

EXERCISE 19-2 Sentence fragments

Repair each fragment in the following paragraphs by attaching it to a sentence nearby or by rewriting it as a complete sentence.

Surfing the Internet now competes with watching television as our national pastime. People, it seems, have a natural ability to sit for hour upon hour. Passively watching images flit before their eyes. Whether these appear on a TV screen or a computer screen doesn't seem to make much difference. What counts are the images themselves. Not where they come from.

Web surfing is the cyber-age equivalent of channel surfing. Both of which appeal to us because of their constant promise of something better around the corner. When 1950s TV viewers got bored with Howdy Doody, they turned off the set. Or switched to a channel with no programming and stared at the test pattern. Today, with more than one hundred channels to choose from, the demanding spectator is no longer forced to watch anything uninteresting. The Internet is the next logical step in this constant broadening of choice. Taking us from a finite number of channels to a seemingly infinite number of screens.

But there is at least one major risk of a culture based on images. That the written word may become an endangered species. As our brains eventually adapt to greater and greater levels of stimulation. Will we continue to be able to focus on a page of print? Already, members of the TV generation have a much harder time reading than their parents did. What, many people are wondering, will become of the Internet generation?

Before we send out too many alarms, however, we should remember that the Internet is still in its infancy. Already, Web browsers are helping us limit the dizzying number of choices that face us on the World Wide Web. By giving us powerful search tools that zero in on whatever aspect of a topic we are most interested in. And there is some evidence that those who spend time surfing the Net are doing more, not less, reading. Unlike TV viewers. Some Net surfers prefer to run their eyes over the words on the screen. An activity that is, after all, reading. Others download information and read the printouts. While it is true that television has reduced our nation's level of literacy, the Internet could well advance it. Only the future will tell.