It is generally believed that the only debate worth having in the 'new era' is how to ensure that everyone has access to cyberspace.

In these constructions *it* is a dummy subject and the *that/wh-/to* clause is the extraposed subject of the predicate. Extraposition allows a clausal subject to occur at the end of the sentence, which is the preferred position for heavy constituents.

⇨ **Alliteration**, namely the repetition of the same sound at the beginning of two or more words in succession, is used to obtain particular stylistic effects: it adds enphasis and functions as a memory helper, and it also has results on the structural cohesion of the text. Some examples of alliteration in Text 2 are the following: *equally important issue, road rage, click-click culture.*

Text 2

LOG OFF NOW

by Jeremy Rifkin

New technology was supposed to make our lives easier, not take them over.

1. The whole world is rushing to join the information revolution. Everyone wants to be connected. It is generally believed that the only debate worth having in the 'new era' is how to ensure that everyone has access to cyberspace. Now an equally important issue is beginning to loom: is too much access as big a problem as too little? Is it possible that the information and telecommunications revolution is speeding up human activity at such a rate that we risk doing grave harm to ourselves and to society?
2. Two experiments by American scientists reported recently should give all of us reason to ask where we are heading in this era of instantaneous global electronic connections. In the first, two Harvard University teams succeeded in slowing light down to a full stop, holding it in limbo, then sending it on its way again. Light travels at a speed of 186,000 miles a second and is thought to be the fastest form of energy in the universe. This marks the first time light has ever been stopped and temporarily held in storage, and researchers hope it will lead to a new type of technology revolution called quantum computing and quantum communication. Quantum technologies could vastly speed up both computing and communications in the coming century.
3. In the second experiment, scientists at Princeton succeeded, for the first time, in making a light pulse travel at many times the speed of light. While researchers were quick to point out that nothing with 'mass' can exceed the speed of light, scientists now believe that a 'pulse' of light can. The physicists conducting the experiment hope that their work will lead to a dramatic speed up of optical transmission rates.

These experiments bring us to the cusp of a new era in human history: we are beginning to organise life at 'the speed of light'. Every day, new software and telecommunication technologies are being introduced to compress time, accelerate activity and process

greater stores of information. We live increasingly in a nanosecond culture. But is it possible that the very technological wonders that were supposed to liberate us have, instead, begun to enslave us in a web of ever-accelerating connections from which there seems to be no escape?

4. A new term, 24/7 – around the clock activity, 24 hours a day, seven days a week – is quickly coming to define the parameters of the new temporal frontier. Our fax machines, email, voice mail, PCs and cellular phones, our 24-hour trading markets, instant around-the-clock ATM and online banking services, all-night e-commerce and research services, 24-hour television news and entertainment, 24-hour food services, all vie for our attention.

5. And while we have created every kind of labour- and time-saving device and activity to service one another's needs and desires, we are beginning to feel we have less time available to us than any other humans in history. That is because the new services only increase the diversity, pace and flow of commercial and social activity around us. For example, email is a great convenience – until we find ourselves spending much of the day frantically responding to each other's email. The cell phone is a great timesaver – except that now we are always potentially in reach of someone else who wants our attention.

6. Today, we find ourselves in a far more complex interdependent temporal world made up of ever-changing webs of human relationships and activity – a world in which every available minute becomes an opportunity to make another connection. Descartes' dictum, 'I think, therefore I am', has been replaced by: 'I am connected, therefore I exist'.

7. What happens when our lives are embedded in around-the-clock relationships operating at the speed of light? The telltale signs of our new time angst are everywhere. Stress-related illness is rising dramatically all over the world. Much of it is attributable, say the experts, to information overload and burnout as more and more people find themselves unable to cope with the pace, flow and density of human activity made possible with new lightening-speed technologies. In the UK, three in 10 employees suffer mental problems each year from stress-related behaviour. Stress-related illness and absenteeism costs the economy the equivalent of 10% of its GDP.

8. According to a recent report of the International Labour Organisation, one in 10 adults worldwide suffer stress, depression and burnout. The ILO predicts a dramatic increase in stress as even faster technologies are introduced and globalisation accelerates. Stress-related diseases – including depression, heart disease, strokes, cancer and diabetes – are rising so quickly, say some observers, that stress may become the leading cause of illness.

9. The new, fast-paced 24/7 society is having other profound effects on people's lives. Around-the-clock activity has led to a serious decline in the number of hours devoted to sleep. In 1910, the average adult was still sleeping nine to 10 hours a night. Now the figure is less than seven hours in highly industrial countries: an extra 500 waking hours a year. But our internal biological clocks are set to the rotation of the planet and daily, monthly and seasonal temporal rhythms. We are biologically designed to go to sleep after sunset and wake at sunrise. Massive sleep deprivation, brought on by the frantic new pace of living, is increasingly being linked to serious illness including diabetes, cancer, strokes and depression.

10. Nowhere is the 'speed of light' society having a greater impact than with the dot.com generation. Millions of children (especially boys) are being diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in the US, with a rising number of cases in Europe. Sufferers are easily distracted, unable to focus their attention, impulsive and quickly frustrated. But if a child grows up surrounded by video games and computers, and comes to expect instant gratification, is it any wonder that he develops a short attention span? Quicken the pace, and we risk increasing the impatience of a generation.

11. Is the hyper-speed culture making all of us less patient? Already, new stress-related,

anti-social behaviour patterns are beginning to emerge. 'Desk rage', 'road rage' and 'air rage' have become part of the popular lexicon as more and more people act out their stress with violent outbursts. In the click-click culture, we shouldn't be surprised if everyone is poised for a hair-trigger response.

12. Perhaps we should be asking what kind of 'connections' and what types of 'access' matter. If this new technology revolution is only about speed and hyper efficiency, then we might lose something even more precious than time – our sense of what it means to be a caring human being. Until now, we have asked only the question of how best to integrate our lives into the new technology revolution. We need to ask a deeper question. How do we create a social vision that makes these new 'speed of light' technologies a powerful complement to our lives, without them taking over our lives?

Source: *The Guardian*, May 26, 2001: www.guardian.co.uk

Activities

Activity 1. Separating the main ideas from details
Select from the text three summary sentences, carrying main messages and opinions.

Activity 2. Explaining
Explain the following terms and expressions:

quantum technologies, nanosecond culture, 24/7, stress-related illness, the dot.com generation.

Activity 3. Quantifiers
Choose amount words like *all, many, too little,* etc., in the text and grade them along the arrow below.

small quantity → *large quantity*

Activity 4. Vocabulary: semantic fields
In the text hypothetical risks and drawbacks of modern technologies are highlighted. The writer uses words and expressions which belong to the semantic fields of 'speed' and 'information technology'. Identify them and put them in the appropriate group in the table below.

Semantic field	verbs	nominal expressions	adjectives and adverbials
speed	*is rushing*		
information technology	*to process*		