



Law Admission Test (LAT)

Sample Paper

Australian Council *for* Educational Research



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Task A

Your Task

Develop an analytical piece of writing, with a title, that discusses and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented in the following opinion piece.

Your analysis will be assessed on:

- your ability to critically analyse the opinions and arguments presented
- how effectively you express yourself, which includes the structure and organisation of your analysis.


Please note: Your writing will be assessed on the strength of your analysis, not on the length of it. Avoid repetition and aim to be succinct.

Background Information

The following opinion piece was written by Thomas Wright in response to the Australian Government's recent ban on gambling advertising during daytime live sports broadcasts. It was published on an Australian online sports fan blog, of which he is the founder.

Fair go, sport!

Government's ban on gambling ads is just not cricket

Posted by [Thomas Wright](#) 

01
June
2019

As far as pastimes go, there's nothing more Australian than gambling. Take the game of Two Up, where participants bet on the outcome of how two flipped coins land. The roots of this game go as far back as the convicts of the First Fleet, and it travelled with the ANZAC soldiers to the shores of Gallipoli in World War I as a form of spirited entertainment.

Or perhaps the pokies are more your thing? Not surprising – Australia has more poker machines per head of population than any other country. We love to gamble, whether it be a punt on the Lotto or a flutter at the races – heck, we'll even raffle a chook at the pub!

The only thing more Australian than gambling, perhaps, is watching sport. To sit in the sun on The Hill at the Adelaide Oval watching the Ashes Test, to scream at an AFL umpire from the Great Southern Stand of the MCG, or to cheer on your team as they hoist the Provan-Summons Trophy at the NRL Grand Final are all uniquely, and proudly, Australian experiences.

It is only natural then that, as a nation, we would seek to unite our twin passions of gambling and sports. Betting on your team makes the game just that little bit more interesting (all the more so if betting against your mate!), and winning the bet brings you closer to sharing the joy of victory with your team's players.

So there is something decidedly un-Australian about the federal government's recent hysterical decision to ban gambling advertising during televised sports broadcasts. And I don't simply mean this in a jingoistic sense; it is an attack on our fundamental right to enjoy doing what we like and engage in a little harmless fun. We pride ourselves on the Aussie spirit of a 'fair go', but what is fair about banning a business from advertising its services to its customers at exactly the time those services are needed – just before and during a match!

It is claimed that such a ban on TV advertising is necessary to protect children from the evil clutches of the big bad gambling companies. This kind of argument has a long history: recently it was first-person shooter games that were going to turn our kids into homicidal maniacs, before that heavy metal music was certain to convert young minds to Satanism. If you go back far enough, it was The Beatles' music that spelled the moral corruption of a generation (the same generation now enforcing a ban on gambling advertising...).

But if gambling was really harmful, it wouldn't be legal in the first place. And where is the evidence that TV advertising is turning children into gambling addicts? At best, a Deakin University study has found that 75% of children can recall the name of at least one sports betting brand, and one in four children can name four or more brands. No doubt they can also name four or more varieties of fruit, so should we now ban fruit advertising? The fact is, gambling advertising during sports broadcasts is a relatively new phenomenon; we don't know what effect it will have on children, if any at all! So if we don't know it's broken, why are we trying to fix it?

And let's remember one simple fact: you have to be over 18 to gamble in the first place, so the ban is not necessary because children can't gamble. All the ban does is push gambling advertising online (kids don't go online, right?) and deprive TV broadcasting channels of about \$140 million in revenue, which means they need to put more ads for other things into sports broadcasts to recoup their costs. This makes sport less enjoyable to watch on TV, encouraging kids to watch their favourite sports online instead, where all the gambling advertising is.

The legislation was meant to ensure that parents and their children could sit down and watch the footy together without gambling messages popping up. But isn't it better that this happens when parents are there to talk to their children about responsible gambling? When children are sneaking off to their bedrooms to watch sport on their phone or iPad instead, parents can't do their job.

Should we be taking that gamble?

Task B

Background Information

You are the head of curriculum at Roverville Primary School. A year ago the school introduced a program in which students would use tablet devices in all their learning, based on the belief that children needed to develop skills to prepare them for the 'digital world'. Over the past six months, there have been a series of escalating complaints from parents in the school community that their children are spending too much time using digital technology at school. More than 50% of parents have now signed a petition requesting that time spent using technology ('screen time') at school be reduced. In response to the petition, the principal has asked you to make a recommendation on the school's use of digital technologies in the classroom, which will be published in the school newsletter.

Your Task

Read and consider the following items related to children's use of technology. Develop a piece of writing to present to your principal that outlines your recommendations (i.e. your point of view as head of curriculum) on the issues relating to the amount of time students at Roverville Primary School spend using their tablet devices.

Please note: While it is not a requirement to reference all the material reproduced on the following pages, your piece of writing should be clearly based on the issues arising in this material. You can reference the reproduced materials in your argument by their item number in brackets, e.g. '(see Item 2)'.

Task B

Item 1: Article

The following is from an article, recently published in the local newspaper's 'Parenting Life' section.

Your child is not reading enough

*It's not just you who is worried about your child's obsession with electronic gadgetry, writes **Samuel Page**.*

Ever get the feeling your child is spending too much time on their electronic device? You're not alone. Many prominent academics are starting to worry that the recent shift towards video gaming or social media in preference to reading a good book is doing harm to young children.

Psychology researchers such as Keith Oatley from the University of Toronto (himself a novelist) have found that reading fiction improves empathy. When two groups in his study were each given a different text to read – one a Chekov short story and the other a version of the events within the Chekov story rewritten in documentary form – those who read the original work of fiction scored higher in later tests of empathy for the characters.

Related research carried out recently at the University of Buffalo showed that reading fiction engenders powerful feelings of belonging to – and identity within – the social world of the novel, and thus may help young readers to rehearse socialisation and identity formation in their real-world social contexts.

The problem with children resorting increasingly to social media and first-person action gaming in place of fiction reading – according to high-profile neuroscientist Susan Greenfield – is that these activities develop a lack of empathy for others and an overinflated sense of one's own significance.

At a public lecture at the University of South Australia in 2014, Greenfield said, "I just wonder whether we might be looking at a generation who are completely self-centred, [with] short attention spans, not very good at communication, rather needy emotionally and with a weak sense of identity?"

Kids Vox Pop: Do you prefer book time or screen time?

"I like playing Minecraft because it makes you think and you can create your own world, but my mum hates it." – *Jackson, 10*

"I like books but they can be pretty boring as well. Screen time is good because I can connect with my friends and actually learn about stuff I'm interested in." – *Evie, 12*

"Well I suppose screen time because I read books off my iPad, but I can also play games if I get bored." – *Aditi, 11*

Task B

Item 2: Opinion Piece

The following opinion piece is by the principal of a new selective entry high school and was published in an Australian teaching and education magazine.

Designing a 21st-century curriculum

Tomorrow's world will be a vastly different place to the world we inhabit today. However, many features of the school curriculum have remained unchanged for decades. We still place an emphasis on the mastery of large bodies of 'textbook' factual and procedural knowledge and treat learning as an individual and offline process rather than a collective and connected activity.

Key measures of Australia's international educational performance show positive outcomes from increased ICT use in our classrooms. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA):

Students in Australia perform significantly above the OECD average in digital reading (521 points on the PISA digital reading scale). In particular, they have strong web-browsing skills, and are better able to plan and execute a search, evaluate the usefulness of information, and assess the credibility of sources online than students in other OECD countries, on average.

Should we lazily assume that putting an electronic device in front of a student will necessarily improve their information and digital literacy? No. But while PISA testing shows that the verbal, scientific and mathematical literacy of Australian students appears to be slipping compared to some other countries, we should be questioning the validity of a book-based curriculum that treats knowledge as inert, eternal and fixed, and learning as the mere individual retention of this knowledge. To continue in this way is to prepare students for our past, not their future.

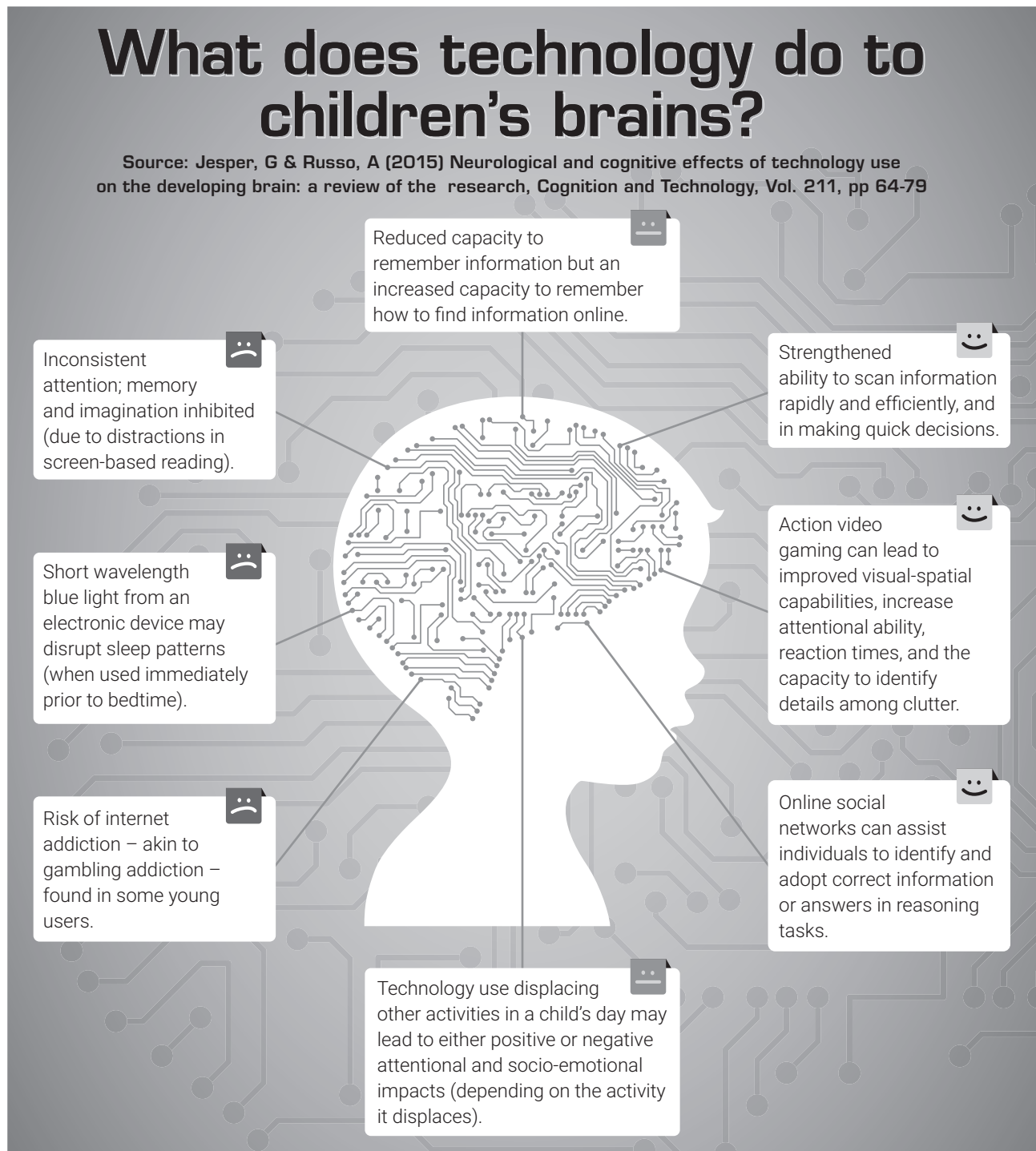
Susan McAteer

Principal, Blackmont High School

Task B

Item 3: Infographic

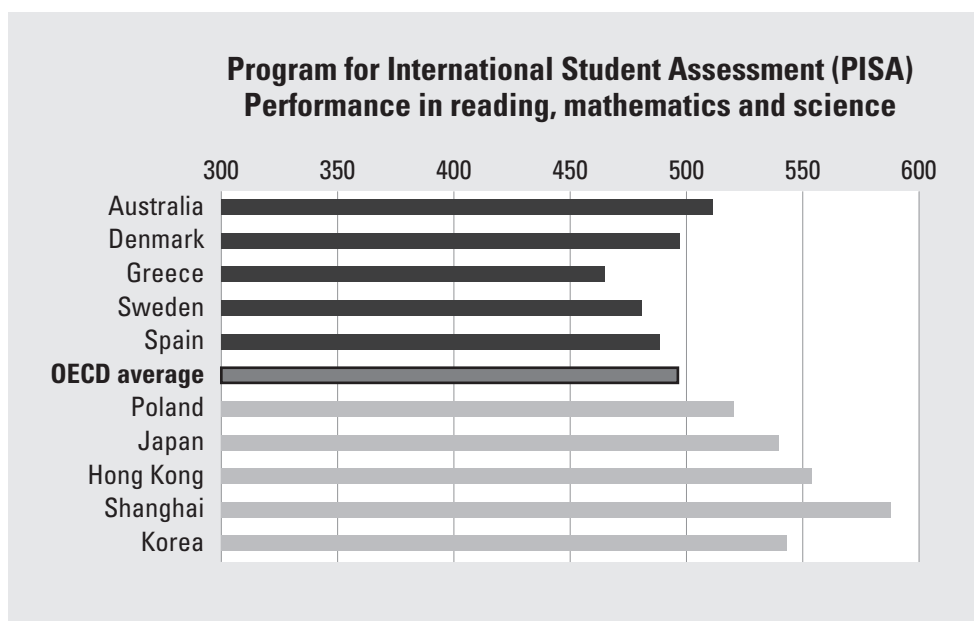
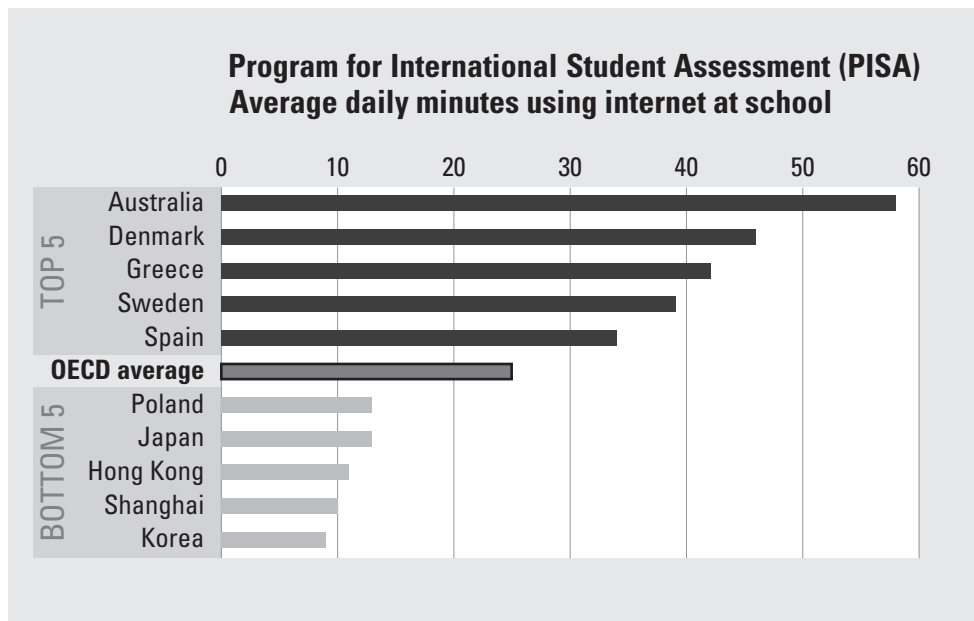
This infographic shows a summary of some of the findings of scientific research conducted into the effects of technology use on the developing brain.



Task B

Item 4: Graphs and Quotation

The following graphs and quotation come from recent research published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), regarding the relationship between student internet usage at school and their overall academic performance in reading, mathematics and science.



'Overall, students who use computers moderately at school tend to have somewhat better learning outcomes than students who use computers rarely. But students who use computers very frequently at school do much worse, even after accounting for social background and student demographics.'

Task B

Item 5: Cartoon



*"Please, Daddy. I don't want to learn to use a computer.
I want to learn to play the violin."*

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Acknowledgements — Robert Weber/The New Yorker Collection/The Cartoon Bank for the cartoon 'Please Daddy, I don't want to learn to use a computer. I want to learn to play the violin' in The New Yorker, 1984; Baroness Susan Greenfield, for a quotation reported in 'Neuroscientist Susan Greenfield warns young brains being re-wired by digital technology', 2014; Teacher Magazine, for an extract from "'Big five" challenges in school education' by Geoff Masters, 2015; The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for an extract from 'New approach needed to deliver on technology's potential in schools, as well as for data from 'Students, computers and learning: Making The Connection', 2015 and 'Snapshot of performance in mathematics, reading and science', 2012.