

Grammar | comparatives

- 1 a** Read the article and complete the sentence.

Part 1 is _____ positive about Wikipedia
_____ part 2.

1

Wikipedia has revolutionised the way encyclopaedias are compiled. Its open nature has led to a democratising process; knowledge is now not only in the hands of professors, but of the ordinary man or woman who has the interest, time and dedication to research and document facts. No wonder the establishment feels threatened. 'It's not authoritative!' they cry. 'It's too left-wing!' 'It doesn't represent the whole range of culture!' Of course it doesn't. It is a contemporary comment on the world. With time, today's contributors' views will be challenged and edited by a new generation.

2

Wikipedia is a valuable resource for the amateur researcher in a hurry. If you want to find out when the Crimean War started, or what *quarks* are or when Picasso painted *Guernica*, Wikipedia will tell you, with 99.99% accuracy. But for anything more complex, Wikipedia is full of potential or real misinformation. It's not the contributors' fault; they genuinely want to get it right. But, for all we know, the contributors could be five-year-olds. Wikipedia's open-source system means that anyone – young children, obsessives and the lunatic fringe – can edit it. Because of this, no serious academic should trust Wikipedia.

- b** Find the mistake in each sentence and correct it.

- 1 Text 2 is nothing near as complimentary about Wikipedia as the other text.
- 2 It suggests that Wikipedia is nowhere like as reliable as other encyclopaedias.
- 3 It is more considerably positive about Wikipedia than the other text.
- 4 The author of the text had rather let each generation question the views of the preceding generation.
- 5 According to the text, the less we know about the contributors, less we can trust Wikipedia.
- 6 The author of text 1 is definitely not as critical of Wikipedia to the author of the other text.
- 7 The author probably thinks that rather for using Wikipedia for all research, you should only use it for simple facts.
- 8 The text implies that it's a mile better to let everyone contribute to encyclopaedias.

How to... | recognise features of informal language

- 2 a** Replace the underlined words with words from the box. You don't need all of them.

in due course don't hesitate to contact me
would like concerning Dear be grateful
Yours sincerely of your attendance
following a previous arrangement
look forward to hearing take place

- a We hope to hear from you soon.
- b Please get in touch if you have any queries.
- c Hi Mrs Dormer,
- d Technics Solutions wants to invite you to our annual investors' meeting
- e inform us whether you will be able to come by 14 June.
- f which will be at The Atrium on Rose Street at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday 6 July.
- g We would like it if you could
- h Best wishes,

- b** Put the sentences (a-h) in order to make a formal letter.

Reading

3 a Read the article. Which community did each website target?

- a Fashionable people
- b Readers
- c People who have goods to sell

1

Pierre Omidyar, the son of French-Iranian immigrants, was already a millionaire before launching eBay. Omidyah's electronics site, e-shop, was bought out by Microsoft in 1996, making him a millionaire before he had turned 30. With this money, he set up an online auction company which allowed people to show items they wished to sell; other users then made a bid. Omidyar wanted to name the site Echo Bay Technology Group, but this name was already owned by a Canadian mining company, so he shortened the name to 'eBay', and a legend was born. Almost immediately, eBay made a profit. The site sold goods ranging from computers to posters to underwear. The growth of eBay was phenomenal. It is now the world's most successful online business and its users consider themselves part of a distinct community. 150 million registered users buy and sell goods worth \$1,050 every second. The website is used by big companies such as Vodaphone and IBM to sell off excess stock, but the majority of goods still sell for less than \$50.

2

It was the early 1990s, the internet boom was just beginning, and Jeff Bezos wanted to be a part of this brave, new, forward-thinking community. After leaving his job on Wall Street, Bezos decided to set up an online bookselling business. Using his garage in Seattle as an office, Bezos created Amazon.com. The idea was to make the buying of books cheap and easy, with more choice than the traditional bookshop could provide. The site had a number of features which made it attractive to potential users: fast service, search capabilities, low costs for users, tools for comparing prices of books, and personalisation in the form of customer-written book reviews. As a 24-hour virtual bookshop, Amazon was convenient, cheap and reliable. Gradually, through word-of-mouth, the company grew in popularity. Bezos had originally handled customer orders himself, but soon he realised that the company was growing too fast for one man. By 1998, the net sales were \$540 million and a whole generation of book buyers was hooked.

3

Ernst Malmsten, an events organiser, and Kajsa Leander, a supermodel, grew up in Lund, Sweden. In the late 1990s, they decided to launch boo.com, a website that would create a global fashion community by selling designer clothes all over the world.

From the beginning, there were difficulties. Clothing companies didn't trust the internet and were reluctant to sell online. Also, no one was sure that people would buy clothes without trying them on first. On 3 November 1999, the day boo.com was launched, the website had 25,000 hits, but these resulted in only eight actual orders for clothes. Worse, a well-known journalist wrote a negative article about boo.com, explaining how it had taken him 81 minutes to order a product. Other problems included viruses and a fraud detection system that rejected customers' orders. By March 2000, half of boo.com's workforce had lost their jobs. While most internet start-ups are run from garages or bedrooms, boo.com had luxurious offices in six of the world's most glamorous and expensive cities. Fresh fruit and flowers were delivered daily. Malmsten and Leander, who always travelled first-class, claimed that companies in the fashion industry needed this image. But boo.com was spending faster than it was earning and the company was doomed.

b Read the statements (1–8). Write eBay (E), Amazon.com (A) or boo.com (B).

- 1 The founder originally wanted a different name for the website.
- 2 The company had a high-class, stylish image.
- 3 Users of the site could post their own opinions of the things being sold.
- 4 The site sold a range of goods from the beginning.
- 5 The type of goods for sale weren't ideal for online shopping.
- 6 The founder/founders originally ran the website alone.
- 7 The founder/founders was/were already rich before launching the website.
- 8 The company had some technical problems.

c Match the definitions (1–7) to words in the article.

- 1 offer of a price for something (part 1)

- 2 extraordinary or remarkable (part 1)

- 3 a store of goods ready for sale (part 1)

- 4 unwilling/not wanting to do something (part 3)

- 5 new company (especially internet companies) (part 3)

- 6 extremely comfortable and expensive (part 3)

- 7 destined to end badly or in failure (part 3)
