

Student name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

In *C21 English for the 21st Century*, Levels 1 and 2, you are often asked to express opinions on different topics as part of discussion activities. Expressing opinions is also important in academic settings where students discuss academic topics in seminars and tutorials. You may also have to discuss ideas to complete academic tasks in groups.

Practice

- 1** Read the opinions below (a–c). These students are discussing the benefits of reading academic texts on paper or on screen. Underline the words and phrases they use to introduce their opinions.



a Nowadays, I think most students probably read things on screen, on their laptops or tablets. You can find most books and academic papers online. It's easier than going to the library to get books and it's cheaper, too.

b For me, reading on paper is more comfortable because I don't like looking at a screen all the time. You know, doctors say too much time looking at a screen is bad for your eyes and it makes you tired.

c I think it depends on what you're reading. Sometimes it's easier to look for information online, but if I need to read something in detail, for example for an assignment, then I usually print it out.

- 2** Which of the speakers mention:

- 1 their own experience?
- 2 what other people do?
- 3 facts or evidence to support their opinion?
- 4 examples to explain their point?

TIP

In an academic discussion, you don't usually just express personal opinions, e.g. *I think reading books is much nicer*. You need to support your opinions with reasons or evidence, e.g. *I think reading books is better because it's more comfortable*. Often you give evidence to support your ideas from academic sources, e.g. *I think reading books is generally better because research shows that too much time looking at screens can be bad for your health*.

- 3** In pairs, tell your partner which of the opinions, a–c, you agree with most. How do you prefer to read when you are studying? Say why. Make a note of your partner's opinion or record them if possible.

- 4** Now read the information below. How do the points link to your own ideas and knowledge? Underline any points that support your opinion. Add notes next to the texts as you read and think about the ideas.

Is it quicker to read on screen or on paper? The evidence is not clear. Some studies have found that people read slightly more quickly on paper, but recent research suggests that young people tend to read text on screen more quickly than in print.


Many young people say they prefer the convenience of reading on screen. Recent surveys have found, however, that more university students are going back to reading on paper. This may be good for their grades. Research shows that when two groups of students read the same text on screen or on paper, both groups can answer general questions about the text equally well. However, the students who read the printed text do better at answering specific questions about details.

In 2012, the US state of California passed a law that all college textbooks should be available for students as digital e-books. Since then, digital textbooks have become increasingly popular at universities around the world. Some e-textbooks are available for free via university libraries and even paid-for downloads are much cheaper than buying traditional print books.

- 5**  In groups, discuss the benefits of reading academic texts in print or on screen.

Remember to:

- introduce your opinion, e.g. *I think ... For me ...*
- give reasons to support your opinion, e.g. *because ...*
- use your own experience and/or the information above, e.g. *The research shows ...*
- use examples to help explain your ideas, e.g. *for example ...*
- ask others about their opinions, e.g. *What do you think, Amy?*

- 6**  **Make a list of suggestions for expressing opinions in academic discussions. Include examples. Present your lists to the class.**

Reflect

- 7**  In pairs, look back at the notes you made in Exercise 3.

- Have you changed your opinion? If so, why?
- Did any of the information in the texts help support your opinion?
- Can you express your opinion more effectively now?