

Strong and weak opinions on the news and media

Choose and read out a sentence below that you agree with, using one of the expressions in brackets () if that makes the sentence more exactly match your opinion. The different options in brackets change the meaning and don't go together, so choose carefully. See if your partner(s) agree with your opinion, discuss as long as you like, then take turns making sentences from below to do the same with.

Useful phrases for discussing strong and weak opinions

"Do you agree?/ What do you think?"

"Exactly./ I totally agree."

"I wouldn't go that far. I'd say that..."

"I'd go even further and say that..."

Strong and weak opinions on the news and media to discuss

- (I'm not sure but) I (do/ really) think that news organisations in this country should do more real investigative reporting.
- In my (honest/ humble) opinion, too much coverage is given to natural disasters.
- I (really) don't (really) think that tabloids and gossip mags care about how true their news stories are.
- I (really) don't (really) agree with the idea that people who leak government documents are heroes of free speech.
- I (completely/ more or less/ mostly/ partially/ partly) agree with giving more protection to whistleblowers.
- I (firmly/ strongly) believe that the right-wing media represent the interests of their rich owners and their rich friends.
- I'd (definitely/ probably) say that most columnists are just trying to get paid and so often don't really care about what they write.
- A (clear/ huge/ major/ possible/ potential) benefit of controlling the paparazzi more would be the media wasting less time on celebrity gossip.
- Public broadcasters (definitely/ probably/ really) should ignore conspiracy theories and conspiracy theorists.
- It's (extremely/ incredibly/ fairly/ really/ very) important for national broadcasters (including commercial broadcasters) to be balanced and/ or unbiased.
- In my (extensive/ limited/ own personal/ personal) experience, the comments BTL (= below the line) are usually more informative than what the journalist has written.
- I have (always/ occasionally/ sometimes) found that local newspapers avoid controversial stories such as scandals involving important local people.
- The decline of newspapers will (certainly/ definitely/ probably) lead to more fake news.
- I'm (absolutely/ fairly/ not) certain that newspapers will disappear in the next twenty years.

Ask about any sentences which you don't understand, are not sure of your opinion on, etc, discussing your opinions on those sentences each time.

Brainstorming stage

First with no help, write stronger and weaker forms of the given expressions in the columns below. You can add or change words, but try to stay close to the original wording.

| Weaker opinions | | Stronger opinions |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| | I think... | |
| | In my opinion,... | |
| | I don't think that... | |
| | I don't agree that/ with... | |
| | I agree that/ with... | |
| | I believe... | |
| | I'd say that... | |
| | A benefit of... would be... | |
| | ... should... | |
| | It's important for... to... | |
| | In my experience,... | |
| | I have found that... | |
| | ... will lead to... | |
| | I'm certain that... | |

Key words for making opinions stronger and weaker

Use the mixed words below to help with the task above. Some words can be used in more than one place.

- absolutely
- always
- certainly
- clear
- completely
- definitely
- do
- extensive
- extremely
- fairly
- firmly
- honest
- huge
- humble
- I'm not sure but
- iiiiii
- incredibly
- limited
- major
- more or less
- mostly
- occasionally
- own personal
- personal
- possible
- potential
- probably
- really
- sometimes
- strongly
- very

Use the first sheet with the opinions to check that you have matched the key words to the correct language above, double-check that you have put them in the right column, then check with the answer key below.

Give and discuss other opinions on the news and media using the language below.

Give and discuss other opinions on current affairs and the media using the key words above, ticking them off as you use them.

Suggested answers

Other answers may be possible, so please check if you wrote something different.

| Weaker opinions | | Stronger opinions |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| I'm not sure but I think... | I think... | I do think.../ I really think... |
| In my humble opinion,... | In my opinion,... | In my honest opinion,... |
| I don't really think that... | I don't think that... | I really don't think that... |
| I don't really agree... | I don't agree that/ with... | I really don't agree that... |
| I more or less agree that.../ I mostly agree that... | I agree that/ with... | I completely agree... |
| I beliiiiiiiiieve... | I believe... | I firmly believe.../ I strongly believe... |
| I'd probably say that... | I'd say... | I'd definitely say that... |
| A possible/ potential benefit of... would be... | A benefit of... would be... | A clear/ huge/ major benefit of... would be... |
| ... probably should... | ... should... | ... definitely should.../ ... really should... |
| It's fairly important | It's important for... to... | It's extremely/ incredibly/ really/ very important |
| In my limited/ own personal/ personal experience,... | In my experience,... | In my extensive experience,... |
| I have occasionally/ sometimes found that... | I have found that... | I have always found that... |
| ...will probably lead to... | ... will lead to... | ... will certainly/ definitely lead to... |
| I'm fairly certain that... | I'm certain that... | I'm absolutely certain that... |

News and media topics to give strong and weak opinions on

Give strong and weak opinions on topics from below or using words below, then respond to your partner's strong or weak agreement or disagreement.

- (un)bias(ed) – balance
- breaking news/ rolling news/ the 24-hour news cycle
- (national/ public/ public service/ commercial) broadcasters
- broadsheet newspapers – tabloid newspapers
- (coverage of) business and economics
- cancel culture
- censorship
- citizen journalists/ bloggers
- (BTL/ below the line) comments
- conspiracy theories/ conspiracy theorists
- (coverage of) (organised/ violent/ white collar) crime and law
- parts of the paper (columns, editorials, front, back, headlines, captions, crossword, etc)
- fake news/ misinformation
- freedom of information/ freedom of speech (leaks, whistleblowers, etc)
- (celebrity) gossip
- hate speech
- health news/ health scares
- (coverage of) international news/ foreign news/ overseas news
- investigative news/ scoops
- keeping up with the (latest/ breaking) news/ staying well-informed
- left-wing news sources – right-wing news sources
- (news/ gossip/ scandal) mags/ magazines
- (mainstream/ alternative) media
- (coverage of) natural disasters
- negative/ positive things about newspapers/ broadcasters/ journalism/ TV news
- online influencers
- ownership of media organisations
- paparazzi
- (news/ true crime) podcasts
- (coverage of) (local/ domestic/ international) politics
- (coverage of) (local/ national) politicians (prime minister, MPs, local councillors, etc)
- privacy/ data protection
- (talk/ local/ speech/ AM/ FM/ satellite/ pirate) radio (station)
- (coverage of) (financial/ sexual/ political) scandals
- (coverage of) science and technology
- sensationalism/ alarmism/ scaremongering (health scares, etc)
- social media
- sports pages/ back pages
- switching off
- (cable/ satellite/ 24-hour news/ terrestrial) television
- (un)trustworthy

Share one opinion you agreed on and see if other groups agree. Then ask about anything above you are not sure about, sharing opinions each time.