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Television does more harm than good

(For further practice in writing an argumentative essay, there is a very useful exercise at the selfaccess.com site.)

Your task is to write an argumentative essay in the style of the [zoos](#) example elsewhere in this website. In other words, you will state your opinion clearly in the first paragraph (TV does more harm than good). Then in each of the subsequent paragraphs you will start by acknowledging an argument that is often made by supporters of television but present evidence that their argument is false. Finally, you will write a conclusion that restates your main points and boldly spells out what you believe.

The following is a possible structure for the essay, clustering the arguments into three groups (educational value, entertainment value and international understanding).

Yes, I have done a lot of the work for you, but these are just notes - you still need to turn them into sentences!

Par. 1 Today 98% of American households have a TV set and the same is true of most "developed" countries. Indeed, many homes have more than one set. Television is taken for granted, treated as an innocent "part of the furniture" but, in fact, it does more harm than good.

Par. 2 Supporters of television argue that ... = educational (e.g. science, geography and history documentaries, news programmes, children's programmes such as "Sesame Street") ...

However, ...

- TV viewing is essentially a passive activity that discourages critical thinking - indeed, most viewers (esp. children) watch television indiscriminately ...
- Research suggests that TV can slow down young children's speech development ...
- A link between literacy problems and frequent TV viewing ...
- Similarly, a link between TV and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) ...

Par. 3 Those in favour of TV claim that ... = an innocent form of entertainment - especially helpful for housebound elderly people and the physically handicapped

...

On the other hand, ...

- television interferes with conversation (visitors often end up staring at "the box in the corner" instead of chatting with their hosts) ...
- Many programmes spread fear and depression by focussing on violence, war, crime and various disasters ...
- Some evidence that seeing on-screen violence makes us less sensitive to the real thing ...

Par. 4 Proponents of TV sometimes suggest that ... closes the gap between different nations and cultures (e.g. satellite TV news reaches people simultaneously all around the world) ... As a result, >>> greater cross-cultural understanding and respect ...

However, ...

- The satellite channels are controlled by powerful "western" corporations and the culture of the programmes is predominantly North American, European or Australian ... (Not an equal sharing of information, opinions or cultural expressions ...)
- Television is often used as a propaganda tool (e.g. coverage of the Gulf War or Afghanistan) ...
- In a very subtle way, television encourages materialism - people in "developing" countries develop a desire for Coca-Cola, Big Macs, fast cars and western fashions ...

Par. 5 *In conclusion*, TV viewing

- accelerates the process of "Coca-colonisation";
- destroys the art of conversation and a healthy, optimistic view of life;
- and turns people into unthinking, illiterate "couch potatoes".

Just as a drug addict must kick their habit in order to avoid an early death, so the world must switch off its TVs if it wishes to produce active, intelligent citizens!

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