

01

LIVING IN A BIG CITY OR A SMALL TOWN

Some people prefer to live in a small town. Others prefer to live in a big city. Which place would you prefer to live in?

1. Key words

to live in a city / a city dweller	habiter en ville / un citadin
a metropolitan area	une zone métropolitaine
urban sprawl	la périurbanisation
a district / neighborhood	un quartier
to live in the suburbs	vivre en banlieue
to live in the heart of a city	habiter au cœur d'une ville
an inner city district / slum districts	un quartier défavorisé / les taudis
an estate / a housing estate	un grand ensemble
to live in a house / a detached house	vivre dans une maison / un pavillon
a large apartment / flat	un grand appartement
amenities	les aménagements, les équipements
public transportation	les transports en commun
to commute / a commuter	aller au travail / un banlieusard
a shopping precinct	un quartier commerçant
to attend cultural events	assister à des événements culturels
a cosmopolitan environment	un environnement cosmopolite
to be within walking distance (of)	être à portée (de)
a polluted environment	une atmosphère polluée
traffic congestion / a congested street	les embouteillages / une rue embouteillée
a traffic jam	un embouteillage
the cost of living / the quality of life	le coût de la vie / la qualité de la vie
dehumanization / dereliction	la déshumanisation / la déréliction
urban ills	les maux de la ville
to flee the big city	fuir la grande ville
to escape the rat race	échapper à la course à l'argent
a hectic pace of life / the hustle and bustle	un rythme de vie frénétique
to be built on the human scale	être bâti à l'échelle humaine
back to nature	le retour à la nature
a feeling of solidarity	un sentiment de solidarité
a sense of community / belonging	un sentiment d'appartenance
a tight-knit community	une communauté soudée

2. Talking points

1. Advantages of living in a big city

- Cities offer cultural diversity and richness, along with a wide variety of entertainment: the opera, the theatre, museums, and exhibitions.
- There are plenty of leisure activities in a big city, in addition to a vibrant night life; roller skating rides, parades, circus, funfair, clubbing, etc.
- Big cities offer work opportunities (a big city is where big companies and government are located). Trade is dynamic in a big city.
- There are reliable means of public transportation in a big city, which makes it easy to move from one place to another; it cuts costs on owning a car, which is often necessary in a small town.
- There are better services in large cities, such as education or health; there are more educational opportunities and a large array of schools, colleges, universities to choose from, in addition to better research centers or health care facilities.

2. Advantages of living in a small town

- Transit and commuting conditions are much better in a small town. There are no long commutes, no sitting in traffic jams for hours on end.
- In a small town, there's a pervasive sense of community: people feel connected. They have a sense of belonging, a sense of fellowship and a community spirit. It makes for a stronger social fabric and civic spirit.
- A small town offers a more relaxed way of living, which contributes to a stress-free lifestyle, and better school results for the children.
- In a small town, there are affordable housing conditions, less expensive rent, more room for half as much as in a big city. The cost of living in a small city is lower than in a big city.
- Life in a small town is much safer: less robbery and mugging, less trafficking, less rioting or gang warfare than in big cities.
- The environment in a small town is healthier, less polluted and less noisy than in a big city, hence conducive to a better life quality.

3. Possible answers

1. Advantages of living in a big city

City life has always fascinated people the world over. Be it in the rich or the emerging countries, farmers and migrants have flocked to cities like flies mesmerized by bright lights. Living in a big city actually offers many advantages.

To start off, cultural life is much more diverse in a big city. In a big city, you have easy access to a variety of entertainment events and venues. There is no scarcity of fun activities. Concerts, theater, libraries, museums and cultural opportunities such as art exhibitions are happening all the time. You can also visit famous historic monuments such as Rome's Coliseum, Paris' Eiffel Tower, or London's Tower.

A big city is cosmopolitan; you meet people from all walks of life and from the four corners of the earth. As such, they enrich you as much as you enrich them. In a big city, you are exposed to many different cultures. Furthermore, being able to choose between countless Thai, Italian or Indian restaurants is a definite plus. Dating and nightlife are also abundant in cities; plenty of clubs and social gatherings give you a chance of meeting friends or that special someone.

There are many more opportunities to enjoy oneself in a city. Leisure activities are far more numerous. Each neighborhood has its own activities, which offers city dwellers a wide range of choices, be it the Friday night roller skating tour, techno parades in June, the Mardi Gras festival, St Patrick's Day, Chinese New Year, circus shows or funfairs. In a city, you never get bored. The show is ongoing: a big city never sleeps.

Work opportunities are quite numerous in a big city. A big city city is a place where the economy is vibrant, fueled by a dynamic trade sector. Large companies are usually headquartered in big cities, and so is the seat of government or power.

In a big city, public transportation helps you to travel from one place to another. Reliable subway, efficient bus systems and ever-present taxis make transportation relatively inexpensive. There is no need to buy gas, and many city dwellers don't own cars at all, eliminating the need for insurance, registration, parking fees, and maintenance.

Services are more numerous in a big city than in a small one. You find the best schools in a big city. Top academic programs attract the best and brightest students and this contributes to building a competitive and buoyant study atmosphere. Cutting-edge medical facilities and research centers are to be found in big cities too. Therefore, career wise and health wise, it is much better to live in a big city than in a small one.

For all those who enjoy fast-paced and varied life, a big city has many advantages. Above all, it is in a big city that you can get ahead and build a career that will take you much further than if you live in a small town.

2. Advantages of living in a small town

Urban sprawl has driven people further away from their workplaces, forcing them into long commutes or endless hours spent in the subway packed like sardines before reaching their destination. That is one of the reasons why I would rather live in a small city than in a huge metropolis. Bumper-to-bumper traffic on the motorway and overcrowded public transport are no viable options for me. That is why I much prefer living in a small town. I can just walk to work or, weather permitting, ride my bike on streets that are not as congested and hazardous as in a big city.

Another reason why I moved out was the dehumanization of the big city. In the small town where I now live, there's a strong sense of community. I feel I belong. I am not anonymous. The buildings are on a human scale, unlike the housing estates and tower blocks in a big city. My neighbors say hello, pick up my mail, and water my plants when I'm away. We look out for each other and enjoy getting together for BBQs in my backyard.

The pace of life in a small town is much more relaxed than in a metropolis. Time takes on another dimension, allowing you to enjoy life while living at a leisurely pace. Gone are the hectic days when you had to get up at the crack of dawn to make sure to catch that train that would take you downtown (when it did not break down) and, in the evening, hurry on the way home to pick up the kids at day care. In a small city, everything seems so... normal. We get up at decent hours and we have time for a hearty breakfast. The children are not stressed out and they're doing well at school.

Another benefit to small-city life is housing. In big cities, not only is there a shortage of affordable apartments, but they are also priced out of the range of the middle class. Real estate prices are sky high and out of the reach of modest families. Rents are outrageously expensive, space is limited and walls are skin thin. Do not even consider buying: a tiny bedsitter in London, for example, costs an arm and a leg. On the contrary, small cities offer cheap, affordable and roomy apartments for half the price of those in a big city. More broadly, the cost of living is much lower in a small city.

Another advantage to living in a small city is the peace and safe atmosphere I find there. Whereas big cities bring about urban evils, such as mugging, carjacking, purse-snatching, robberies, drug trafficking, gang warfare, a small city is a safe place to live in.

Last but not least, air and noise pollution are virtually non-existent in a small city. Because there's less traffic, less industrial activity, a small city is a congenial place to live in, enabling inhabitants to practice sports, go for walks in the nearby woods. Living in a small city far from the hustle and bustle of a big city is therefore much more congenial for health, be it physical or mental health. So, for all those who would want to reconnect with nature and a simple, less artificial and less shallow way of life, I would by all means recommend small city life.

02

BUILDING A FACTORY NEAR YOUR COMMUNITY

A company has announced that it wishes to build a large factory near your community. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this new influence on your community. Do you support or oppose the factory? Explain your position.

1. Key words

to build a factory	construire une usine
to settle / to set up / to be set up	s'installer, s'implanter
to be beneficial (to)	être dans l'intérêt (de)
to bring in jobs	apporter des emplois
to create / to generate jobs	créer des emplois
job creation / job opportunities	la création d'emplois / les offres d'emplois
a business opportunity	une occasion de faire des affaires
a pocket of poverty	une poche de pauvreté
an economically challenged area	une zone défavorisée
tax revenue	les recettes fiscales
to be liable for tax	être imposable
to collect taxes / tax collection	prélever l'impôt / le prélèvement de l'impôt
to revitalize a community	redonner vie à une communauté
public transport	les transports en commun
a rural area	une zone rurale
to spoil the landscape	défigurer le paysage
to cause environmental havoc	causer des dégâts à l'environnement
to be a sore sight (to)	gâcher la vue (de)
to pollute / a polluter / a pollutant	polluer / un pollueur / un polluant
to reject / to belch / to spew toxic fumes	rejeter des fumées toxiques
air / water pollution	la pollution atmosphérique / de l'eau
to pollute the aquifer / water table	polluer la nappe phréatique
to bring about health problems	provoquer des problèmes de santé
to raise real estate prices	faire grimper les prix de l'immobilier
to bring down real estate value	faire baisser les prix de l'immobilier
the fabric of society	le tissu social
to destroy the life quality	détruire la qualité de la vie
not in my backyard (NIMBY)	partout sauf chez moi
to be environment- / eco-friendly	être écologique

2. Talking points

1. Advantages to building a large factory

- There are economic advantages to building a factory: it will lead to job creation for the locals and bolster the local economic activity.
- Building a factory will create services around the community (hospitals, schools, public services) and re-energize the area.
- Building a factory will bring urban planning too: building roads, creating or improving public transport will benefit the local population.
- Building a factory will bring in more tax revenue and therefore more possibilities to cater to the needs of the community, building day-care centers, schools, nursing homes, sports facilities.
- Building a factory is likely to improve the quality of life, bringing in money for the community, new infrastructures, raising living standards and making life better for all.

2. Disadvantages to building a large factory

- Building a factory is bound to wreak environmental havoc; it may deface a pristine spot, pollute the air and the aquifers, ruin the landscape, and be an eyesore for the local inhabitants. The place will be noisy during the construction phase and after.
- Building a factory will entail traffic, and with it congestion, jams, but also casualties and road accidents.
- Building a factory will make it more difficult to find decent housing: real estate will increase in value and make living more pricey, thus preventing many low-income inhabitants from living in the community where the factory is to be built.
- Building a factory will weaken the fabric of society: it is likely to bring in troublemakers and result in violence.
- As out-of-towners will come to the new factory, security might become an issue and a concern in the neighborhood.

3. Possible answers

1. Advantages to building a large factory

It has recently been announced that a new factory might be built in the little village where I live. As life there is quite monotonous, I believe that a new factory would be a shot in the arm to a region that has been declining socially and economically over the past decades.

There is no doubt whatsoever that, in my rural neck of the woods, building a new factory would offer enormous benefits for all. To begin with, it would bring economic advantages. A factory means job creation for the locals, opportunities of employment for young people who are often doomed to a hardscrabble life on the farm, just like their parents before them. Building a factory would be a godsend in terms of employment.

Such a project would also result in creating or strengthening services in the town. More jobs equate more families, and thus more children, more schools, more hospitals. It would be good for business too, as restaurants, shops, or even a supermarket might be built. Public services like the post service might remain open until 6 p.m. instead of closing at 2 p.m.

Another benefit to the construction of a factory would be the local infrastructures. We now drive on narrow, winding lanes in and around my village. A new factory would mean the expansion of the road network and probably better public transport as well in order to ferry the workers to the factory and back. A motorway might even be built which would connect the village to the capital city and help break its isolation.

All this would be made possible only thanks to the extra revenue that such a factory is likely to bring to the village such as the vocational education tax. Tax collection would be enhanced, more money to the community would pour in and therefore better social services would be developed, for example, for the elderly or the young: holidays at the sea or in the mountains, city-sponsored outings to the ocean a couple of hundred miles away for the disabled or the underprivileged, a new kindergarten, day-care center or nursing home.

All in all, the quality of communal life would greatly improve, therefore benefiting generations across the board: the retirees could enjoy the company of young people, the young would face a brighter future thanks to job opportunities. A whole region would be revitalized overnight. A community that is slowly dying on its feet would be given a new lease of life.

2. Disadvantages to building a large factory

The topic of building a new factory in our community has recently been discussed during one of the town hall meetings. We live in a quaint, quiet little village, remote from the hustle and bustle of city life and I would hate to see such a project materialize. There are several reasons why I am opposed to the construction of a new factory.

Building a factory near our village might bring some benefits, but I do believe that they would be outweighed by the risks. It would be a mixed blessing. Indeed, one of the major consequences would be the havoc wreaked on the environment. Building a factory comes with a price: what sort of building would it be? What sort of energy would it run on? What traffic would it generate? One problem would be the chimneystacks belching noxious fumes into the atmosphere and increasing health hazards. The clean air we used to breathe would become laden with particles, bringing or worsening respiratory illnesses. Another danger would be the possible pollution of the aquifer or the water table. How can we be sure that the local river will not be polluted by the effluents or waste water dumped by the factory? Another concern of the villagers would be the landscape. Indeed, building a factory is sure to ruin the pristine countryside where the sight of ugly stacks would replace that of the trees. The wildlife would certainly suffer too, from the noise, the traffic, the pollution.

New roads would mean more traffic and, of course, more road fatalities. Even if public transport is encouraged and provided, chances are that people will still use their private cars and clog the local roads, especially if the factory expects to operate round the clock. I also think of our children, whose lives will be much more at risk because of the traffic and who will have to sharply restrict their hitherto carefree outdoors activities.

Of course, as housing will be much in demand following the influx of new workers, it will be more difficult to find decent accommodation. As a consequence, the real estate value will skyrocket, or, perhaps plummet as the scenic beauty of our countryside will lose its attractiveness.

Last but not least, the massive arrival of strangers in a tight-knit community is likely to dangerously strain the fabric of society. We live in a village in which we all know each other, we even call ourselves by our first names. The influx of strangers would be bound to disrupt the quiet life we have been living so far, upending our life habits and traditions. Not only would we lose our serenity and lifestyle, yet I do fear we'd lose our very soul too, not to mention the security concerns that might arise from influxes of people from outside who come to work for the factory.

For all these reasons—environmental and social—I strongly urge the factory owners to find another spot. Indeed, NIMBY still lives on and we do not like our lives to be disrupted, even if it is to promote job opportunities in the name of economic progress.