

Task

You have been asked to participate in a blog called ‘Coming up’. This is a chatty blog about the future. The topic you have been asked to write about is what opportunities and dangers the future of communication technology presents us with.

You have found the article below, and you decide to write a text based on this.

Write a blog post (150–180 words) explaining the pros and cons of possible communication trends in the future.

Talking of the future ...

How we communicate has changed a lot over the last couple of decades and there’s no sign of this slowing down. So, what developments can we see emerging in how we communicate?

Well, there’s already software that can translate what someone is saying over the phone in real time. This will certainly break down language barriers. But will reading the translation on a screen or hearing it in an artificial, automated voice be the same as really speaking to each other? I don’t think so. I don’t see how it could capture the way you use stress or intonation to get your meaning across. So, even if the software gets the words right, it might not make it clear that you were joking, for example. There’s a danger that the right words expressed in the wrong way could actually lead to some pretty serious misunderstandings.



Face-to-face communication is already less and less common and this is a trend that we can expect to see continue. More and more people are working from home or in teams that are spread around the world, meaning that virtual meetings are becoming the norm. Whilst this means that people are spending less time commuting or travelling for work, it also means that we are spending less and less time speaking to people face-to-face. Some people are concerned that this trend towards virtual communication is already making us less comfortable when talking with others face-to-face, and they worry that this will only get worse.

And what about how we communicate with machines? We have started to make the move away from having to press buttons to talking to them. We can now speak to devices like Amazon’s Alexa or to our smartphone to ask them to play a song, add something to our shopping list or search for something on the web. This is certainly quick and convenient, but could it go too far? Might we start talking to our machines instead of to each other? And what if we get so used to talking to devices that we start talking to other people in the short commands that we give to our machines?

And maybe one day, technology will allow us to communicate our thoughts directly with one another. Work is already taking place on allowing people to communicate with a computer using their thoughts. This technology is used to allow people to do things like operate prosthetic limbs. At some point, this technology could be used for people to communicate with each other. This would enable us to communicate with anyone in the world immediately, without even taking our phone out of our pocket. I think I’d be more than a little bit concerned about what happens if the technology is hacked and someone gets access to people’s every thought.

We don’t know exactly what to expect, but, given the speed at which things are changing, you can be sure that one day, that fancy smartphone in your pocket will be seen by people of the future in the way we look at the quill