

Exam question

In some countries an increasing number of people are suffering from health problems as a result of eating too much fast food. It is therefore necessary for governments to impose a higher tax on this kind of food.



To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Nowadays, more and more people are affected by health issues such as diabetes and heart disease which are linked to overconsumption of cheap, mass-produced food. Some people believe the only solution is to make fast food less affordable by taxing it highly. Despite the severity of the problem, I think this is quite wrong. Increasing the tax on fast food would unfairly penalise people and may not necessarily bring about the desired health benefits.

First, fast food is about more than just nutrition. Many teenagers spend money on fast food not because they need to eat out but because this is how they socialise. Fast-food restaurants provide a safe, convenient place for young people to meet friends. For another group, low-income families, fast food can provide an inexpensive treat for their children. Denying people a small pleasure in life could affect their social lives or happiness.

Another important point is that if the reason for taxing fast food is to reduce obesity, it may be ineffective. It is true that fast food is high in sugar, salt and fat, all of which cause weight gain and are detrimental to our health. However, we also know that there are other factors which contribute to the risk of obesity, such as lack of exercise and inappropriate portion size. While home-cooked food is generally healthy, this is not always the case. I personally know a family that used to eat high-fat, home-cooked food in enormous portions. They all suffered from health problems due to obesity.

On the other hand, I do understand the point of view of those who say drastic action is needed. If fast food were taxed and became expensive, people would be forced to seek out healthier options. In addition, food producers would have an incentive to provide healthier foods. However, there is likely to be resistance from consumers and producers who want to have a wider choice.

To conclude, although imposing a higher tax on fast food could have some positive effects, these would be outweighed by the drawbacks. For one thing, some sectors of society would feel victimised, and there is also the fact that simply raising tax would not result in a much healthier society. What we really need is greater awareness of diet and cheaper healthy food.

Top Tips for writing

1. Avoid repeating words used in the question. It makes your vocabulary seem limited. Instead, use synonyms to demonstrate your vocabulary.
2. If you are asked to give your opinion, make it clear at the beginning and the end.
3. Give a reason for your opinion in paragraph 2 and another in paragraph 3. Support them with examples and explanation.
4. In paragraph 4, balance your essay by discussing the opposing view. If possible, highlight a disadvantage of it to reinforce your viewpoint.
5. Use linkers to show the logical connections between ideas. These may include addition, contrast, concession and sequencing.