

01

GROWING UP IN THE COUNTRY OR A BIG CITY

It is better for children to grow up in the countryside than in a big city. Do you agree or disagree? Use specific reasons and examples to develop your essay.

1. Key words

to grow up	grandir
to be suitable (for)	convenir (à)
to be brought up (in)	être élevé (dans)
to spend one's youth (in)	passer sa jeunesse (à / dans)
to have limited opportunities (to)	avoir peu de chances (de)
to be exposed (to) / exposure (to)	être en contact (avec) / le contact (avec)
to be part and parcel of education	faire partie intégrante de l'éducation
a rural environment / setting	un environnement rural
a rural area / the countryside	une zone rurale / la campagne
to live in the country / countryside	vivre à la campagne
a secluded / sheltered environment	un environnement protégé
the beauty of the scenery	la beauté du paysage
a pollution-free environment	un environnement sain
a tight-knit community	une communauté soudée
to help one another	s'entraider
to live close to nature	être proche de la nature
to be in harmony with nature	être en harmonie avec la nature
to connect with nature	avoir un rapport avec la nature
to be crime-free ÷ crime-ridden	être sans danger ÷ criminogène
stressful ÷ relaxed (a)	stressant ÷ détendu
boredom / bored ÷ excitement	l'ennui, qui s'ennuie ÷ l'excitation
to live in a city	vivre à la ville
an urban setting	un environnement urbain
the hustle and bustle of a city	l'effervescence / le tourbillon de la ville
a city dweller	un citadin
to attend a cultural event	assister à un événement culturel
a music conservatory	un conservatoire de musique
to broaden the mind	ouvrir l'esprit
to ensure a brighter future	être assuré d'un avenir meilleur
to find / to get / to land a job	trouver un emploi
a career / job opportunity	une possibilité d'emploi

2. Talking points

1. Agree - It is better for children to grow up in the countryside.

- It is a quiet environment remote from the hubbub of city life, the noise of cars and traffic congestion.
- It is a healthy environment: there are no exhaust fumes or pollution; it is a place where you can enjoy the great outdoors.
- It is a safer place to grow up in: there is little violence, no gang-warfare, no ghetto, no mugging. It is a crime-free place.
- In the countryside, you can develop your imagination, your sense of beauty and your taste for natural things. The setting is quite different from the urban concrete jungle.
- It is a less stressful and less competitive environment than in a city; it is quiet, peaceful. Life follows the rhythm of nature and people attend to their own businesses. Exposure to green space reduces stress, boosts health and makes people less vulnerable to depression.
- A village is a tight-knit community; there is mutual aid among people; it is a place where neighbors look out for each other and each other's children.

2. Disagree - It is better for children to grow up in a big city.

- There is a greater choice of shopping places in a big city at relatively lower prices than in the country. In a city, you do not need to have a car to go shopping.
- Access to educational opportunities is much better in a city, with a wide range of schools and/or colleges to choose from, and the chance of a solid education.
- There is greater access to health care facilities—more primary care doctors, more specialists, better services in case of an emergency, with hospitals nearby.
- There are cultural centers, museums, concerts, the theatre, the opera, music academies, more entertainment, more fun places to go to and more activities to do – helping people to become more culturally aware. For party-goers, nightlife never ends in a big city.
- There are more opportunities of playing sports, attending sports events and rooting for your favorite team in a big city than out in the boonies.
- There are more opportunities to go out for dinner, with a wide choice of restaurants and cuisines to choose from.
- There are better opportunities to make an enlightened career choice as there are many more jobs to choose from than in the countryside.
- A big city is a cosmopolitan environment and therefore a place where people are likely to get more exposure to other people and be better equipped to face a world going global.

3. Possible answers

1. Agree - It is better for children to grow up in the countryside.

At a time when many people are mulling over whether they should return to a simpler life, living in the countryside has many advantages. As a matter of fact, life in a small village in the heart of France holds considerable appeal.

First, it is a quiet environment. As there's little traffic, there are no jams, no cars honking, no tires screeching, no sirens wailing. People walk to work or ride their bicycles to go to the local market; they take time to enjoy life and, unlike city-dwellers, they are not the victims of a city's hectic pace of life.

In addition, a village is usually crime-free. No ugly and dehumanized suburbs, no bleak housing projects, not gang-ridden inner districts, no drug trafficking, mugging or car-jacking. People in a village are courteous and polite. They know each other. A big city is hardly ever built on the human scale. In a village, inhabitants attend to their business, unconcerned by the major political hiccups happening in the rest of the world.

Living in the countryside is much healthier too. Apart from horse manure and fertilizers, the threat of pollution is quite limited, whereas in a big city, you have congested streets, car exhausts, or smog. They all contribute to create an unhealthy environment where it is difficult to breathe and hazardous to cross a street.

The countryside is an ideal playground for children to blossom. In the country, kids can sharpen their senses and their taste for the simple and beautiful whereas, in a city, they are constrained by a limited horizon. The boundless sky in the countryside is like a world in which you can let your imagination run wild because everything is possible. Unshackled by the biases of society, country children are indeed much more forward-looking in approaching life as adults and more confident in assuming who they are. The peaceful atmosphere in a village goes hand in hand with a lifestyle that is stress-free. Whereas big city dwellers are always on the move, harried, under pressure and anxious to go home as quickly as possible, villagers live according to the rhythm of seasons.

Another advantage of country life is the tight knit community you find there. Villagers call you by your first name and look out for one another. There is a spirit of solidarity that is hard to find in a big city. In the country, children can walk home from school. We know that watchful neighbors will look out for them. Once their homework is done, they can play freely outside. Whereas in a city, especially in a housing project, children may fall prey to drug trafficking, racketeering and bullying, all evils which a secluded life in a village shelters children from.

A quiet and healthy environment, a safe environment and a feeling of mutual aid are all advantages of country life. That is why I would definitely live in a village, far from a city's hustle and bustle.

2. Disagree - It is better for children to grow up in a big city.

There is no doubt that living in a big city offers unparalleled opportunities to children that country living does not have.

To start off, big cities are most certainly suited towards those who love to shop. Clothing, household items or consumer electronics are all available from various department stores, meaning a wide variety of choices compared to villages where there may only be one or two shops to choose from. Having a wide selection of shops close by also negates the need for a car—many shops are close in proximity making it possible to walk from store to store. Living in the country often means driving many miles just to get to one shop.

Whereas a village has often a primary school with one single classroom, a big city offers a wide range of schools to choose from, according to one's talents, calling and avocation. Chances are that a child will find much better education opportunities in a city than in a village.

Access to health care is much easier in a city, where there are many doctors and medical facilities. Emergency medical services are more readily available in a big city than in a small village. A person has more chance of dying from a stroke or any other acute condition in an isolated village than in a big city.

Access to culture is arguably another boon of city life. Imagine, children can have access to all sorts of cultural events: be it going to the opera, attending concerts, visiting museums or theme parks, going to fun places, a city offers practically everything you can dream of to spend an entertaining evening, whereas village people will only have the choice among two or three TV shows or some bland soap opera to brighten up the day. And naturally, if a child wants to play a musical instrument, it is much easier to find a conservatory or a music teacher in a city than in a small village. In the same way, access to bookstores, libraries, is much easier in a city. Playing sports, joining clubs or attending sports events are other advantages of city life.

For those who enjoy dining out, there are many restaurants to choose from. In a village there's only a single diner or coffee shop whereas a big city offers a variety of different cuisines and theme restaurants. Those who enjoy the excitement of new people to see and places to visit would certainly enjoy living in the city.

Finally, in a big city, you can choose from more opportunities and make a more enlightened career choice than if you spend your life in a small village where chances are that you will take over the family farm. Being cosmopolitan, a big city will better equip a child to face a world going global than the relative peace and quiet of a small, self centered village, remote from the hubbub of the world's affairs.

All in all, educational and job opportunities, better health care services and a vibrant cultural life are solid reasons why I'd rather live in a big city than in the countryside.

“When people succeed it is because of hard work. Luck has nothing to do with success”. Do you agree or disagree with the quotation above? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.

1. Key words

to succeed (in) / to manage (to)	réussir (à / dans)
to be a success / successful	avoir du succès / qui a réussi
a string of success	une série de succès
to be a hit (with sb)	avoir du succès (auprès de qn)
to be a great success	connaître un grand succès
a stroke of luck / to rely on luck	un coup de chance / compter sur la chance
to have a lucky break	avoir un coup de chance
a stroke of genius	un coup de génie
a best-selling author	un auteur à succès
an entertainer / a movie star	un artiste / une vedette du grand écran
an entrepreneur / a discoverer	un entrepreneur / un inventeur
serendipity (ni) / serendipitous (a)	un heureux hasard / inopiné, fortuit
to be at the right time at the right place	être au bon moment au bon endroit
to be born into a wealthy family	être né dans une famille riche
a brainwave / by chance	une idée de génie / par hasard
to take one's chance / a chance	saisir sa chance / un risque
to leave nothing to chance	ne rien laisser au hasard
to cram for an exam	bachoter pour un examen
to seize an opportunity (of)	saisir une chance (de)
to chance upon / to stumble upon	trouver par hasard
it's the luck of the draw	c'est une question de chance
to count, to bank on one's efforts / luck	miser sur ses efforts / sa chance
to play for high stakes	miser gros
to train long and hard	s'entraîner dur
to make sb famous	rendre qn célèbre
fame / to achieve fame	la célébrité / atteindre la gloire
fame and fortune	la gloire et la fortune
hard working (a)	travailleur
to work / to strive hard	travailler dur
to work tirelessly / relentlessly	travailler sans relâche

2. Talking points

1. Agree - Luck has nothing to do with success but hard work does.

- Hard work is at the root of Puritanism. The work ethic is a set of values according to which workers can achieve better positions, have more responsibility and ultimately gain promotion. The “no pain no gain” philosophy is alive and well.
- Underachievement equates work aversion – laziness has never made sb successful.
- Success means planning things well ahead of time: can any politician expect or hope to be elected without campaigning?
- A successful student owes his/her academic success to diligence. Burning the midnight oil is a prerequisite to gaining admission to a top school or pursuing a college degree.
- A successful career is not something that is left to chance – It has to be prepared well in advance through studies, practice, training.
- A successful dancer / actor / musician / writer / painter has to work hard to achieve fame and climb the ladder of success. An actor has to rehearse his/her lines. An athlete has to train hard to build up his/her stamina and body muscle and remain at the top of his/her game.

2. Disagree - Luck has everything to do with success.

- In the world of entertainment (the movie or music industry), luck is the prime factor, more particularly when it comes to detecting the right trend and getting to know the right people.
- Succeeding in the world of business owes much to chance, *videlicet* the whiz kid who stumbles upon a bright idea, or the inventor who has a brainwave.
- The stock exchange operator who makes the right moves, the gambler, the card player with a lucky hand, the punter who bets on the right horse, the gamer who pulls the right arm, the lottery winner who has hit the jackpot: they all reach financial success through luck. Those get-rich-quick schemes do not last though, nor do those who win by the flip of a coin, spinning the roulette wheel, throwing the dice in craps.
- Being rich by birthright has everything to do with luck. Some people, who have achieved fame, have just inherited their parents' business or name.
- You can get a lucky break when you are given a job interview or a promotion over sb else, or following the sudden death or departure of a colleague.

3. Possible answers

1. Agree - Luck has nothing to do with success but hard work does.

Some people claim that success is due to luck only and that hard work has nothing whatsoever to do with it. I believe this is a far-fetched assumption, which past and present examples have challenged and disproved.

At the root of America's success lies the Protestant work ethic, a set of values according to which workers can achieve better positions, have more responsibility and ultimately gain promotion through hard work. The "no pain no gain" philosophy is one that many Americans equate with the pursuit of happiness. Barring hard work and effort, the American Dream will remain an elusive one. On the other hand, people who are work-shy, or work-adverse are bound to fail. Those underachievers who shun work will remain stuck at the bottom rung of the success ladder. Indeed, laziness has never made anyone successful, quite the opposite.

Success indeed means working hard. Be it the lawyer, the doctor, the engineer, the scientist, the researcher, working hard is the key to a successful career, achievements or discoveries. And I mean not only at university but in life too, in so far as life can be considered as a form of continuing education. Burning the midnight oil, following relentlessly an academic degree, striving hard to reach one's goal are some of the ingredients necessary in order to lay the foundations to a successful career.

Even the politician who dreams of getting himself elected needs to work hard. We all have in mind the example of Jimmy Carter who started his presidential campaign some 4 years before he was actually elected to the White House, crisscrossing America, delivering thousands of stump speeches on the trail, canvassing people's homes, pressing the flesh at dawn outside factory gates or holding forth at town meetings late into the night. He eventually won the presidency by dint of hard work and perseverance.

A successful career is not something that can be left to chance. It has to be planned well in advance through studies, practice, training. Successful artists, be it the dancer, the actor, the musician, the athlete, all owe their success to hard training or practicing, building their career step by step. Athletes follow a strict regimen according to the seasons: they have to train hard to build up their stamina and body muscle before competing in a marathon or entering a tournament. In the same way, the pianist or cellist will practice his/her scales for hours before being able to master the technique and be proficient enough to play Beethoven's or Mozart's masterpieces. The actor will rehearse his/her lines for hours on end before opening night. There is no magic recipe to achieve success. And luck has nothing to do with it.

2. Disagree - Luck has everything to do with success.

Does luck play a role in success? Indeed, many examples point in that direction. They tend to show that hard work plays no part in success.

In the volatile world of entertainment, luck is a key factor on the road to stardom. Films have been box office hits because they revealed the budding talent of a movie actor with a cherubic face that touched the people's hearts. A pop star's success lies on the capacity to ride the wave of public opinion, seize the mood of the times and tap into that vein. Having the right connections, being spotted by talent scouts, getting yourself invited to TV shows, go towards reinforcing the idea that it is not so much who you are but whom you know that can help you achieve fame.

The success of the researcher or the entrepreneur more often than not is built not on hard work but on a brainwave or plain serendipity. History is ripe with whiz kids who struck it rich overnight. Twitter met with overnight success, making its creator one of the few millionaires under the age of 30. C. Columbus hit upon the West Indies by chance rather than design.

Luck plays a major role in the get-rich-quick schemes. It can be the stock exchange operator who makes the right moves, the poker player who draws the lucky hand, the punter who bets on the right horse, the gamer who pulls the one-armed bandit, the lottery winner who hits pay dirt. The flip of a coin, the spin of the roulette wheel, the throw of the dice show how luck can change the course of a life.

Birthright, not hard work, correlates to success too. Being born into a wealthy family has everything to do with luck. The scion of well-to-do parents has a better chance of making it in life than the poor inner city kid who was abandoned as an infant. It is not because that child is cleverer or more ambitious, but simply because it will be given a better education, access to cultural events and the benefit of his parents' experience.

Finally, success can also depend on the lucky break you get when you are given a job interview. Hitting it off with the HR manager owes much to the subtle chemistry between people. Getting a promotion is not always due to hard work. Although Dwight Eisenhower had seen no action, the future American president was promoted over 228 senior officers when he took over the high command in North Africa; he leapfrogged over more experienced British soldiers when he was made commander-in-chief of the allied forces just seven months later, in 1943.

Thankfully, the luck of the draw is not always enough to become successful. The short career of child actors or actresses is proof enough that luck does not mean you will build an international career into adulthood. So, all in all, luck may be a starter but not a sufficient factor to last. When opportunity knocks, welcome it. But if you want success to last, work hard on it. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "I'm a great believer in luck and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it."