**Resolved: The Internet is making people smarter.**

**Prop Contentions**

**My partner and I affirm the resolution: The internet is making people smarter.**

**Contention 1: The internet is increasing our intelligence.**

**Problem People aren’t as smart as they can be**

Without the internet, people lack access to information, to seeing new ways to solve problems, to creative work, etc. Thus, their minds are not sparked to learn, to improve. Costly books, travel to libraries, living in small towns, being part of narrow minded communities have all been barriers to learning, growing and being smart.

**The Topic solves: The internet is making people smarter and the information we receive is expanding our knowledge and intelligence.**

* The use of the internet makes us smarter by improving our reading and writing skills with access to much more information.
* Study at Imagining the Internet Center at Elon University (2010): ¾ experts state our use of the internet enhances human intelligence.
  + And 2/3 said the use of the internet has improved reading, writing, and the comprehension of information.
  + The rise of the internet and social media adds a twist, it requires written communication skills. This requires people to use their brain when participating in electronic communication.
* Dr. Code (University of Victoria): A study conducted showed that frequent internet users do better
  + Frequent internet users did better on the tests for both planning and attention than ones that don’t use it as much.
  + Using the internet actually stimulates your mind, and often have better attention and planning skills.
* Western Sydney University (2019): The internet can produce both acute and sustained alterations in areas of cognition, increasing our attentional capacities, memory, and social interactions.
* Onlinecollege.org (2019): After TV, Twitter, Facebook, and Google, we’re getting smarter, and our IQs are actually increasing over time.

**Impact: The internet expands our knowledge, increases our comprehension of information, and even benefits our lives in reality.**

* + Medium.com (2020): Free and paid courses online on any topic, electronic books, guides, and tutorials, online libraries. This all creates a great opportunity to learn, expand our knowledge, and increase intelligence.
  + Frontline, James Popham (2001): The internet also provides this information with more diverse populations and creates equal access to information and society.

**Contention 2: Culture**

**Problem: People have historically had issues relating to people different from themselves**

People have feared others, not understood them. This has led to discrimination, hatred, fear, and ignorance.

**This topic solves: the lack of interaction between cultures. Now we are able to see cultures up close and comprehensively.**

* TeleDataIct (2017): The internet brings culture closer to more people, making it more easily and quickly accessible.
  + British Council (2020): Through electronic communication, students can establish new friendships and tackle difficult problems from the viewpoint of students from different cultures.

**Impact: By being connected through the internet, we become more accepting and open to other cultures.**

* **The internet has given us unlimited availability to expand our knowledge of other cultures, and what is it like to be the “other”. This makes us smarter when we interact with different cultures, and helps others accept them. Before the internet, we only receive this information through television shows, but never without alterations. Now, we can see this cultures for what they are and learn their true significance through their own populations.**
* University of Rhode Island (2011): With the internet, people across the globe can interact with each other within seconds and has brought people from different cultures together regardless of differences and location.
  + This helps people learn about different countries, create relationships, and stay informed with events in other countries.
* Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences and Practice (2017): Through the internet, there has been an increased desire to continue accepting and learning about other cultures.
  + Health care professionals have developed more of a responsibility to be culturally aware.
  + Through virtual experiences, cultural sensitivity increases among participants, meaning they are more receptive to cultural differences.

**Contention 3: In History, people have constantly feared new technological advances.**

**Problem: Fear of New Advances.**

* Over time, as the telephone and computers and televisions came out, people have feared that these inventions would cause us to become “less smart” because we wouldn’t have the availability to do these things. We have the same fear with the internet and it taking over our lives. However, this trend has been proven wrong over time.
* ZDNet.com (2011) All new technologies, including the internet, have been feared.
  + Greek philosopher Socrates believed that writing was a threat to society because it would “introduce forgetful into the soul of those who have learned it”
  + In the 18th century, people were worried about telephones over fears that eerie voices would tear apart society by removing the need to meet people face-to-face.

**The topic solves: The internet helps us advance as a society, and we have to let the fear that it will take over our lives go. We need to take advantage of the opportunities that come with innovation, as we have when we let go of those fears in the past.**

* Medium.com (2015): The internet allows us to record more information. This information on its own may be useless, but to somebody else, it is their idea of love, humor, and a guide to how life should be lived.
* University of Cincinnati (2021): There is no evidence showing that the use of the internet harms our brain’s ability to function – only giving us access to more information and communication.

**Impact: Over time, these technological advances have benefitted our lives, making them easier and healthier, and smarter. When we take advantage of this opportunity, we can grow smarter as the internet does as well.**

**Responding to Con arguments:**

**Argument on Re-wiring our brains:**

* Our unlimited access to the internet is why we don’t have to remember this information. If the information is nearly always readily available, why would we need to remember small details if it’s a tap of a finger away.
* Our brains are just evolving to a more technology-filled world. If our brain wouldn’t change according to the amount of information or how the information is given, then we let it change. Our access to information is not a bad thing, we simply just have more to remember than ever before.
* The 7-point IQ drop is something bad, but only 3 generations have had frequent access to the internet. If we look at how we use this information in the future, as most of them are still in their 20s, then we can see the real harms the internet has had on our brain’s growth.

**Argument on too much information:**

* As the Con case states, our brain has to be more efficient in how we remember information. By doing this, we are expanding our knowledge, therefore making us smarter. By being able to have this access to information, more and more populations can have access to this information.
* In changing our brains in some ways and not others, the internet is just changing the way we approach information and what we do with it. If I read something online that has my interest, I am going to be more likely to remember the information. This applies to both online reading and reading on paper.

**Resolved: The Internet is making people smarter.**

**Opp Contentions**

**My partner and I reject the resolution: The internet is making people smarter.**

**Contention 1: Re-wiring our brains**

* **The topic is wrong: The internet has reduced our ability to focus. We are losing our ability to fully comprehend the articles and books we read.** 
  + Nicholas Carr, author of *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*: “It takes patience and concentration to evaluate new information. When the brain is overloaded by stimuli, attention lessens, thinking becomes surface-level, and our memory suffers”
* Maryanne Wolf, The Guardian (2018): Not only do people reading digital text skim more and remember less information than reading it on paper, but the effects of reading digitally leads to less comprehension and less analysis and even less empathy for others.
  + Reading less critically results in low English grades, believing false information, and misunderstanding important documents such as contracts and voting.
* Because the internet is involved with every part of our lives, the way our brains process information is changing to accommodate the fast, distracting information on the internet.
* Neuroscientist Erman Misirlisoy, Ph.D., “internet use has “googlified” our brains, making us more dependent on knowing where to get information instead of remembering them ourselves.

Impact: Who needs to waste their brain space remembering something when the internet could tell us in 5 seconds? This has allowed us to get comfortable not remembering the information, leading to our brains becoming comfortable with that as well.

* Evan Horowitz, Director of Communication at FCLT Global: found that there has been a 7-point IQ-point drop per generation due to causes, such as the internet.
* Brittany Beckman, Author of The Internet Tricked Me into Believing I can Multitask (2021): Our functional IQ drops 10 points when we are distracted by multiple tabs open, emails, videos, and a text document.
  + More than the effect of a lost night’s sleep. We can’t process all these functions at once and doing so decreases our success in each.

**Contention 2: Too much information**

* **The internet gives us too much information, causing our brains to become overloaded. It causes our brains to rearrange what it decides to remember and not remember, including core information.**
* Younes Medkour, Concordia University (2019): People are consuming three times as much information each day as they did before the internet. Being exposed to that much information requires us to be more efficient in how we remember it – changing our brains for the long run.
  + We are not keeping information long enough in our attention to form a connection in the brain when learning this information.
  + Our brains have become a “storage unit” of information. By doing this, we only have to remember where to find the information, not what it is.
* In an experiment at Cornell University, half of the class was allowed to use connected laptops during a class, and the other had to keep their computers shut. Those who browsed the Web during the class performed much worse on a test of how well they remembered the lecture’s content.

**Impact: The internet has given us consequences due to the overload of information that we consume**.

* Psychologist Patricia Greenfield: “Our brains have become worse at vocabulary, mindfulness, reflection, problem-solving, critical thinking, and imagination.
  + Nicholas Carr, WSJ (2019): By changing our habits of the mind, each new technology strengthens certain parts of our brains and weakened others. So, the internet is continuing to shape the way we think even when we’re not using technology

**Responses to Prop Arguments:**

**Answering the argument on increased intelligence:**

* As stated, prior in the Con case, “Our functional IQ drops 10 points when we are distracted by multiple tabs open, emails, videos, and a text document.” And there has been a 7-point IQ-point drop per generation due to causes, such as the internet.” The information given by our case shows that it’s a scientific fact that our IQ’s have dropped as technology use increases.
* Even if the internet can benefit our brain, its doing so by re-wiring it for the worse. As shown in our contention one, the internet has reduced our memory, whether we are reading our listening or seeing. All of these have a great deal of factors on our day-to-day intelligence, including in class or talking with our parents.
* Even though there is more access to information online, as shown in our contention two, this has made our brains only remember where to find the information, not what the information is. So if we wanted to take an online class, we aren’t going to retain the information as much as if we were learning it in a classroom or from a friend.

Answering the argument on culture:

* It is great that cultures can connect online, but it doesn’t make us comprehend different cultures and learn how to accept them. If we see something online from another culture and want to recreate it, we’re at risk of disrespecting another culture just because we saw a photo or an article about it.
* By people being more connected from different cultures, it can create an environment where people harass different cultures because of this access to information. Such as, there was a lot of hate on the internet towards China during the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic. This is an example of how we have been able to read wrong information and accept it as a fact.

**Answering the argument on history:**

* The difference between history and now is that these different technologies didn’t consume our lives, it found a way to add to it. By talking on the phone, you’re not face to face with that person. However, if you skype or video call, you’re replacing that face-to-face connection.
* Even if we have access to record more information, we still don’t have the ability to remember it in a critical moment. If I need to change a flat tire and don’t have cell service, if I wrote it down a month before – that doesn’t help me either.
* The internet may not harm our brain’s ability to function, but it’s making our brain function in a different way that harms our intelligence and our ability to comprehend information to use it.