



Pre-Reading Activities

A: Discussion

Talk about the following in a group of three or four:

1. Do you enjoy using computers? Why / Why not?
2. Have you ever used the Internet? If so, what sorts of things do you like to look up?
3. Talk about what you know about 'chat rooms'. Have you ever been to a chat room?
4. What do you think about people making friends through the Internet?



B: Preparing for Reading

Complete the following in a group of three or four:

Part 1

Look at the headline of today's article:

Computers Can Harm Young Children, U.S. Group Says

What does '**harm**' mean? (Use a dictionary if nobody in the group is sure of the meaning.)

Complete the table below with your own ideas on the topic of today's article:

Ways computers can harm young children	Ways computers can benefit young children

Part 2

Write down two questions you would like the article to answer.

1. _____
2. _____



Reading Activities

A: Checking your Ideas

Part 1 Read the article and add any information you find in the article that is not included on your table (from **Pre-Reading B, Part I**).

Computers Can Harm Young Children, U.S. Group Says

WASHINGTON Tuesday September 12 (Reuters) - Early **exposure** to computers stops healthy development in children and such technology should only be introduced after elementary school, a group of U.S. educators and psychologists said on Tuesday.

The Alliance for Childhood, a group that focuses on child development, said in a report that computers and the Internet prevent preschool children from interacting with each other and adults.

"Children need a healthy education, and computers cannot provide them with a healthy education because children need a living education -- with live people," said Joan Almon, a **former** preschool teacher and US coordinator for the organization.

The US government has spent billions of dollars a year on new technology for elementary schools. In 1994, the Clinton administration said it would work with public schools to have them hooked up to the Internet by the end of this year. According to the report, in the last five years public schools have spent more than \$27 billion in computer technology and related costs.

"Children are not getting warmth, artistic inspiration and understanding. Only a teacher can do that," Kim John Payne, a Massachusetts child psychologist, told Reuters in a phone interview.

As of late 1999, 95 percent of schools were connected, said a spokesman for the US Department of Education.

Almon said some schools have cut back on teachers, library books, music and arts programs, and field trips to parks, while spending millions on computer hardware and software.

Studies show that introduction to computers at an early age does not increase children's creativity and can cause **eye strain**,

repetitive stress injuries and **obesity**.

Those who frequently draw on a computer are **reluctant** to create hand drawings, and are extremely **critical** of their hand-written art work because it is not "**sophisticated** enough," she said.

The effects go beyond that, Payne said.

She said that increased computer lab time and shorter breaks make it difficult for children to develop their social skills. Early exposure makes children unaware of other children's emotions, she added. It is particularly damaging at a young age because the brain is most active in terms of the socialization process.

"When children are playing with a computer they are not playing with each other," Payne said "It's a virtual world not a real world."

But not everyone agreed with the report. Alan Delamater, a child psychologist at the University of Miami, agreed about the risks such as **posture** problems and obesity, but said this was outweighed by benefits such as educational games.

"It's an inactive activity, but so is reading," Delamater said.

He said children need to learn to use computers at an early age because they are part of modern life, but stressed that parents must monitor things like computer games and Internet access.

While Almon and her peers encouraged parents and teachers to keep young children away from computers, they favored their use in the education of older children.

"They are wonderful tools," she said. "Let's be really careful about how we use them."

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Glossary: **exposure:** contact with something, being affected by something **former:** the person used to have the job before, but not now **eye strain:** a tired condition of the eyes caused by such activities as reading or looking at a computer screen **obesity:** being very fat **reluctant:** not keen, not wanting to do something **critical:** saying something is not good quality **sophisticated:** advanced, complex **posture:** the way you hold your body **monitor:** to watch carefully

Part 2 Compare your table with the students from your group.

B: Finding Information

Read the article again to find answers to the questions you wrote in **Pre-Reading Activity B Part 2**.

Share your questions and answers with your group.

C: Understanding Points of View

Find information in the article to help you complete the table below. You must decide whether the person / group listed feel **positive** or **negative** about using computers with young children.

Person / Group	Positive / Negative
The Alliance for Childhood	
The Clinton Government	
Joan Almon - former preschool teacher	
Kim John Payne - child psychologist	
Alan Delamater - child psychologist	

D: Vocabulary

Choose five words from today's article that you do not know, then complete the following:

1. Copy the sentence from today's article (with the unknown word).
2. Look at the sentence and try to decide what part of speech the word is.
3. Look at the words which go together with the new word. Underline these words.
4. Try to guess the meaning of the word before you look in the dictionary. Write down your guess.
5. Look in your dictionary and find as much information as you can. Do all the following:
 - check the part of speech.
 - look carefully at the grammar of the new word.
 - read the example sentence if there is one.
 - write your own sentence using the new word.
 - notice other words with the same or opposite meaning.
 - teach your new words to a partner.

E: Grammar

Work with a group and complete the following:

Part 1 Look carefully at the sentences below.

1. Children need to learn to use computers.
2. Parents need to monitor things like computer games.
3. Introduction to computers at an early age can cause eye strain.
4. Computers cannot provide them with a healthy education.

Part 2 Now write a rule for the verbs '**need**' and '**can**'.

1. In the positive, the verb '**need**' is followed by _____
2. The verb '**can**' is followed by _____
After the third person (*he, she, it*) the verb '**can**' _____

Part 3 '**Can**' is a modal auxiliary verb. There are three other modal verbs used in the article. Write them down here:

Part 4 '**Need**' is sometimes called a '**marginal modal**'. This is because when used in a question or in a negative sentence, it can also be used like a modal i.e. (no third person '**s**', no **past form** and **not** followed **by to + infinitive**)

Sort these sentences into two groups. What is the difference of meaning between the two groups?

1. You mustn't take life so seriously.
2. You needn't wait for me if I'm not there at 1 o'clock.
3. You mustn't be surprised if he shouts, he can't hear very well.
4. You mustn't forget to send me a postcard.
5. You needn't take your umbrella, it isn't going to rain.
6. You needn't pay, it is my turn.
7. You mustn't pay him. He has done a bad job and it isn't finished yet.
8. You needn't get the train from the airport — I'll pick you up.

Complete the sentences:

We use *mustn't* to

We use *needn't* when

Part 5 Now answer the questions below. Everyone must ask and answer **one question each**. Think carefully about the grammar of your answers.

1. What are three things you must do every day?
2. How many languages can you speak? What are they?
3. What are the five most important things children need to do so that they grow up healthy and happy?
4. What is one important thing you feel you needn't change about the way you study?



Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

A: Say It!

Work with a group of four. Choose one role each to talk about for at least one minute. When you have finished you may like to take a different role.

<p>Role A You are from the Alliance for Childhood. Talk about what you feel is a healthy education for children.</p>	<p>Role C You are the head of the Department of Education for the Clinton Government. Talk about why you have spent so much money on computer technology in schools.</p>
<p>Role B You are Alan Delamater. Talk about all the advantages of children using computers from an early age.</p>	<p>Role D You are a parent of a child who has just started school. Your child spends a lot of time at school in the computer lab. How do you feel?</p>

B: Interview a Classmate

Prepare some questions to ask a partner about their opinion on young children using computers. Be ready to talk to the class about what your partner said.

C: Letter to the Editor

Write a letter to a local newspaper. Give your opinion about the increase in computer time in schools.

D: Vocabulary

Part 1

Today's article contains some vocabulary related to computers. Talk about the meaning of the words in **bold type** in the sentences below:

1. The Government said it would work with schools to have them **hooked up to the Internet**.
2. Some schools have spent millions on **computer hardware and software**.
3. It's a **virtual world**, not a real world.

Part 2

Now try and find out the meaning of some more computer words.

1. He spends most of his time **surfing the net**.
2. He forgot to save his **document** on a **floppy disk**.
3. The computer **crashed** before I had saved my work.



TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Pre-Reading Activities

A: Discussion - Notes

The number of students in a group is not particularly important. Working in pairs would also be appropriate for this task. The advantage of a larger grouping is the wider range of experience and knowledge to share. (If the Internet is available, you may wish to introduce the students to a chat room so they can try it out for themselves. If you do this, try and use a chat room on a reputable education site and monitor the students closely.)

A: Discussion - Answers

A 'chat room' is a place on the Internet that people can access according to special interests or topics, for example fans of a particular rock band. In the 'chat room' people write their opinions using a nickname and others read what they have written.

B: Preparing for Reading - Notes

You may wish to keep the same groups for this activity as for **Pre-Reading Activity A**. For **Part 2**, you will need to circulate around the class to check students' grammar as well as checking that students' questions are reasonable in regard to what to expect in the article. Make sure you read the article first so you are able to steer students in the right direction with their questions.

Reading Activities

A: Checking your Ideas - Notes

It is best to ask students to read the article without a dictionary. Some difficult words have been defined at the bottom of the article. It is good for students to develop the skill of guessing the meaning of unknown words by using the context the words appear in.

A: Checking your Ideas - Answers

Ways computers can harm young children	Ways computers can benefit young children
1. they stop children from relating to other people	1. educational games
2. computers don't give children the warmth and emotional connection they need	2. useful skills for the future
3. they limit a child's creativity	
4. they can cause eye problems	
5. can cause posture and stress injuries	
6. they can cause weight problems because a child is not active enough	
7. they make children not want to draw freehand	
8. they make children not appreciate their own handwriting	
9. they make children unaware of others' emotions	

C: Understanding Points of View - Answers

Person/Group	Positive/Negative about computers for young children
The Alliance for Children	Negative
The Clinton Government	Positive
Joan Almon - former preschool teacher	Negative
Kim John Payne - child psychologist	Negative
Alan Delamater - child psychologist	Positive

D: Vocabulary - Notes

It will be necessary to work together as a class learning to identify collocations of a word in a sentence, if the students have never done this before. The article provides many ready examples for students to practice with. Once students have mastered it, they will be ready to work independently with the words they have chosen for this task. You will need to circulate to make sure they are all on track.

E: Grammar - Notes

Part 1

If you feel that the students will not be able to talk about grammar themselves it would be equally effective to do the activity as a class and elicit the rules from the students together.

E: Grammar - Notes

Need is often referred to as a modal verb which is not strictly true.

In British English, both forms of **needn't** are possible:

- you don't need to bother
- you needn't bother

Although both are possible in American English, **needn't** is rarely used.

E: Grammar - Suggested Answers

Part 2

1. In the positive, the verb 'need' is followed by to + the infinitive form of a verb
2. The verb 'can' is followed by the base form of a verb (no to)
3. After the third person (he, she, it) the verb 'can' does not have an 's'.

Part 3 would, must, should

Part 4

You mustn't take life so seriously.

You mustn't be surprised if he shouts, he can't hear very well.

You mustn't forget to send me a postcard.

You mustn't pay him. He has done a bad job and it isn't finished yet.

You needn't wait for me if I'm not there at 1 o'clock.

You needn't take your umbrella, it isn't going to rain.

You needn't pay, it is my turn.

You needn't get the train from the airport — I'll pick you up.

Complete the sentences:

We use mustn't to stop or forbid someone.

We use needn't when it is not necessary to do something.

Post-Reading Activities

A: Say It! - Notes

The students may enjoy changing this activity into a debate.

D: Vocabulary - Answers

Part 1

- connected to the Internet
- Hardware is the computer itself or computer equipment (what kind of screen the computer has, how much memory it has), and the software is the particular programs on the computer.
- Something that is not real but seems real.

Part 2

- Using the Internet and going from one site to another to see what is there.
- A **document** is the writing/information that someone does on the computer, for example a letter, a story, a job application.
- A **floppy disk** is a flat piece of plastic which stores information for use by a computer.
- The computer stops working or fails suddenly for some reason.