper article

© *The Times*
10 Feb 2001

Bold headline in a
serif font →

Author's name in
the byline →

This article is a
detailed discussion
on the topic – the
price of CDs and
how British
consumers may be
paying more than
consumers in the EU

Formal language →
(e.g. 'It is alleged ...
cheaper imports').

No use of
contracted words

Notice how the
word 'doctor' has
been placed in
quotation marks –
this is not the
language that the
writer would
normally use →

THE TIMES SATURDAY FEBRUARY 10 2001

Fair trade spotlight falls on pricey CDs

By **Adam Sherwin**

THE Office of Fair Trading opened an inquiry yesterday into the world's biggest record companies over allegations that they were putting pressure on retailers stop importing cheaper CDs from Europe to keep prices artificially high.

High street supermarkets can sell CDs for as little as £10 from Europe whereas the megastores charge up to £14 for chart-topping albums manufactured in the UK.

The government watchdog believes that there is sufficient evidence to mount an investigation which could result in multimillion-pound fines for companies in breach of the Competition Act. The inquiry follows the start of a European Commission investigation last month into alleged CD price-fixing by the same companies which could send prices tumbling for British consumers.

The OFT will look at the practice of record companies of producing "UK-only" releases with extra tracks. It is alleged that these are being used to persuade retailers not to buy cheaper imports.

The companies accused of abusing their market power are Sony Music, Universal, EMI, BMG, Warner Music, Virgin and Pinnacle Records.

According to Consumers' Association estimates, it costs between £9.50 and £9.80, including shipping, to import a CD from a wholesaler in Europe. Distributors in Britain charge on average £10.80.

Sainsbury's began importing CDs and sold the Top 100 for £9.99 each, a 40 per cent discount on other stores. This cut the record companies' profits and challenged the price structure which made CDs in the UK the most expensive in Europe. The industry began to "doctor" CDs, producing different versions for the British

market. Current albums by Madonna, Texas and Sir Elton John contain extra tracks for the "UK only" versions.

The record companies predicted that fans would go for the UK versions, leaving the stores little choice but to buy from British wholesalers.

Sainsbury's relented and now buys British and as a consequence will have to increase prices. Helen Vance, Sainsbury's general manager, said: "It was a direct attempt to force us to put the prices up. It is confusing for the customer to have two different versions of the same CD. We hoped the OFT would look into this. We can make a profit and still sell CDs at £9.99."

An OFT spokesman said: "After preliminary inquiries we had reasonable grounds for suspecting that the record companies had taken concerted action to limit the parallel importing of CDs into the UK from other EU members states." The British Phonographic Industry, which represents 250 labels, said the competitive nature of the industry was recognised by a Mergers and Monopolies Commission report in 1994.

Phil Evans from the Consumers' Association said: "UK consumers have paid too much for CDs for too long and we have never accepted that there is a good reason for this. The record companies say they are offering better value with the extra tracks but then why shouldn't European audiences get the same treatment?"

The independent retailer Pete Thorogood, of Sounds to Go in North London, said: "CDs are overpriced but we are all underpaid. We sell CDs as cheap as we can."

The companies have until February 23 to respond and the inquiry is expected to last six months. The companies declined to comment.

No graphics present

Narrow columns

There are many
examples of
complex sentences
such as the one
here: 'An OFT
spokesman ... other
EU member states'

This article has
quotations from
many different
sources – this
suggests a lot of
research has gone
into it, and shows
how detailed it is.

Typical tabloid newspaper article

Sans Serif bold headline

The author's name in a byline – note that it's an 'exclusive' – a sensationalised term

© The Daily Star 12 Feb 2001

FAN MOVES 5,000 MILES TO BE NEAR MANU



WINNER: Kevin's hero is Giggsy Picture: Tony Fisher

MANCHESTER United fan Kevin Goddaer was so keen to go to the match he moved his family closer - 5,000 miles from SOUTH AFRICA.

And the 30-year-old ex-pro windsurfer has no regrets. Even though he's left the sea and 20C sunshine behind for the Lancashire market town of Chorley, he's warmed up by watching the Red Devils at Old Trafford instead of just on TV. Sales manager Kevin said yesterday: "I've been a United supporter since I was small and always said I'd

EXCLUSIVE by JOHN MAHONEY move to England when I got older. Now there's not much chance for windsurfing in a place like Chorley – but my dream's come true. "To see United and my hero Ryan Giggs in the flesh is total joy."

Award

Fortunately, wife Emma is originally from Blackpool and jumped at the chance of leaving Durban and returning home with their two-year-old daughter Britney.

And Kevin's dedication has earned him an award from the Premiership champs, who are now set to team up

with the New York Yankees to create a giant trans-Atlantic supporters club. He is one of 15 winners of the Salute The Fan competition, which the side runs with sponsor Western Union, and will be given a free VIP trip to Old Trafford next month to watch United play Arsenal. A club spokesman said: "He's not the first fan to move home just to be closer to us – but I've never heard of anyone coming 5,000 miles."

Kevin added: "I feel a bit sorry for Emma's parents, who missed their grand-daughter so much they came back here as well. They don't like the cold and my father-in-law sure misses playing golf all year round."

Informal tone: This man is referred to as Kevin, and not Mr Goddaer, and he's a fan of 'Giggsy'

The subject is not very serious or important – it's more of a people story than a news story

Some play on words ('he's warmed up'); use of contracted words (he's, don't) and informal words (e.g. 'champs')

Typical tabloid newspaper article

The headline is a play on words →

Man or mouse?

This was a big news story on the day it was released, yet the *Star* doesn't go into a lot of detail →

SCIENTISTS have proved that the question “Are you a man or a mouse?” is not so ridiculous.

← The tone of the article is informal – stressing the issue of man's closeness to mice, and not stressing the more important implications of the story – that this research could lead to new medical treatments

Work on the “Book of Life” project has produced a genetic map of the human body, showing we have 60,000 fewer genes than we thought, between 30,000 and 40,000 – about the same as **MICE**.

The phrase ‘rubbed out’ is a very informal or colloquial way of saying eradicated →

The work could help with the detection and treatment of cancer; heart disease and diabetes could be revolutionised; inherited disorders rubbed out; and treatments tailored to a person's genetic make-up.

And it could mean we live 25 years longer.

← Starting a sentence with the word ‘and’ is an example of informal use of language

Treatments for asthma, Alzheimer's, depression and other mood disorders should all be boosted by the project.

© *The Daily Star* 12 Feb 2001

Compare the detail in this (important) story to the amount of detail in ‘Fan moves 5,000 miles to be near Man U’ on the previous page

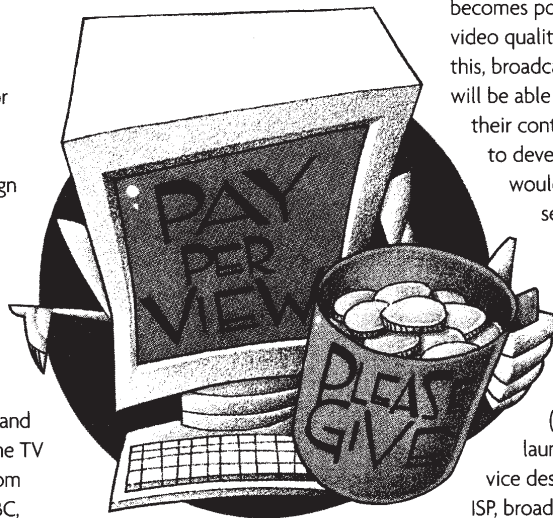
Public broadcaster investigates pay-as-you-go TV service provided via the Net.

Pay-Per-View TV at the Beeb?

By George Cole

The BBC is looking at using the Internet for delivering pay-per-view films and TV programmes. It's yet another sign that the Internet is joining satellite, cable and terrestrial TV networks as an important broadcasting medium. The Net is already used by many broadcasters and news agencies such as Sky News and CNN, and Apple's QuickTime TV service includes content from companies including the BBC, Bloomberg, Fox, Disney, VHI and The Weather Channel. But these services are free, and deliver video clips using media players like QuickTime, RealVideo or Microsoft Media Player.

Although video streaming technology has greatly improved over the years, the bottleneck has always been the connection



between the Net and the home. Net users with 56K or even ISDN connections can only see jerky video pictures covering a small portion of the screen. But as high-speed ADSL digital phone lines roll out across the UK, full-screen video with VHS picture quality (or better)

becomes possible. When Internet video quality becomes as good as this, broadcasters believe they will be able to charge for some of their content. The BBC hopes to develop a portal that would allow users to select content and watch it on a pay-per-view basis.

In another development, the Digital Broadcasting Company (DBC) is planning to launch a webcasting service designed for narrowband ISP, broadband DSL and third-generation mobile phones. The service will allow users to search and view content such as films and sport. Richard Brooke, chief executive of DBC, says: "The Internet is fast becoming the key entertainment portal in the home."

KEVIN FEBRUARY

Typical magazine article

© *Computer Buyer*, November 2000

The title hints at the specialist nature of the topic. This was originally a full-colour article. The article is on a specialised topic (broadcasting on the Internet) and this is typical of the articles in this magazine – they're all themed in some way on computers. There is evidence of a specialised vocabulary, e.g. Quicktime, RealVideo, ADSL, digital phone lines, etc.

A₃

To make yourself more familiar with the conventions, look at a selection of broadsheet, tabloid and magazine articles. Take note of how they are different – look at the layout, contents and language used.

There is no comment given after this activity.

A₄

Look at the article in Appendix A (page 55) again. After reading it, read the points below, and take note of how it's been examined below in order to work out its source.

- It is written in columns.
- It has a bold headline.
- It is a fairly detailed discussion (it is almost 400 words in length).
- It uses fairly formal language (e.g. 'Either they should be sent to special schools or they should be in ordinary schools reinforced with investment to create special units, special projects and to hire support teachers.').
- It uses some complex sentences (e.g. 'So, instead of going against the grain of government policy to keep troublemakers in the mainstream, schools are discovering elaborate ways of minimising the disruption to themselves while at the same time keeping their exclusion figures low.').
- It is all about a social issue (i.e. how to deal with students with behavioural problems).

Because of these, we can conclude that it comes from a broadsheet newspaper.

What type of text is this?

Let's pull all of the points together, and make them into one answer.

The article 'Excluded by the system' is written in columns. It is a detailed discussion of a serious social issue – how to cope with students who are disruptive in schools. It uses formal language and some complex sentences (e.g. 'So, instead of going against the grain of government policy to keep troublemakers in the mainstream, schools are discovering elaborate ways of minimising the disruption to themselves while at the same time keeping their exclusion figures low.'). These features all suggest that it is a broadsheet newspaper article.

Note

When you sit the assessment you will be expected to give an answer of similar detail to this one here.

Identifying the type of writing: summary

When you are asked to identify the type of writing, you are being asked to say what type of publication the text came from.

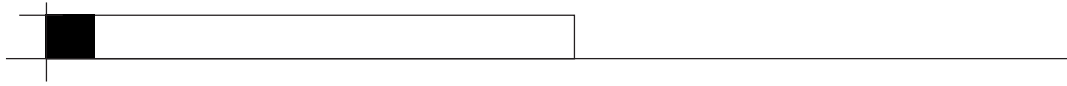
To do this, you should analyse in terms of these conventions:

- Layout – the way the text looks on the page
- Content – the topic being discussed
- Language – the level of formality and the complexity of words and sentences.



Read the article in Appendix B 'Stress makes young old before their time' and answer the following question in about 75–125 words.

Where does this article come from? Refer to the layout, the content and the language used.



Writing for particular readers

As well as having a purpose in writing articles, writers also have to aim their writing at particular readerships or audiences. When you're asked to identify a target audience, you're being asked to say which group of people the author wrote it for and also to say who would find this text interesting.

Different readers have different expectations and different abilities. Writers attempt to meet the readers' needs by writing in a way that is appropriate for them, and that delivers the message in a suitable way.

Another thing you should consider is who would be interested in the text – what is the content about and who are the target readers?

To answer the question of who is the target audience, you should consider some of the following points:

- Content
- Layout
- Headlines and titles
- Pictures and other graphics.

Let's look at these in more detail (again using the article in Appendix A as an example).

A₅

Look at the article in Appendix A again. After reading it, read the points below and on the next page, and take note of how it's been analysed with a view to working out the intended readership.

Content

The content of the text – i.e. what it is about – often tells you who the target audience is. For example, a text all about cruelty to animals would be of interest to pet owners, vets and anyone else interested in animals. A text that is all about teenage pregnancy would be of interest to teenagers, health workers, social workers, teachers, parents and other people who have contact with teenagers.

The article in Appendix A is all about schoolchildren with behavioural problems, and therefore parents, schoolchildren, teachers, and others interested in education would be amongst the target readership.

Layout

The layout of a text can tell you a lot about where it came from, and therefore who it is aimed at. An article from a tabloid newspaper is generally aimed at the people who read tabloids. A broadsheet article is usually aimed at people who read such papers.

We've already agreed that the article in Appendix A came from a broadsheet newspaper (the layout is in columns, and the text is quite detailed) and so the target audience could be broadsheet readers such as members of the 'middle classes', people who are reasonably well educated, business people, etc.

Headlines and titles

Headlines and article titles often give a clue to the content of the piece, and therefore you can work out who the text is aimed at. For example, the headline 'Too much fat in the British diet' would suggest the text was about what people eat, and therefore the target audience would be people on diets, or those who are otherwise concerned with what they eat. The headline 'Interest rates to rise again' suggests the text is about financial issues and interest rates, and therefore the target audience would be people who borrow money such as those with a loan or mortgage; people who work in the finance industry, and people with an interest in economic matters.

The article's title in Appendix A suggests that the text is about schooling, and so people who are involved with schooling would be interested in reading it.

Pictures and other graphic material

In the same way as headlines and titles give clues to the content, so too do pictures and other graphic materials. These also give us clues about the target audience. For example, a text accompanied by a picture of a young person dancing would suggest that the purpose was to discuss leisure pursuits of young people, and so the target audience would be young people and their parents.

There are no graphics with the article in Appendix A.

For what group of readers is this text written?

Once again, let's pull all of this together into one answer.

The article 'Excluded by the system' is all about schoolchildren with behavioural problems, and therefore parents, schoolchildren, teachers, and others interested in education would be amongst the target readership. The article is laid out in columns, and the text is quite complex and detailed, suggesting it comes from a broadsheet newspaper and so the target audience could be members of the 'middle classes' and people who are reasonably well educated. The article's title suggests that the text is about schooling, and so people who are involved with schooling would be interested in reading it.

Note

When you sit the assessment you will be expected to give an answer of similar detail to the one above.

Identifying the target readership: summary

When identifying the target readership, you should consider:

- Content – what the communication is about
- Layout – what type of publication it has come from, and who would read this type of writing
- Headlines and titles – what they say, and who would be interested by them
- Pictures and other graphics – what they contain, and who would find them of interest.

You must give reasons for your answer. Explain who the target readership is, and explain why you feel that this group would be interested in the piece of writing.



Read the article in Appendix B 'Stress makes young old before their time' and answer the following question in about 75–125 words.

Who is the target readership? Give reasons for your answer by referring to content, layout and the headline.



Summarising texts

When reading a text, you need to be able to identify what the important points are, and what the less important points are. If you are asked to write a summary of a text, you're being asked to identify the main points only.

A summary is a shortened version of the original text, in which the main points are discussed, along with a few of the supporting examples. When summarising, you should ensure that the meaning of the original article is not changed.

Summarising requires you to read the article, and then to decide what the main points are, and what the less important points are. You should then write up the summary, covering the main points only.

A summary should be written in your own words – but reporting the events that someone else has written about. You must not give your own opinion in a summary. A useful way to help you to do this is to refer to the author. Begin your summary with a line such as:

'In the article 'My Gran was a Monster' by Michael North, the author starts off by telling us that ...'

And as you write your summary, use linking phrases such as those in bold here:

*'**The writer then goes on to claim** that his grandmother used to eat babies whole.'*

*'**North then argues that** grandmothers are ferocious as a race, and that false teeth should only be dispensed on special licence.'*

Writers often give opinions in their writing and for this reason you should avoid repeating something as if it is a fact. Use phrases such as the bold ones here:

*'**The author says that** grandmothers are all devious.'*

*'**The author states that** his grandmother was quite mean.'*

*'**The writer feels that** it's strange what they get away with.'*

*'**The author argues that** grandmothers have a lot to answer for.'*

? 6

Read the two short paragraphs below, and summarise them in your own words. Try to keep your summary to about 70–100 words (the original article is 168 words long).

People watch too much of the box, the telly, the TV, call it what you like (and many people have affectionate names for it). Whatever you call it, people do watch too much television. It's claimed that *Eastenders*, *Coronation Street* and *The Bill* are harmless forms of relaxation for viewers, but I feel that they cause people to become so wrapped in their fictional worlds that they lose contact with the real world and the people in it.

Most of the plots and issues are silly and stupid, and are handled too simplistically, causing people to lose the ability to think for themselves. Some people spend so much time in front of the television that they never get any real exercise, and they never manage to meet new people. The only way they meet new people is when new people move into a soap! Ultimately, television destroys people – it destroys relationships, it destroys the mind and it destroys the body. Get rid of your telly, and start living!

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Once again, we're going to use the article in Appendix A as an example of how to summarise a text.

Overleaf, you will see the original article from Appendix A in the left-hand column. In the right-hand column is a summary.

Look carefully at the original and summarised versions, and notice what parts have been chosen for the summary. The summary tries to include only the main arguments or points being made. It has missed out a lot of the detail.

Pay attention as well to the way the words in the summary are used. I have used my own words: you should use yours.

The original article was about 380 words, and the summary is about 215 words.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Excluded by the system

Something is wrong with an education system that allows a 12-year-old boy to attend school for only three hours a day for art, PE, home economics and to play on computers. He is not taught English or maths because his school cannot provide him with a support teacher. Without one he would probably disrupt the other pupils in his class: they would learn nothing and he would learn nothing.

There are no easy solutions for teachers when they are confronted with troublesome children like this, but his part-time existence at school is no solution at all. An education system that fobs off troublemakers with a few hours of so-called schooling a day, rather than educate them, is failing itself, its misfit pupils and, in the end, society. Rightly, the boy's mother complains: 'It is supposed to be an education, but he learns nothing at all.'

If this boy's predicament was unusual, it would be less worrying. But he is one of many such children. They are supposed to receive a mainstream education but, because they are so difficult to handle, schools cannot cope with them. So, instead of going against the grain of government policy to keep troublemakers in the mainstream, schools are discovering elaborate ways of minimising the disruption to themselves while at the same time keeping their exclusion figures low.

Common sense dictates that there are two principal options for education policy-makers grappling with persistently disruptive pupils. Either they should be sent to special schools or they should be in ordinary schools reinforced with investment to create special units, special projects and to hire support teachers.

The Scottish Executive has chosen the latter option, but does not seem to be funding it sufficiently for it to work, despite £23m in the excellence fund for schools to set up 'alternatives to exclusion'. Money is not the only answer, but it helps. The lack of it, and the government's target to cut exclusions by one third by 2002, is having the effect of increasing the number of halfway-house children who are being neither educated nor excluded.

The minister must look at the policy again. Unless, of course, Labour intends to modify its mantra 'education, education, education' by adding the words 'except for children who cause trouble'.

SUMMARY

In the article, 'Excluded by the system', the writer starts off by telling us about a 12-year-old boy who attends school for only three hours a day, because the school can't provide the support teacher he needs. He would disrupt classes without such support.

The writer feels that for the teachers, there are no easy answers, but that it's not fair on the boy. He feels that the current system is failing the school, the boy and society.

The writer quotes the boy's mother who says that he is learning nothing.

The writer goes on to claim that this boy is only one of many in the same situation – difficult to handle. He claims that schools use this system because it means they don't have to exclude pupils.

The writer feels that for pupils in this situation, there are two options – special schools or special units in existing schools.

The Scottish Executive favours the special unit model, but isn't funding it properly.

Partly because of a lack of appropriate funding, and because schools are trying to cut exclusion figures, the number of what the author refers to as 'halfway-house children' who are neither excluded nor being educated will grow. The writer concludes by attacking government education policies, saying that they ignore troublesome children.

Writing a summary for this text

The article summary is written in the right-hand column on page 33. Here it's written again so you can see at a glance how the article has been summarised.

In the article, 'Excluded by the system', the writer starts off by telling us about a 12-year-old boy who attends school for only three hours a day, because the school can't provide the support teacher he needs. He would disrupt classes without such support. The writer feels that for the teachers, there are no easy answers, but that it's not fair on the boy. He feels that the current system is failing the school, the boy and society. The writer quotes the boy's mother who says that he is learning nothing. The writer goes on to claim that this boy is only one of many in the same situation – difficult to handle. He claims that schools use this system because it means they don't have to exclude pupils.

The writer feels that for pupils in this situation, there are two options – special schools or special units in existing schools. The Scottish Executive favours the special unit model, but isn't funding it properly. Partly because of a lack of appropriate funding, and because schools are trying to cut exclusion figures, the number of what he refers to as 'halfway-house children' who are neither excluded nor being educated will grow.

The writer concludes by attacking government education policies, saying that they ignore troublesome children.

Note

When you sit the assessment you will be asked to write a full summary similar to this one, or the assessment may ask you to discuss specific parts of the text only. Be sure to read the assessment carefully so that you know what you are expected to do.

How to write summaries: summary

- Summaries should be a shortened version of the writer's article.
- You should include the main points only.
- They should be written in your own words, but should reflect the author's views.
- Name the author and article title in your answer (e.g. In the article 'My Gran was a Monster' by Michael North, the author starts off by telling us that ...).
- Refer to the author as you summarise (e.g. The writer claims ...).
- Never put in your own opinion.



Read the article in Appendix B 'Stress makes young old before their time' and summarise the whole article in about 100–200 words.

The writer's attitude

Sometimes writers make their feelings or views about something absolutely clear. Other times, they imply or suggest what they feel. When you are asked to identify the writer's attitude or feelings, you're being asked to say what the writer thinks about the issue. To do this, you should consider some of the following:

- The writer's stated attitude
- The words used by the writer
- The balance of views reported
- The people and sources quoted
- The tone and level of formality.

Again, we'll use the article in Appendix A as an example to help make these points clear.



Look at the article in Appendix A again. After reading it, read the points below, and take note of how the article has been examined in order to work out what the writer's attitude is.

Stated attitude

This is the easiest one to identify. If a writer says what he or she feels, then you're left in little doubt about his/her view. However, your answers shouldn't focus on this type of answer alone. You should also refer to other aspects of the text (discussed below) which imply or suggest what the writer thinks.

In the sample article, the writer states his opinion openly. He says that there is something wrong with the education system (first paragraph) and that the government needs to do something about it (last paragraph).

Words used

Writers pick words carefully to express themselves. The choice of words that a writer uses can tell you a lot about what the writer thinks. For example, if you describe an incident as an 'unfortunate accident', you clearly feel less strongly about it than someone who describes it as 'the result of carelessness'.

The article in Appendix A contains many examples of words and phrases that tell us about the writer's attitude. In the first paragraph, the writer says that the boy attends school for 'only' three hours a day. This word shows that he feels this is not enough. He uses the

phrase 'fobs off troublemakers with a few hours of so-called schooling'. This phrase shows that he feels pupils are being given poor treatment, and the 'so-called' schooling they are given is not of a good quality. In the middle of the article, he refers to the situation as 'worrying', and this tells us he feels concerned about the situation.

Balance of views

A good writer usually discusses ideas for and against what is being discussed. If the writer discusses most ideas from one point of view, then you can infer that he/she is in support of that viewpoint.

Looking at the article in Appendix A, it's clear that the writer feels that children with behavioural problems are being let down by the system. The writer quotes from the mother, and gives several examples of how the 12-year-old boy's education is suffering. He also points out that schools are failing lots of children like this boy. Nowhere in the article does he criticise the boy himself. The writer doesn't allow anyone from the government to speak either, and this suggests that the writer wanted to emphasise one side of the argument.

People and sources quoted

When putting together an argument, most writers quote different people and different sources. If a lot of the quotations come from one side of the debate, then again you can infer that the writer favours this side of the argument.

In the article in Appendix A, the writer quotes the mother, and quotes from a policy document which discusses 'alternatives to exclusion'. Once again, it seems clear that the writer is sympathetic to the boy's plight.

Tone and level of formality

If someone writes in a very light tone about a serious subject, then it's safe to assume that he/she doesn't take the subject seriously. Similarly, if the writer uses a very formal tone to discuss an apparently trivial matter, it suggests that the writer may feel that this is a serious issue.

The article in Appendix A is written in a fairly formal tone, and this suggests the writer feels quite strongly about the subject. Also, the last sentence 'Unless, of course, Labour intends to modify its mantra "education, education, education" by adding the words "except for children who cause trouble"' is almost sarcastic in tone. This suggests that the writer feels that the Labour Party doesn't give this issue as much attention as it should. The tone is less formal in a few parts – phrases such as 'fobs off' and 'so-called' are also sarcastic in tone, showing how strongly the writer feels about the issue.

What is the writer's attitude?

Once again, let's pull all of this together into one answer.

In the article 'Excluded by the system', the writer states his opinion openly. He says that there is something wrong with the education system (first paragraph) and that the government needs to do something about it (last paragraph). In the first paragraph, he says that the boy attends school for 'only' three hours a day. This word shows that he feels this is not enough. The writer uses the phrase 'fobs off troublemakers with a few hours of so-called schooling'. This phrase shows that he feels pupils are being given poor treatment, and the 'so-called' schooling they are given is not of a good quality. In the middle of the article he refers to the situation as 'worrying', and this tells us he feels concerned about the situation.

The writer quotes from the mother, and gives several examples of how the 12-year-old boy's education is suffering. He also points out that schools are failing children like him. Nowhere in the article does he criticise the boy himself. Thus, it seems clear that the writer is sympathetic to the boy's plight. The article is written in a fairly formal tone, and this suggests the writer feels quite strongly about the subject. Also, the last sentence 'Unless, of course, Labour intends to modify its mantra "education, education, education" by adding the words "except for children who cause trouble"' is almost sarcastic in tone. This suggests that he feels the Labour Party doesn't give this issue as much attention as it should.

Note

When you sit the assessment you will not be expected to give an answer as detailed as the one here. All you need to do is to explain the writer's attitude to the events reported, and to give a few examples from the text to illustrate this.

Identifying the writer's attitude: summary

When you are asked to identify the writer's attitude, you should look at some of these points:

- The writer's stated attitude – what s/he says openly
- The words used by the writer – what the words imply about the the writer's attitude
- The balance of views reported – whether they are biased or there is an equal discussion of views
- The people and sources quoted – has the writer chosen people who agree with his/her point of view?
- The tone and level of formality – whether these suggest the writer feels seriously or strongly about the subject.

? 8

Read the article in Appendix B 'Stress makes young old before their time' and answer the following question in about 50–100 words.

What is the writer's attitude to the subject being discussed?

Evaluating written communications

When you are asked to evaluate a written communication, you are being asked to decide how well the writer wrote it and to what extent s/he achieved the purpose of the writing. You should say what the strengths and weaknesses of the communication are. To do these things, you should ask yourself the following questions.

- What was the writer's purpose?
- Was the communication biased?
- Were the sources quoted relevant?
- Were the examples used clear and relevant?
- Did the writer stick to the point?
- Was the communication well structured?
- How effective were the graphics?
- How effective were the headlines/titles?
- Was the layout effective?
- Were the language and tone appropriate?

This is a long list of questions, and usually you'll be asked to evaluate the communication in 100 words. This means that there is no way you can cover all of the points listed here! The purpose of providing you with such a detailed list is to allow you to consider all of the points that you can use when you evaluate a communication.

Each article that you're given will need to be evaluated in different ways. The questions here will not all apply to every article. But when you come to evaluate a written communication, you should be able to select the most relevant questions from this list. Having read the communication, think about which of these points can be used to evaluate the communication.

Let's look at each of these questions in detail, and again we'll refer to the article in Appendix A as an example.

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Look at the article in Appendix A again. After reading it, read the points below, and take note of how it has been examined for purposes of evaluation.

What was the writer's purpose?

Before you can begin to decide how well the writer met the purpose, you need to remind yourself of what the writer's purpose was. Look over your answer to the question that asked you what the purpose was, and remind yourself of why you gave that answer before you go any further.

In the article in Appendix A, the writer's purpose was to argue that more support is required for 'troublesome' children.

Was the communication biased?

A biased communication may be less effective than a communication that examines both sides of the argument. If the writer has only looked at one side of the debate, and has ignored obvious weaknesses in the argument, then the communication as a whole may be less effective than one that addresses points for and against.

In the sample article, the writer only really gives one side of the story. He criticises the government for failing to fund special support adequately, but he doesn't allow the government a chance to defend its position. This makes the article one-sided, and less effective than a balanced treatment.

Were the sources quoted relevant to the debate?

Where a writer has quoted from people or from documents, you should ask yourself if these sources are relevant. It's always easy to provide quotations, but these should be from people or organisations whose opinions come from experience of the subject.

In the sample article, the writer has quoted from one woman whose son is not getting the support that he needs in school. This is a relevant source, as the woman clearly has a relevant contribution to make, and so makes the article more effective. However, the writer quotes from no one else, and so it seems that this article is largely made up of the writer's opinion – maybe quoting from other relevant sources would have made this article more effective.

Were the examples used clear and easy to follow? Were they relevant?

Examples are useful to make points clear. A good example makes the point very easy to follow, whilst a bad example simply obscures the main point.

In the sample article, the writer uses the example of the 12-year-old boy, and his case is explained well and is easy to understand. This is a strength of the article.

Did the writer stick to the point?

If the writer sticks to the point, and works through his/her argument clearly, the piece is more effective than one where the writer goes off at tangents, or starts to talk about things that are not really relevant to the issue.

In the sample article, the writer seems to stick to the point. He uses the example of the boy to introduce the wider issue of how this problem affects many children. There is a clear focus to this article, and we're not led off at tangents.

Was the structure easy to follow?

All written communications follow some form of structure. A well written communication has a structure which helps the reader to understand what is being said, and uses linking phrases to move from one point to another. A badly structured piece is difficult to follow, and you may find yourself asking why the writer has said something, or you may find you need to go back a few lines to make sense of what the writer was trying to say.

The sample article is well structured – it's introduced with a good example, and then goes on to explain the wider problem. The writer also implies possible solutions – increased funding and a rethink of policy.

How effective were the graphics?

Pictures, charts, diagrams, etc., should add to the meaning of the message, by making a point easier to follow, or by providing extra information to support the text. If the graphic is difficult to understand, or is not clearly related to the issue, then it's probably not very effective.

There are no graphics with the sample article.

Were the headline, byline, title effective?

Headlines, bylines and titles should give you some idea of what is to come in the text. Their purpose is usually to interest the reader, and they should suggest something of what is to come in the written communication. If they are obscure, or if they appear to be not directly related to the text, then they're probably not very effective.

The sample article's title 'Excluded by the system' is quite effective. 'Excluded' is a word used by schools to refer to pupils who have been temporarily barred from school as a punishment, and so the title refers to the issue being discussed.

Was the layout effective?

Layout refers to the way that the communication is presented on the page. As such, it refers to text size, fonts used, headline/title size, the position of graphics and so on. You should look at the layout and decide if it helped to make the communication appealing and something that you would want to read. Something that is cluttered and untidy on the page is less inviting than something that has a clear and attractive layout.

The sample article is laid out in straightforward columns, which are easy to read, but some pictures or other graphics would have added interest to the piece.

Were the language used and the tone appropriate?

Language refers to the vocabulary (word choices) and to the complexity of sentences, etc. Language should be appropriate for the subject being discussed. Also the language used should be appropriate for the target readers. The same is true of the complexity of the sentences used.

The sample article uses a formal and somewhat specialised language, and some of the sentences are quite complex (e.g. 'So, instead of going against the grain of government policy to keep troublemakers in the mainstream, schools are discovering elaborate ways of minimising the disruption to themselves while at the same time keeping their exclusion figures low.'). All of this is appropriate for the subject: because the subject is serious it needs to be discussed in a formal way. Also, it's appropriate for the target reader (people involved in education): it uses some specialised language that the readers would understand, and the complex sentences would also be suitable for the target readers. Some parents may find it overly complex however. Overall the article has an appropriate language and tone.

To what extent were you convinced by the written communication?

This is a personal question, and your answer is going to be unique to you. When saying to what extent the article convinced you, you must say what it was that made you feel that way.

For example, I felt quite convinced by the writer's points, although overall I was left feeling that he raised issues but didn't provide real solutions. By not allowing the government to speak, I felt that I was being asked to believe the writer, and that I wasn't being given enough information to make up my mind for myself.

Evaluating the text

Having examined the article in Appendix A, we can evaluate it as follows.

In the article 'Excluded by the system', the writer's purpose was to argue that more support is required for 'troublesome' children. The writer only really gives one side of the story. He criticises the government for failing to fund special support adequately, but he doesn't allow the government a chance to defend its position. This makes the article one-sided. The writer has quoted from one woman whose son is not getting the support he needs in school, and his case is explained well and is easy to understand. Although this is a relevant source, the writer quotes from no one else, and so it seems that this article is largely made up of the writer's opinion – quoting from other sources would have made the piece more effective.

There is a clear focus to this article, and it is well structured – it's introduced with a good example, and then goes on to explain the wider problem. The writer also implies possible solutions – increased funding and a rethink of policy. The article is laid out in straightforward columns, which are easy to read, but some pictures or other graphics would have added interest to the piece.

Overall the article has an appropriate language and tone. It uses a formal and somewhat specialised language, and some of the sentences are quite complex (e.g. 'So, instead of going against the grain of government policy to keep troublemakers in the mainstream, schools are discovering elaborate ways of minimising the disruption to themselves while at the same time keeping their exclusion figures low.'). All of this is appropriate for the subject – because the subject is serious. Also, it's appropriate for the target reader (people involved in education) – it uses some specialised language and complex sentences that the readers would understand (although some parents might find it overly complex).

Note

When you sit the assessment you will not be expected to give an answer as detailed as the one here. All you need to do is to explain how effective the writer was in achieving the purpose, and to give examples from the text to justify your answer. You are only expected to write around 100 words (this answer is about 300 words).

Evaluating written communications: summary

Evaluating a written communication is all about judging its strengths and weaknesses. The issues you should look at when you consider how effective a written communication was are:

- What was the writer's purpose?
- Was the communication biased?
- Were the sources quoted relevant?
- Were the examples used clear and relevant?
- Did the writer stick to the point?
- Was the communication well structured?
- How effective were the graphics?
- How effective were the headlines/titles?
- Was the layout effective?
- Were the language and tone appropriate?

You do not need to use every one of these questions to evaluate a single item of written communication. Once you've read a piece, you will be able to identify which of the questions are relevant to that particular communication.



Read the article in Appendix B 'Stress makes young old before their time' and answer the following question.

Evaluate the article in about 100 words.

Summary

When you read a text, you will be asked to do the following:

- Identify the purpose of the communication
- Identify the type of writing
- Identify the intended readership
- Summarise the text
- Describe the writer's attitude to the events reported
- Evaluate the communication.

This Study Section has looked at each of these tasks, and you should refer back to the relevant part if you're unsure about how to do that particular task.

In your answers, you need to provide supporting detail to back up your answers. This means you need to refer to the text, quote from the text, and show your understanding of the text.

This Study Section looked in detail at the article 'Excluded by the system' as an example. Many of the answers given in this Study Section were more detailed than you will need to give in your answers to the assessment.

You were also asked to answer questions based on the article 'Stress makes young old before their time', and you were shown how many words to provide for each answer.

You are now going to be asked to analyse a text on your own. You should now complete the tutor assignment (below and overleaf) and submit this to your tutor. S/he will mark it and return it to you with comments. Following this, you and s/he can decide if you are ready to proceed with the outcome (summative) assessment, or if you should try another practice piece first.

T

Read **one** of the articles on pages 47 or 48 and answer the following questions. You should then submit these answers to your tutor for comment. After marking it, s/he will advise you whether you're ready to do the assessment, or whether you should try another practice assessment first.

You must answer all questions correctly. You must provide evidence to support your opinions and ideas by making detailed reference to the text.

1. What is the purpose(s) of the piece of writing? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What type of writing is it? (Note that sources are given, but you must refer to features of the text that would help you to determine what type it is.)
3. For which group of readers is the text written? Give evidence to support your answer.

(For questions 1, 2 and 3 you should think about more than the content. Think about what the writer is aiming to do, such as informing, persuading, or expressing feelings. There may be more than one purpose. Your evidence should include aspects such as layout, illustrations, and words or key phrases by which you have identified the type of text and intended reader.)

[PC (a)]

4. Give a summary in your own words of the main information and ideas in the text.
[PC(b)]
5. What is the attitude of the writer to the subject? Justify your answer with reference to the text.

(Do not simply report what the writer says. Consider what the argument is, whether or not it is balanced, what the tone of the words used seems to be, and what the illustrations, if there are any, suggest.)

[PC (c)]

6. Do you think the piece of writing is effective in meeting the purpose(s) you identified in your answer to Question 1? Justify your answer with reference to the text.

(Consider the strengths and any weaknesses of the text. Say whether the writing could have had more effective layout, illustrations or vocabulary. Consider how you or other people have responded and make an evaluation of at least 100 words. Link your evidence to the points made in your answer to Question 1.)

[PC (d)]

Note

You should attempt **one** of the practice assessments from pages 47 and 48.

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editorial

A lucrative career in IT is no longer a sure thing, but a centralised model may alter that, says Riyadh Emeran

Coming full circle



A good friend of mine came to see me recently. He's doing his final year of a computing degree and wanted some advice on what his ultimate goal should be. He had initially wanted to be a C++ programmer, but a couple of years into the course he decided to diversify into other areas such as Java and web development.

We sat for a while, drank several cups of coffee and mulled over the career opportunities that would be open to him when he finally finished his course. We discussed the idea of working for a software application vendor, but the thought of being a small part of a large coding team didn't appeal to him. We tossed around the possibility of web development, but came to the conclusion that this was a somewhat saturated market. With so many people teaching themselves how to create websites the days of professional web developers are probably numbered.

After a while we came to the realisation that computing as an industry does not guarantee the same lucrative career that it once did. When I worked in the industry there was no shortage of jobs at every level, since large computing facilities were the norm rather than the exception. Magazines such as *Computing* carried hundreds of jobs every week for computing professionals – from mainframe computer operators to system automation programmers. Now however, the days of huge computer suites filling entire floors of buildings are a thing of the past and the chances of working your way up from a trainee computer operator into system development, as I did, are slim to non-existent. The world of computing has moved on, and many of the people who were once involved in it have, like myself, also moved on.

A worrying knock-on effect of this situation is that skills that were once commonplace could soon become very rare, or disappear completely. Many times I have found myself in conversation with IT and computing professionals who call themselves systems analysts or system administrators, only to realise that they work in PC support. When I worked in system development the

title of systems analyst meant something much more. These were people who knew multi-million pound computing platforms inside out; people who installed, configured and customised software and hardware to meet specific needs.

Back then a whole team of analysts and administrators were needed to keep large computer centres ticking over. These days everything has shifted to the desktop and the guy who comes to fit your CD-ROM drive is calling himself a system administrator.

That said, things are changing again, and the centralised computing model may yet make a comeback. Microsoft is set to start pushing its ASP model hard this year, with end users paying for time on its applications rather than buying them complete.

If ASPs do become the way forward for software use and distribution, then we'll probably see a return to the large computer centre setups of the mid- to late-1980s.

These days the chances of working your way up from a trainee computer operator into systems development ARE SLIM TO NON-EXISTENT

This will mean that computer professionals will be required to set up and administrate the hardware and software while computer operators will be necessary to keep things running reliably, 24 hours a day. No-one will relinquish physical application distribution if it means they can't use their word processor every time the ASP server goes down.

It's here that the diminishing number of real systems analysts, administrators and even computer operators becomes a problem. If most of these people have moved on to new pastures, finding the right people to once again set up centralised sites could be a problem.

We could end up with a severe IT staff shortage as we did in the 1980s, and those few who have the required skills could find themselves to be very hot properties.

Ultimately, moving computing back to a centralised rather than distributed model should open the door for a new generation of IT professionals, and hopefully help my friend kick-start his career.

Riyad Emeran, Editor in Chief

Politicians must seize NHS nettle



Katie Grant

Saturday Standpoint

THE other week a GP told me, with both amusement and resignation, that his latest dread was the patient with the file. Not the patient's own file, you understand, but a file, often inches thick, of medical diagnoses and treatments downloaded from the Internet.

"They seem to think it is helpful," he observed wryly. However, while it may be helpful for the patient to feel he is "taking control" of his or her, often entirely misdiagnosed, illness, those sheaves of paper bring nothing but difficulty for the doctor.

The patient may have all the latest information at his finger-tips, but often the pioneering treatment he seeks is quite out of the question. At the moment it falls to the doctor to tell him that the NHS cannot keep up with every "latest breakthrough", however life-saving. The patient stomps off in a fury of disappointment, cursing the doctor for letting him down.

Doctors must sigh for the good old days when they did the diagnosis and the patient was grateful for whatever treatment was offered.

Doctors cannot prevent patients logging on to the Web, but it is increasingly important that patients are clear that many of their demands cannot be met by the NHS. As Bill O'Neill, the Scottish secretary of the BMA, indicated in a report published this week, to survive, the NHS must move "from a comprehensive system (still centrally funded and essentially free at the point of use) to a restricted one".

Dr O'Neill is absolutely right. His suggestion is the only sensible way forward. But because it is not a vote-winner no politician will go near it. Consequently the NHS is collapsing under the pressure of increasing demands. Averting their collective gaze and pretending that money will make it all rosy in the garden is about all politicians feel up to.

This is a gross dereliction of their duty. All is not rosy and

money will not make it so. The combined deficits of NHS trusts in Britain amount to about £500 million. When new money is put in, the deficits gobble it up. Yet more and more treatments and drugs are offered, often for conditions that people have, up to now, simply put up with. HRT is a case in point. Some people really need it to combat osteoporosis. Others take it to combat menopausal symptoms that may be acute but are hardly life-threatening. At present, both types of patient get HRT on the NHS. Can that really continue?

What an opportunity for the Scottish Tories this BMA report presents. NHS rationing is essential if the NHS is to survive. It is the most pressing issue on the domestic political agenda. How it is done requires deep thought, both moral and practical. In the long term, there will be great prizes and a place in the history books for the politician who is prepared to tackle it head on, for at stake is nothing less than the continued operation of our public health system.

The Scottish Tories, who up to now have shown about as much moral and political courage as a shoal of jellyfish, could salvage their reputation for drift and intellectual idleness by grasping this issue and doing some real work on it.

Everybody knows the NHS cannot do everything. Doctors need to know under what limits they are operating. As Dr. O'Neill rightly says: "It should be politicians who set out what is available and not available on the NHS." Getting doctors to do the politicians' dirty work for them is quite wrong. But what politician has the courage to say so? Until one is found, I suggest that when a GP is presented with an angry patient demanding the breakthrough treatment promised on the Internet, he should prefer nothing more than directions to the local politician's constituency office.

PART II**? I: Answer**

1. What are we doing when we read something?

When we read, we are doing some or all of the following:

- Looking at the layout of the text
- Looking at the characters (typed or written), and the words that they make up
- Understanding the words, and the sentences that they create
- Interpreting the writer's meaning
- Bringing our understanding to the text
- Analysing the text
- Judging how effective the writing has been in meeting its purpose.

As you can see from this, reading is all about understanding, interpreting, and evaluation. Reading is much more than just passively looking at words, and absorbing the information contained. You need the following skills:

- Ability to read
- Concentration
- Ability to understand
- Ability to interpret
- Ability to analyse
- Ability to identify links
- Ability to identify purpose
- Ability to make judgements
- Ability to consider and understand points being made.

2. Why do we read?

We read for a variety of reasons, including: to be entertained; to be educated; to get information; to seek out other people's opinions; to expand our knowledge; and so on.

3. What different types of writing can you think of?

I thought of the following:

- Newspaper articles
- Letters
- Reports and official 'papers' (e.g. government publications)
- Textbook articles

- Magazines
- Pamphlets
- Notices
- Instructions
- Charts, diagrams and other graphics
- Signs
- Advertising
- E-mail and Internet page.

? 2: Answer

Here are some different purposes.

Type of writing	Identify two purposes
Newspaper articles	To express an opinion, to give information, to present a range of views, etc.
Letters	To highlight something; to present information; to request a service, etc.
Reports and 'papers'	To examine an issue; to investigate something; to present information, usually in an objective way
Text book articles	To give information; to present arguments; to explain something
Magazines	To entertain; to give information; to ?
Pamphlets/leaflets	To advertise; to give information; to sell something
Notices	To inform; to highlight; to advertise
Instructions	To give information; to show how to do something
Charts, diagrams and other graphics	To give information; to summarise a point; to give offer additional data to explain
Signs	To warn; to give instructions or directions
Advertising	To sell a product; to increase awareness
E-mail and Internet pages	To give information; to entertain; to express views, etc

These are not the only answers you could give, and you may have identified different purposes.

? 3: Answer

You should have identified at least one purpose from the left-hand column, and at least two reasons for saying that this was the purpose, from the right-hand column.

Purpose	Reasons for saying this is the purpose
The writer's purpose is to inform us that stress is on the increase among young people.	The headline ' <i>Stress makes young old before their time</i> ' tells us that stress is affecting young people.
The purpose of this article is to warn young people about the effects of stress.	The article makes it clear that 'more than one in three young people ... ⁴ regularly feel stressed.'
The writer's purpose was to highlight a report carried out by the Bread for Life campaign which shows that stress is on the increase among young people.	Throughout the article, the writer quotes from a report from the Bread for Life campaign, and she also quotes from a psychologist who tells us that young people are living unhealthy lifestyles.
The purpose of this communication was to highlight the dangers of stress at work for young people.	The writer quotes a spokesperson from the Confederation of British Industry who says 'Stress at work is becoming a big problem across all age groups ... That age group [younger people] ⁵ ... is also more likely to work hard and play hard.'
The writer was attempting to warn young people that when they are stressed they should not turn to under-eating, over-eating, smoking or drinking. These are not ways of coping with problems.	The writer quotes from a report from the Bread for Life campaign and gives figures to show the extent to which under-eating, over-eating, smoking and drinking are problems for young people with stress.
The writer's purpose is to tell us that young people are suffering from insomnia, headaches, irritability, aggression and depression because of stress.	The writer says that a report found that ; 'one in three 18 to 24-year-olds suffers insomnia, 56% complain of headaches, and 23% suffer from depression, while ... [many] young people become irritable when stressed and a third behave aggressively.'

It's not too important which purpose and reasons you gave. The important thing is that your answer is supported by good reasons from the text.

⁴ Three full stops (...) are used to show that something has been cut out of the quotation. This is called ellipsis.

⁵ Square brackets [like this] are used when you want to add your own words to the quotation to help the reader to understand it. You shouldn't put in your own opinion – simply use this convention to make the quotation more understandable.

? 4: Answer

Where does this article come from? Refer to the layout, the content and the language used.

The article 'Stress makes young old before their time' is written in columns, and has a large headline. The writer's name appears as a byline. The whole article is a detailed discussion of a serious issue – stress among the young. The writer has quoted from a report, and has additionally got quotations from a psychologist, a research specialist and a spokesperson from the Confederation of British Industry.

All of this suggests that this communication came from a broadsheet newspaper. The language used is formal, and some of the sentences are quite long and detailed (e.g. the opening sentence, which runs to a whole paragraph).

? 5: Answer

Who is the target readership? Give reasons for your answer by referring to content, layout and the headline.

This article 'Stress makes young old before their time' is about how young people are coping with stress. Young people would therefore find it of interest. Psychologists and a health specialist are quoted in the article, and this suggests that people who work in the medical field, such as doctors and nurses, would be interested.

The layout suggests the piece is from a broadsheet newspaper (columns, headline and byline), and so it would also be of interest to the educated reader. The headline mentions the word *young*, and again this would suggest a piece that might be of interest to the young reader.

? 6: Answer

Here is my summary. Yours will be worded differently, but you should have included most of the points that I do here.

The writer claims that people watch too much television, that they become engrossed in programmes' storylines, and lose contact with real people. He feels that storylines are not handled in a realistic way, and that people become unable to think for themselves. He also claims that television causes some people to miss out on exercise. He concludes by saying television destroys relationships, the mind and the body of the viewer, and urges people to dispose of their sets.

? 7: Answer

In the article 'Stress makes young old before their time', the writer Rosemary Free starts off by telling us that stress is causing young people to develop bad eating and drinking habits. One third of people aged 18–24 feel stressed, and half say that work is the cause. The writer quotes from a report carried out by the Bread for Life campaign, which claims that some young people are suffering from insomnia, headaches and depression. Some people also become irritable or aggressive.

The writer tells us that work is the biggest cause of stress, followed by money and relationship worries. Women are more likely to turn to food for comfort, and men more likely to turn to alcohol.

Free⁶ quotes a psychologist who says that young people are living destructive lifestyles because of stress. Another psychologist tells us that the workplace is highly stressful and that people also feel stressed when relationships do not meet their expectations. He says that eating and drinking allow people to feel in control.

A spokesperson from the CBI agrees that stress at work is a big problem. The writer concludes the article with some advice from a specialist in the Health Education Board, who tells us that we should talk about problems, find time to relax and set realistic goals.

? 8: Answer

The writer seems to take the issue of stress seriously, but she doesn't state her own opinion openly. The headline is a bold statement – stress makes young people old before their time – and this suggests that she is not questioning the results of the report.

The article doesn't question the report's findings, and all of the information given is about the causes and symptoms of stress. This suggests that the writer believes stress to be a problem.

The author quotes from several sources including psychologists and a health specialist. This again suggests that the writer feels it is a serious issue because she has gone to people who are experts to get their opinions.

Finally, the article is written in a formal way, and this further shows that the writer feels that this is an issue that is worth serious discussion.

Your answer will be different from this one. This isn't a problem, as long as you are able to justify why you've said what you did. If your answer is very different from this one, speak to your tutor about it. S/he will look at your answer and help you to decide if you've provided a good answer or not.

⁶ When referring to an author after the first mention, you use only their last name.

? 9: Answer

In this question, you have been asked to evaluate the article in about 100 words. The answer given here is much more detailed than this (about 250 words). The reason for this is to show you different ways of evaluating the sample communication. Do remember though that your evaluation is only 100 words, and that that is sufficient detail for the purposes of the assessment.

In the article, the writer's purpose was to inform us that stress is on the increase among young people, and to warn young people about the effects of stress.

The communication was biased to an extent, as it didn't question whether stress was really as much of a problem as the report suggests. Despite this, the sources quoted were very effective, as she quoted the opinions of people who are experts in this area.

She gave figures from the report to back up the claim that stress is affecting young people, and these figures demonstrated that stress is a big problem. The writer stuck to the point that was being made throughout. The communication as a whole was well structured, and it was always clear who was saying what. The arguments were put together in an easy-to-understand way.

There were no graphics with this article – a graph showing the figures quoted in the article would perhaps have helped to underline the serious nature of the problems discussed. The headline was effective, as it made it clear that this article was about young people and stress. The language used was appropriate to the serious nature of the subject, and no complicated phrases were used, adding to its easy readability.

Overall, this was a very effective article, giving a lot of information on the subject. It would have been a bit more effective if the writer had questioned whether stress is as bad as the article suggests.

Your answer will be different from this one, but I expect you covered some of the same points. If your answer is very different from mine, speak to your tutor about it. S/he will look at your answer and help you to decide if you've provided a good answer or not.

The Sunday Times Scotland

7 May 2000, SCOTLAND: EDITORIAL

Excluded by the system

Something is wrong with an education system that allows a 12-year-old boy to attend school for only three hours a day for art, PE, home economics and to play on computers. He is not taught English or maths because his school cannot provide him with a support teacher. Without one he would probably disrupt the other pupils in his class: they would learn nothing and he would learn nothing.

There are no easy solutions for teachers when they are confronted with troublesome children like this, but his part-time existence at school is no solution at all. An education system that fobs off troublemakers with a few hours of so-called schooling a day, rather than educate them, is failing itself, its misfit pupils and, in the end, society. Rightly, the boy's mother complains: "It is supposed to be an education, but he learns nothing at all."

If this boy's predicament was unusual, it would be less worrying. But he is one of many such children. They are supposed to receive a mainstream education but, because they are so difficult to handle, schools cannot cope with them. So, instead of going against the grain of government policy to keep troublemakers in the

mainstream, schools are discovering elaborate ways of minimising the disruption to themselves while at the same time keeping their exclusion figures low.

Common sense dictates that there are two principal options for education policy-makers grappling with persistently disruptive pupils. Either they should be sent to special schools or they should be in ordinary schools reinforced with investment to create special units, special projects and to hire support teachers.

The Scottish Executive has chosen the latter option, but does not seem to be funding it sufficiently for it to work, despite £23m in the excellence fund for schools to set up "alternatives to exclusion". Money is not the only answer, but it helps. The lack of it, and the government's target to cut exclusions by one third by 2002, is having the effect of increasing the number of halfway-house children who are being neither educated nor excluded.

The minister must look at the policy again. Unless, of course, Labour intends to modify its mantra "education, education, education" by adding the words "except for children who cause trouble".

The Herald, 7 October 1999

Stress makes young old before their time

ROSEMARY FREE

YOUNG people are suffering symptoms most commonly associated with middle age, and developing abnormal eating and drinking habits because of high stress levels, according to new research published today.

More than one in three young people aged between 18 and 24 regularly feel stressed, with half citing work as the cause.

Nearly a third under-eat as a result of stress, while one in three admits to over-eating and smoking excessively, and 40% to drinking to relieve feelings of stress. The survey of 950 young adults across the UK was carried out by the Bread for Life campaign, which aims to encourage young people to eat a healthy balanced diet.

It found one in three 18 to 24-year-olds suffers insomnia, 56% complain of headaches, and 23% suffer from depression, while three out of five young people become irritable when stressed and a third behave aggressively.

Work is the biggest cause of stress, followed by money worries and relationships.

Women are more likely to turn to food when stressed, with more than half naming chocolate as the greatest stress reliever, while more men turn to alcohol for solace.

Women are also more likely to talk to a friend about their problems, with men tending to bottle things up.

Commenting on the research, Manchester-based psychologist Professor Cary Cooper said: "When feeling stressed, young people are demonstrating symptoms most commonly associated with middle age and, in order to escape their anxieties, they're turning towards living destructively unhealthy lifestyles from an early age."

Dr Geoff Scobie, a senior psychologist at Glasgow University, said society as a whole was feeling more stress.

"The work situation is now a very stressful place," he said.

"Not only have you got to do your work, you have also got to be seen to be doing your work.

"There is also a high expectation associated with lots of things you do. This includes relationships. We expect relationships to be out of this world and tend to opt out if they don't meet our expectations. What we find most distressing is not being in control of our lives. We turn to a situation where we are in control - that is eating and drinking.

"We can either eat or not eat but we are in control. It gives us some sort of valid action and releases us from stresses and anxieties, especially when we drink alcohol."

A spokesman for the Confederation of British Industry said: "Stress at work is becoming a big problem across all age groups. It is a very competitive market place for companies and therefore there is greater demand for employees to perform to ensure the company can continue to prosper.

"For the younger age group, it's a time to earn their spurs and make an impression on their employer. That age group is also more likely to work hard and play hard."

Ms Elizabeth Burtney, a research specialist at the Health Education Board of Scotland, said stress was an issue that was talked about more in society in general.

"I think the fact that quite a lot of young people are feeling stressed is to do with the fact we are more able to talk about stress as an issue," she said.

"Pressures in society have gone up, but I think we are able to talk about it more, which helps."

She said that as well as talking about problems, finding time to relax and setting realistic goals were other ways to deal with stress.