

SECTION A: Reading

You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.

Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions that follow on page 3.

Four wheel drive cars, also known as 4x4s, were originally designed to be driven by farmers and country people 'off road' but in some countries are now popular in towns and cities as family cars. Some people in the UK feel strongly that 4x4s are not suitable for city roads and that they are bad for the environment. In this article Quentin Wilson argues against these claims.

The 4x4 War



Why so much fuss? The country likes its off-roaders. And that's not because they regularly climb mountains and plough through fields – they don't. The average 4x4 hardly ever gets its bottom muddy. We buy them
5 because they're practical, distinctive and safe for the occupants. But more than anything else we choose them because they offer more space and seating than the conventional family car.

In the last few months the 4x4 driver has been
10 variously branded "irresponsible", "selfish", "dangerous" and "stupid" by those who should know better. There are strident voices saying that we should ban, tax and penalise the off-roader. I expected more light and shade from the Government's learned transport advisers.

And I have to say that their arguments are half-formed. We're told 4x4s pollute, take up more road space and are much more dangerous than conventional cars. Well, the emissions from my
15 own 4x4 are infinitely cleaner than the clouds of gas that come out of the several million low-tech old cars that really pollute the country's roads. It's a fact that a new 4x4 is five times cleaner than the average 1980s car. And let's not forget all those smoky old diesel buses, coaches and heavy goods vehicles that spew out tons and tons of noxious gases. Putting diesel
20 traps on every old bus would make a much greater difference to air quality than the act of banning every single 4x4 from our cities. If we're talking serious polluters then the modern, well-maintained 4x4 is at the very bottom of the smoke chain.

As for the accusation of taking up too much road space there are actually only a few off-roaders that are longer than the average executive car. Sure, the 4x4 may be taller but it doesn't
25 actually occupy that much more physical road space. And if we're banning on the basis of size, well let's pass laws to ban all vans, pick-up trucks, minibuses and caravans. The size argument is just plain daft. As is the safety thing. Sure, a 4x4 driven at speed causes plenty of damage but then so does a builder's van, a plumber's truck or an expensive Rolls Royce. And nobody's trying to pass laws against those. I've yet to see a shred of proper research that robustly proves 4x4s are harming other road users.

30 No, the reality is that these cars can represent a highly rational and sensible choice of transport for the modern motorist, particularly those with a family. Take my own 4x4 – it's safe enough for the school run and boasts enough space and seats to carry the kids and their friends. It's

manoeuvrable enough to negotiate city streets, while at the same time being comfortably cosseting for those long runs. And it's also a highly respectable performer on the rough stuff, as well as being a sure-footed towing tool. When was the last time you came across such an impressive car?

So where is all this bitterness coming from? Well, it's not from the general public. That's for sure. Spend a day driving through town and country in a new 4x4 and you'll encounter no hate, fist-waving or social opprobrium. If anything, the looks you get from other drivers will be of warm approval. Small children won't run and hide, mothers won't shout curses and even cyclists will ignore you. No, the tirade against the 4x4 is from a small but highly vocal minority of activists.



Freedom is about choice and fairness, two essential core values conspicuously absent in this crazy debate. Drivers of 4x4s do not over-pollute, kill or swamp the roads. And anyway, there are much more important things to get worked up about. If the government really wants to lessen congestion and pollution, I respectfully suggest that there are hundreds more important places to start than the modern 4x4.

1. Give **two** suggestions that the writer makes to improve air quality. (2)
2. **In your own words**, give **three** arguments put forward in the passage in favour of 4x4s as a sensible choice of car; and **three** objections given in the passage. (6)
3. How does the writer try to persuade the reader to agree with his point of view?

In your answer you should write about:

- how the writer undermines the arguments of his opponents
- the mixture of facts and opinions
- the words, phrases and techniques that he uses.

You should refer closely to the passage to support your answer. You may include **brief** quotations. (12)

TOTAL FOR SECTION A: 20 MARKS