

Exercise 1: Read the article**Impulse Control: Don't Look at Social Media while Studying**

¹ Amazingly, a researcher found that people in some countries park their cars differently from those in other ones. For example, he discovered that in China, 88% of the cars were backed into the parking space, but in the U.S., less than 6% were. To illustrate, in the picture below, the first car on the right is backed in, but the car on the left is parked head in.



² The researcher, Prof. Shaomin Li, thinks that this parking behavior can tell us something interesting about the people in different countries. He studied parking habits in Brazil, China, India, Russia and the United States, and he found that there is higher economic growth in the countries in which drivers back in than those in which drivers park head in.

³ He believes that it is connected to the ability to delay gratification. Delayed gratification means that someone is willing to do something difficult first in order to get a bigger reward later. For example, let's say you have an important exam tomorrow, but you also want to watch a movie. You could watch the movie now, or you could practice delayed gratification by studying now and get a big reward of passing your exam. Then, tomorrow you can watch the movie.

For people who are parking their cars, when they back in to park, it takes more effort than to park head in, but later, when they want to leave, they can drive away faster and more easily. That's their reward. Prof. Li thinks that the economy is better in countries where people are willing to delay gratification.

⁴ One of the most famous psychology experiments studied 4-year-old children and their ability to delay gratification. For the experiment, a researcher, psychologist Walter Mischel, took a child to a room with a chair and small table. There was one piece of candy and a bell on the table. Let's say that the child's name was Alice. Mischel told Alice that they were going to play a game. He said that he was going to leave the room soon. If Alice decided that she wanted to eat the one piece of candy, she could ring the bell, and Mischel would return, and she could eat that one piece. But, if Alice could wait without ringing the bell until he returned, then he would give her two pieces of candy.

⁵ Interestingly, some children rang the bell immediately and ate the one piece of candy. In other words, they had no impulse control. This means they couldn't stop themselves from doing something that they really wanted to do. Other children had good impulse control. They waited until Mischel returned after about 10-20 minutes, and they got a reward of two pieces of candy. Just like the people who backed in their cars to park, those children had the ability to delay gratification.

⁶ The most interesting findings from this study came several years later when the researcher, Mischel, interviewed those children when they were in their teens, 20s and 30s. The children who could wait and got the two piece of candy, in other words the ones who could control their impulses, were better able to focus on their studies in high school. They got higher scores on college entrance exams and had fewer behavior problems than the students who had weak impulse control. Moreover, they reached higher levels of education and were less likely to be over-weight. They also had more successful jobs and fewer divorces.

⁷ Mischel believes that children who are able to control their impulses and delay gratification have many advantages. They will feel that they have more control over what happens to them, and as a result, will be more optimistic and have more success in the future.

Pre-discussion Exercise 1

Answer True (T) or False (F) according to information in the article.

- ___ 1) It's harder to park a car head in than to back it in to park.
- ___ 2) If you watch a movie now instead of studying for an important test, it probably means that you aren't able to delay gratification.
- ___ 3) According to Prof. Li, people who back in to park show an ability to delay gratification.
- ___ 4) The children in the psychology experiment with candy were teenagers.
- ___ 5) If children had good impulse control, they waited to get two pieces of candy.
- ___ 6) If a child rang the bell, it meant she could eat two pieces of candy.
- ___ 7) Children who had weak impulse control were more likely to weigh too much when they were teenagers compared to ones with good impulse control.
- ___ 8) Children who had good impulse control will feel more confident about their future.

Pre-discussion Exercise 2

Think about these discussion questions. You don't have to write anything.

1. Do you tend to park your car head in or do you back in?
2. Do you think people in your country tend to park their cars head in or do they back in?
3. If you were in this experiment when you were four years old, do you think you could wait to get the two pieces of candy?
4. Recently, when you study, can you stay focused, or do you often stop to check your phone or to do something else?
5. Look at the box below with the example of trouble controlling impulses. Tell us about the ones that you have trouble controlling your impulse with or other ones you have.

Examples of things which people have trouble controlling their impulses about:		
• gambling	• eating certain foods	• yelling at people when you are angry
• drinking alcohol	• watching TV	• spending too much time on the internet/computer games
• shopping	• driving fast	
• checking their phone	• staying up late at night	

6. Do you know anyone who has weak impulse control?
7. Do you do anything special to help you control yourself when you feel an impulse?
8. If you need to study, but your friends want to do something, is it difficult for you to tell them that you can't do it with them?
9. What is something that you recently bought online?
10. Is it sometimes difficult for you control your impulse to buy something online?
11. Are you sometimes worried about your impulse control?
12. In general, are you optimistic about your future?

Small-group Discussion: Impulse Control: Don't Look at Social Media while Studying

Student A

Two important concepts for this discussion

- **Delayed gratification:** This means that you avoid doing something now in order to get a bigger reward later. For example, you have a job and get paid at the end of the week. You decide not to spend it on a big dinner and some movies, but instead you save it and six months later you buy a new computer.
- **Impulse control:** This means you ignore your strong desire or wish to do something right now. For example, you know that buying lottery tickets is a waste of money. You go to a store to buy food for diner, and in the store you see a machine selling lottery tickets with a million-dollar prize. So you strongly want to buy a ticket, but you don't. This shows you have good impulse control.

Directions: Read these questions to your partners and respond to theirs.

1. Read the information in the box at the top of your paper, "Two important concepts."
4. Do you think people in your country tend to park their cars head in or do they back in?
7. **This is a discussion question. We should all answer this and ask follow-up questions.** If you were in this experiment when you were four years old, do you think you could wait to get the two pieces of candy?
10. **This is a discussion question.** Look at the box with the example of trouble controlling impulses. Tell us about the ones that you have trouble controlling you impulse with or other ones you have.

Examples of things which people have trouble controlling their impulses about:

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| • gambling | • eating certain foods | • yelling at people when you are angry |
| • drinking alcohol | • watching TV | • spending too much time on the internet |
| • shopping | • driving fast | |
| • checking their phone | • staying up late at night | |

13. **This is a discussion question.** If you need to study, but your friends want to do something, is it difficult for you to tell them that you can't do it with them?
16. **This is a discussion question.** Are you sometimes worried about your impulse control?

Post-Discussion Discussion

While you wait for other groups to finish, you talk about one of these:

- a) Was there anything in this article that surprised you or that you don't agree with or that you found very interesting?
- b) Talk about saving money.
 - Recently, are you saving money for something special?
 - Are you good at saving money or is it hard for you?
- c) Think of a different topic and discuss it.

Small-group Discussion: Impulse Control: Don't Look at Social Media while Studying

Student B

Two important concepts for this discussion

- **Delayed gratification:** This means that you avoid doing something now in order to get a bigger reward later. For example, you have a job and get paid at the end of the week. You decide not to spend it on a big dinner and some movies, but instead you save it and six months later you buy a new computer.
- **Impulse control:** This means ignore your strong desire or wish to do something right now. For example, you know that buying lottery tickets is a waste of money. You go to a store to buy food for diner, and in the store you see a machine selling lottery tickets with a million-dollar prize. So you strongly want to buy a ticket, but you don't. This shows you have good impulse control.

Directions: Read these questions to your partners and respond to theirs.

2. According to the article, did more Chinese or more Americans back in when they parked?
5. Can you explain how backing in when you park is delayed gratification?
8. **Don't look at the article when you answer this question.** What did the researcher find out about these 4-year-old children when they were in their teens, 20s and 30s?

Examples of things which people have trouble controlling their impulses about:

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| • gambling | • eating certain foods | • yelling at people when you are angry |
| • drinking alcohol | • watching TV | • spending too much time on the internet |
| • shopping | • driving fast | |
| • checking their phone | • staying up late at night | |

11. **This is a discussion question. We should all answer this and ask follow-up questions.**

Do you know anyone who has weak impulse control?

14. **This is a discussion question.** What is something that you recently bought online?

17. **This is a discussion question.** In general, are you optimistic about your future?

Post-Discussion Discussion

While you wait for other groups to finish, you talk about one of these:

- a) Was there anything in this article that surprised you or that you don't agree with or that you found very interesting?
- b) Talk about saving money.
 - Recently, are you saving money for something special?
 - Are you good at saving money or is it hard for you?
- c) Think of a different topic and discuss it.

Small-group Discussion: Impulse Control: Don't Look at Social Media while Studying

Student C

Two important concepts for this discussion

- **Delayed gratification:** This means that you avoid doing something now in order to get a bigger reward later. For example, you have a job and get paid at the end of the week. You decide not to spend it on a big dinner and some movies, but instead you save it and six months later you buy a new computer.
- **Impulse control:** This means ignore your strong desire or wish to do something right now. For example, you know that buying lottery tickets is a waste of money. You go to a store to buy food for dinner, and in the store you see a machine selling lottery tickets with a million-dollar prize. So you strongly want to buy a ticket, but you don't. This shows you have good impulse control.

Directions: Read these questions to your partners and respond to theirs.

3. Do you tend to park your car head in or do you back in?

6. **Don't look at the article when you answer this question.** Describe the experiment with the 4-year-old children and candy.

9. **This is a discussion question. We should all answer this and ask follow-up questions.**

Recently, when you study, can you stay focused, or do you often stop to check your phone or to do something else?

Examples of things which people have trouble controlling their impulses about:

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| • gambling | • eating certain foods | • yelling at people when you are angry |
| • drinking alcohol | • watching TV | • spending too much time on the internet |
| • shopping | • driving fast | |
| • checking their phone | • staying up late at night | |

12. **This is a discussion question.** Do you do anything special to help you control yourself when you feel an impulse?

15. **This is a discussion question.** Is it sometimes difficult for you control your impulse to buy something online?

18. Let's check our True False answers in Pre-Discussion Exercise 1.

Post-Discussion Discussion

While you wait for other groups to finish, you talk about one of these:

- a) Was there anything in this article that surprised you or that you don't agree with or that you found very interesting?
- b) Talk about saving money.
 - Recently, are you saving money for something special?
 - Are you good at saving money or is it hard for you?
- c) Think of a different topic and discuss it.

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Writing Activities (on other paper)

Writing Activity 1. Paraphrasing

1) Write the information from the article “**Impulse Control: Don’t Look at Social Media while Studying**” with as many details as you can. You can use the “Key words and Phrases” in the box below to write your paper.

DO NOT LOOK AT THE ARTICLE WHILE YOU ARE WRITING

Key Words and Phrases	
• parking behavior ¹	• Brazil, China, India, Russia and the United States ²
• economic growth ³	• park head in ⁴
• back in to park ⁵	• delayed gratification ⁶
• For example, important exam tomorrow ⁷	• takes more effort ⁸
• that’s their reward ⁹	• 4-year-old children ¹⁰
• Walter Mischel ¹¹	• one piece of candy and a bell ¹²
• good/weak impulse control ¹³	• control their impulse ¹⁴
• waited 10-20 minutes ¹⁵	• college entrance exams ¹⁶
• behavior problems ¹⁷	• over-weight / divorces ¹⁸

Writing Activity 2. Write a reflection about the article. Try to write a paragraph with several sentences. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*