

Section 1:

#1 Strengths: Your introduction creates a compelling hook with rhetorical questions that engage the reader. The contrast between past and present lifestyles effectively establishes your argument.

Weakness: Vague support for main claims → Your opening paragraph makes several bold assertions without specific evidence. For instance, when you write "we aren't as adventurous and daring as our ancestors," you don't provide concrete examples of how our ancestors demonstrated these qualities. This weakens your argument as readers may question the basis of your claims.

Exemplar: ***Once we were wild people who tracked animals for days, built shelters from natural materials, and navigated by stars. Today, many of us struggle without GPS and pre-packaged meals, showing how our survival skills have diminished over generations.***

#2 Strengths: Your inclusion of statistics from the AIFS provides valuable context and credibility to your argument. The comparison between screen time and time spent outdoors is effective.

Weakness: Underdeveloped cause-effect relationship → While you establish that children spend significant time on screens, you don't fully explain the connection between wilderness experiences and character development. When you write that being in nature can "build character," you could elaborate on specific character traits that develop and how this process occurs.

Exemplar: ***Being in the wilderness develops resilience when children overcome challenges like setting up a tent in the rain, builds teamwork when they must collaborate to navigate difficult terrain, and fosters independence when they learn to rely on their own abilities rather than digital assistance.***

#3 Strengths: Your inclusion of a counterargument shows awareness of different perspectives. The examples of accessible wilderness activities are practical and relatable.

Weakness: Limited scope of examples → Your examples of character-building activities like "tree climbing" and "setting up tents" focus primarily on physical tasks. You miss an opportunity to discuss how wilderness experiences can develop emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, and environmental stewardship. The examples could be more diverse to show the full range of benefits.

Exemplar: ***Activities that create character include navigating with a compass which builds problem-solving skills, identifying edible plants which develops observational abilities, and weathering a storm in a tent which teaches emotional resilience and adaptability in challenging situations.***

■ Your piece presents a passionate argument about the importance of wilderness experiences, but would benefit from more depth in several areas. Consider exploring the psychological benefits of nature exposure by describing how specific wilderness activities develop particular character traits. You could strengthen your argument by including examples of successful wilderness programs and their outcomes for young people. Also, acknowledge the barriers that prevent some children from accessing wilderness experiences, such as cost, location, or disability, and suggest solutions. The historical perspective could be enriched by providing specific examples of how indigenous cultures or early settlers developed character through their relationship with the land. Additionally, consider exploring how technology might complement rather than compete with wilderness experiences. Your conclusion could offer practical steps for families, schools and communities to incorporate more wilderness activities into children's lives.

Overall score: 42/50

Section 2:

Character In the Wilderness

Once we were wild people. Once we lived off the wilderness. Once we knew how to gather, scavenge and survive. But now, what have we become? A modern, lazy society, with blue screens through every window and cars instead of legs. Are we really quite that scared of discomfort, that we deny our descendants the very encounters needed to develop character? The children and teens of this generation are not spending enough time outside, we only reside in comfort – with everything done for us, and we aren't as adventurous and daring as our ancestors. #1

Children, especially tweens and teenagers, have spent excessive amounts of time on technology. According to the Australian Government's Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) a 12–13-year-old child's screen time averages three hours per weekday, and as they grow into tweens that number doubles to over eight hours per day, which means up to 30% of a child's waking time is spent in front of a screen. Being in the wilderness for even leisure, such as camp, instead of fixedly staring at an iPad, can not only build character but strengthen kids' focus levels and let them respect and appreciate nature.

A ~~teenagers'~~ [teenager's] lungs sting as he reaches the top of a mountain, tears of exhaustion and pride welling in his eyes. On the other side of the world, a small girl from Scouts sits among the towering pines, breathing in a scent that seemed almost... rare. They both lived in a home with easy-to-do packaging, remote controls for anything and everything just within reach. This would most definitely be true for almost everyone, as the modern world we live in is built on a foundation that involves easy access to whatever ~~needed~~ [is needed] (or wanted). Stepping out of our comfort zone is a crucial part of our ancestors' life. If they hadn't learnt to be brave and courageous, they most likely would've been

eaten by tigers. Comfort is something we take for granted and are accustomed to – stepping out of it and breaking away from 'modern' society is a crucial part of building who you really are.

Critics may argue that the wilderness may not be safe. However, building character in the wild does not necessarily mean a three-month trip into a dense forest with only water and some rations. Rather, a scout camp or just a one-hour outback exploration session is all it takes for children and teens to appreciate nature and forge a strong, resilient character. Activities that create character include tree climbing, setting up tents, getting water from a well or simply discovering a passion in the wild – like bird watching and leaf paintings. Additionally, camp areas are always approved by officials, and any threats or wild animals have either been removed or transported away from the safe areas. #3

To conclude, building character in the wilderness not only forges a deeper understanding and appreciation of nature, but protects against technology addiction and lets tweens enjoy a fresh air that they barely interact with, ~~freees~~ [freeing] us from the cruel holds of 'modern' society and ~~clarifies~~ [clarifying] just how important and different this change would be. When we say that we have no time for playing – we are denying our very own descendants a resilience and understanding that our ancestors held for millennia. #2