

Reading skills practice: Are celebrities bad for you? – exercises

What's wrong with a bit of celebrity gossip? It doesn't do us any harm ... or does it? Read the article to find out if celebrities really are bad for you.

Preparation

Complete the gaps with a word from the box.

chat	role	public	vast
harmless	general	gossip	reality

1. something that is enjoyable and not damaging = _____ fun
2. a type of TV programme that shows 'real-life' people in a particular situation = _____ TV
3. a type of TV programme including interviews with or conversation about celebrities = a _____ show
4. someone who another person wants to be like = a _____ model
5. another way to say 'famous' is = in the _____ eye
6. ordinary people = the _____ public
7. approximately 80% or more = the _____ majority
8. a publication in which you can read about celebrities' private lives = a _____ magazine



Celebrities are everywhere nowadays: on TV, in magazines, online. Is this preoccupation with famous people harmless fun or is it bad for us? How many people are truly obsessed with modern media idols? And on the other side of the coin, can fame be harmful to the celebrities?

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Studies suggest that the vast majority of teenagers do not really worship celebrities. Researchers have identified three kinds of fans. About 15% of young people have an 'entertainment-social' interest. They love chatting about their favourite celebrities with friends and this does not appear to do any harm.

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Another 5% feel that they have an 'intense-personal' relationship with a celebrity. Sometimes they see them as their soulmate and find that they are often thinking about them, even when they don't want to. These people are more at risk from depression and anxiety. If girls in this group idolise a female star with a body they consider to be perfect, they are more likely to be unhappy with their own bodies.

That leaves 2% of young people with a 'borderline-pathological' interest. They might say, for example, they would spend several thousand pounds on a paper plate the celebrity had used, or that they would do something illegal if the celebrity asked them to. These people are in most danger of being seriously disturbed.



Researchers have identified three kinds of fans

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Can fame be harmful to the celebrities?

What about the celebrities themselves? A study in the USA tried to measure narcissism or extreme self-centredness, when feelings of worthlessness and invisibility are compensated for by turning into the opposite: excessive showing off. Researchers looked at 200 celebrities, 200 young adults with Masters in Business Administration (a group known for being narcissistic) and a nationally representative sample using the same questionnaire. As was expected, the celebrities were significantly more narcissistic than the MBAs and both groups were a lot more narcissistic than the general population.

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Four kinds of celebrity were included in the sample. The most narcissistic were the ones who had become famous through reality TV shows – they scored highest on vanity and willingness to exploit other people. Next came comedians, who scored highest on exhibitionism and feelings of superiority. Then came actors, and the least narcissistic were musicians. One interesting result was that there was no connection between narcissism and the length of time the celebrity had been famous. This means that becoming famous probably did not make the celebrities narcissistic – they already were beforehand.

So, what can we learn from this? People who are very successful or famous tend to be narcissists and are liable to be ruthless, self-seeking workaholics. As we can see from celebrity magazines, they are also often desperate and lonely. They make disastrous role models.

Reading skills practice: Are zoos a good thing? – exercises

How do you feel about keeping animals in zoos? Read both sides of the argument to help you decide.

Preparation

Put the animals in their natural habitats.

bison	walrus	polar bear	seal
giraffe	penguin	lizard	ostrich
camel	zebra	meerkat	elephant

Polar	Grassland	Desert



Zoos are hugely popular attractions for adults and children alike. But are they actually a good thing?

Critics of zoos would argue that animals often suffer physically and mentally by being enclosed. Even the best artificial environments can't come close to matching the space, diversity, and freedom that animals have in their natural habitats. This deprivation causes many zoo animals to become stressed or mentally ill. Capturing animals in the wild also causes much suffering by splitting up families. Some zoos make animals behave unnaturally: for example, marine parks often force dolphins and whales to perform tricks. These mammals may die decades earlier than their wild relatives, and some even try to commit suicide.

On the other hand, by bringing people and animals together, zoos have the potential to educate the public about conservation issues and inspire people to protect animals and their habitats. Some zoos provide a safe environment for animals which have been mistreated in circuses, or pets which have been abandoned. Zoos also carry out important research into subjects like animal behaviour and how to treat illnesses.

Reading skills practice: Are zoos a good thing? – exercises

One of the most important modern functions of zoos is supporting international breeding programmes, particularly for endangered species. In the wild, some of the rarest species have difficulty in finding mates and breeding, and they might also be threatened by poachers, loss of their habitat and predators. A good zoo will enable these species to live and breed in a secure environment. In addition, as numbers of some wild species drop, there is an increased danger of populations becoming too genetically similar. Breeding programmes provide a safeguard: zoo-bred animals can be released into the wild to increase genetic diversity.



However, opponents of zoos say that the vast majority of captive breeding programmes do not release animals back into the wild. Surplus animals are sold not only to other zoos but also to circuses or hunting ranches in the US or South Africa, where some people are willing to pay a lot of money for the chance to kill an animal in a fenced enclosure. Often, these animals are familiar with humans and have very little chance of escaping.

So, are zoos good for animals or not? Perhaps it all depends on how well individual zoos are managed, and the benefits of zoos can surely outweigh their harmful effects. However, it is understandable that many people believe imprisoning animals for any reason is simply wrong.

Have you ever thought about taking up a musical instrument? Here's the perfect guide for you.

Preparation

Write the instruments in the correct group.

guitar	bass guitar	drums	flute	cello
tambourine	double bass	piano	bassoon	tuba
xylophone	violin	saxophone	maracas	trumpet

String instruments	Wind instruments	Percussion instruments

Which musical instrument shall I learn?

Many people would like to learn how to play a musical instrument, but they are put off by one big problem: what to play? Here are a few questions to help you decide.



What kind of music do you like?

Many instruments are versatile, but some are more suited to certain types of music. Although there is some classical repertoire for the saxophone, for example, people associate it more with jazz, and it is not a permanent feature of many orchestras. Some instruments may lend themselves better than others to the music you like, so consider this before you start.

Do you want to play with other people?

Think about your long-term future as a musician. If you want to play with other people, what sort of instrument would be most practical? The initial attraction of playing a dazzling solo instrument like trumpet, violin, flute or lead guitar might fade when you realise how many other people are competing with you to get the main part with the same instrument! If you want to play rock music, there will always be a demand for bass players or drummers, and if you fancy being part of an orchestra, the bassoon is a great bet to make sure you are always needed.

Where are you going to practise?

Many people live in flats and practising the drums, for example, will drive your neighbours crazy. Think about where and when you are going to practise, as well as the patience of the people you live with or near. Electric versions of instruments like the piano, drums, guitar and even violin give you the option of playing into the night using headphones, while your



housemates sleep in peace. Alternatively, you may need to consider going to a school or a community centre to practise.

How much money can you spend?

This is quite a big factor. A lot of instruments can be purchased in different price ranges, for example, guitars. But this doesn't alter the fact that many, such as the piano, are always pretty expensive. If you can't afford your chosen instrument, will you be able to borrow someone else's or hire one?

Are there any physical limitations?

If you're small and don't like lifting heavy objects, you won't want to carry around a double bass. Apart from that, use your common sense, and don't let your perceived physical shortcomings put you off. Who says small skinny people can't play the tuba? It's true that some wind instruments require a lot of lung power but with the right coaching, everyone can develop the right technique.

Still not sure?

Talk to people you know who already play instruments. They might even let you try theirs. It's also a good idea to find an experienced music teacher, preferably one who plays a few different instruments, who can give you some advice and push you in the right direction.

If you find an instrument you love and that suits your needs, you'll find the time spent choosing was well worth it. Good luck with making your choice!

Reading skills practice: FOMO – exercises

Are you suffering from FOMO – that is, Fear Of Missing Out? Research shows that a growing number of young people are, with worrying consequences for their sleep and schoolwork. Read the blog post to find out more.

Preparation

Circle the best word to complete these sentences.

1. It is your irresponsibility / responsibility / responsible to take the dog for a walk.
2. I remember when the phenomenon / phenomena / phenomenal of sending text messages started.
3. This year's trending / trendy / trend for big colourful handbags appeals to young and old alike.
4. She suffers from depressed / depressing / depression in the winter.
5. Young children can suffer from anxiety / anxious / anxiously when they are separated from their parent.
6. I think he made a reason / reasoning / reasonable request when he asked us to help him.
7. It is a worry / worried / worrying business but I'm sure it will all be OK.
8. The film is OK for teenagers and adults but inappropriate / appropriate / appropriacy for small children.



 **FOMO**

posted 2 hours ago by Mr Braddock, Sixth Form teacher

Everybody knows how important it is for students to get a good night's sleep every night. You aren't able to do your best and keep up with all of your responsibilities unless you sleep well. I'm sure you already know that you should go to bed at a reasonable hour. Most experts agree that the optimum number of hours is eight, and this has been accepted as common sense for as long as I can remember. However, I was young once and I know that most of you get much less sleep than that – and in some cases it will be affecting your schoolwork.

I read an interesting article in a teachers' magazine recently. They did a study of 848 students in Wales. Worryingly, the results showed that teenagers are facing a new problem. They may go to bed and get up at appropriate times but a growing number are waking up in the middle of the night, not to use the bathroom or have a snack but because of a new phenomenon: *FOMO – fear of missing out!*

According to the article, schoolchildren are suffering because of a growing trend to wake up during the night to check social media. Afraid of missing a comment or opportunity to take part in a chat, teenagers are waking at all times of the night, going online and getting involved. All this when they should be sound asleep.

Experts are worried about this growing trend and the report reveals some worrying statistics that I'd like to share with you:

- **23% of 12 to 15-year-olds** wake up nearly every night to use social media. Another 15% wake up at night once a week for the same reason.
- **One in three students** are constantly tired and unable to function to their full capacity.
- **Students who use social media during the night** are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety.

So, I'd like to ask you to be responsible when it comes to social media. Be brave! Switch off your devices at night. The world won't end and your social media will be waiting to greet you in the morning! I give you my word that you won't have missed anything important.

Reading skills practice: Leaving home – exercises

Leaving your family home to go to university is not always easy. Read the advice from a first-year student and her dad to get two points of view on the experience, and then do the exercises to improve your reading skills.

Preparation

Match the things you need to know when leaving home with their description and write a–e next to the numbers 1–5.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1..... How to budget | a. Learn some simple, cheap and healthy recipes to impress your flatmates. |
| 2..... How to cook | b. Be slightly formal when emailing university lecturers. Don't post anything on social media you wouldn't want employers to see. |
| 3..... How to make friends | c. Plan to minimise debt, pay all the bills, eat and still have enough money for some fun. |
| 4..... How to be professional | d. Take responsibility for yourself. Manage your time and balance your social life with your studies. |
| 5..... How to be independent | e. Relax, be yourself, and don't feel you have to be cool. |

Leaving home

Going away to university is always a tricky time, both for the students who are leaving home and their parents who are staying behind. We got advice on how to cope from a student daughter and her dad.



A daughter's advice to parents, by Kerry Price

My parents drove me to uni at the beginning of the first term. That was great, but then they hung around, so it was hard to chat to the people in the rooms near mine. It's best if you leave us to unpack ourselves.

Don't ask us to come home during term time. There's a lot going on at weekends, there just isn't time.

Get another interest or a pet if you feel lonely without us. Don't make us feel guilty about leaving home!

It is quite interesting to hear about your experiences at uni, but remember that it was a LONG time ago so don't go on about it so much. Things have changed a lot. Now we have a lot more debt and it'll be harder to find a job in the future.

Please don't check up on us or our friends on Facebook. I know it's a public site, but we have the right to some privacy.

Don't change anything in our bedrooms. We have only half left home - we'll be back in the holidays, so please don't touch anything.

We'd still like to come on family holidays with you. Don't forget to include us just because we're not there all the time.

A father's advice to students, by Stuart Price

Don't complain so much about how much work you have to do. We work a lot too. You're an adult now, get used to it.

Put up with the fact that we refused to get a dog while you were at home, then suddenly bought one as soon as you moved out. We miss you!

Just because you're at university studying very complex subjects, it doesn't mean that you're more intelligent than everybody else. Don't treat your family as if they were stupid; we're really not.

Let us come and visit you now and again. We promise to try not to embarrass you in front of your friends. We just want to see you for a short time and take you out for a meal.

Don't waste so much time on Facebook. You need time for all that work you have to do, remember?

We might make a few changes to your room, so deal with it. It's great to have a guest room at last, but we won't change things too much, promise.

Don't forget to call home from time to time and don't get annoyed if we phone you. It's not pestering. If we didn't call, you wouldn't know that we care.

Are you going crazy with the amount of homework and exams you've got? Never fear, help is here ... in the form of E-tutor's online problem page.

Preparation

Complete the sentences with a word from the box.

lack	distracts	storage
peers	revise	process
siblings	improve	efficient

1. He _____ me by playing music when I'm studying.
2. I need to _____ for my end-of-year exams.
3. I have two _____ – one sister and one brother.
4. We have a _____ system for housework and it's my turn to do the washing-up today.
5. I need to find _____ space for my things while I am travelling.
6. Some plants may die when there is a _____ of rain.
7. Slow down! I can't _____ all the information if you speak too quickly.
8. If the weather doesn't _____, we won't be able to have a picnic.
9. My _____ at school are quite competitive at exam time.
10. Sharing a car is a more _____ way of travelling to work every day.

[◀](#) [▶](#) www.e-tutor.co.uk/forum

Ask E-tutor



Hi! I'm E-tutor, or Emma. I'm here to help with any study-related problems, whether big or small.

Post a message on the forum below.

What should I say to my sister?

Hi, E-tutor. Unfortunately, I share a bedroom and a desk with my elder sister. She continually distracts me because she's noisy and disorganised. I think she's disrespectful. I've got exams in a fortnight and I desperately need to revise. I can't concentrate when she's studying too and the desk is always overflowing with stuff so I can't find anything. If I try to have a dialogue with my sister, she gets annoyed. Can you help?



Meg
9:42 am

Re: What should I say to my sister?

Hi, Meg. That's a common complaint between siblings. Why don't you discuss a rota system so that you use the desk at different times? Or maybe you could study at the local library, cultural centre or community centre a few days a week. Make sure you've got storage space for everything on your desk: folders and containers for your paper and stationery. If everything has its own place, it will be easier to keep orderly. It might even be enjoyable to do this together. If it's easier to write instead of talking face to face, try messaging her and explain how awful you feel.



E-tutor
9:55 am

Against the clock

My problem is time – or lack of it! Next month I've got 12 exams in three weeks. How can I possibly study for all of them? It's complicated. I think it's impossible.



Rudy
1:00 pm

Re: Against the clock

Hi, Rudy. It isn't impossible but you DO have to get started NOW. Make a study plan and highlight periods of study time for each subject. Make a detailed plan for this week and then do the same for the weeks ahead. It's better to study for an hour or so a day than just once a week, all day. Your brain needs time to process information.



E-tutor
1:30 pm

Disaster

My problem is silly and a bit embarrassing. I just find it hard to study. I always stop and start and I keep getting the impression that I'm learning the wrong things. I'm a disaster. I don't think you can really help me.



Hayley
2:04 pm

Re: Disaster

Hayley, your problem isn't silly at all! It's very real and lots of people experience the same thing as you. Sometimes things improve if they join a study group. Set up a group and meet a couple of days a week after school to study together. Take turns to give presentations and teach other what you know. It's called 'peer teaching' and is an effective and efficient practice for lots of students.



E-tutor
2:50 pm

Reading skills practice: The end of life on Earth – exercises

Could a meteorite collision really mean the end of life on Earth? Read this to find out what happens when small meteorites collide with Earth, and just how much damage a big one could do.

Preparation

Write the disasters in the correct group.

solar flare	oil spill	volcano eruption	flood	nuclear accident
meteor strike	hurricane	space junk collision	global warming	

Natural disasters	Disasters from space	Manmade disasters



The end of life on Earth?

It weighed about 10,000 tons, entered the atmosphere at a speed of 64,000 km/h and exploded over a city with a blast of 500 kilotons. But on 15 February 2013, we were lucky. The meteorite that showered pieces of rock over Chelyabinsk, Russia, was relatively small, at only about 17 metres wide. Although many people were injured by falling glass, the damage was nothing compared to what had happened in Siberia nearly one hundred years ago. Another relatively small object (approximately 50 metres in diameter) exploded in mid-air over a forest region, flattening about 80 million trees. If it had exploded over a city such as Moscow or London, millions of people would have been killed.

By a strange coincidence, the same day that the meteorite terrified the people of Chelyabinsk, another 50m-wide asteroid passed relatively close to Earth.

Scientists were expecting that visit and know that the asteroid will return to fly close by us in 2046, but the Russian meteorite earlier in the day had been too small for anyone to spot.

Most scientists agree that comets and asteroids pose the biggest natural threat to human existence. It was probably a large asteroid or comet colliding with Earth which wiped out the dinosaurs about 65 million years ago. An enormous object, 10 to 16 km in diameter, struck the Yucatan region of Mexico with the force of 100 megatons. That is the equivalent of one Hiroshima bomb for every person alive on Earth today.

Many scientists, including Stephen Hawking, say that any comet or asteroid greater than 20 km in diameter that hits Earth will result in the complete destruction of complex life, including all animals and most plants. As we have seen, even a much smaller asteroid can cause great damage.

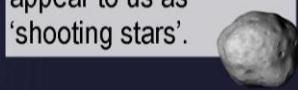
The Earth has been kept fairly safe for the last 65 million years by good fortune and the massive gravitational field of the planet Jupiter. Our cosmic guardian, with its stable circular orbit far from the sun, sweeps up and scatters away most of the dangerous comets and asteroids which might cross Earth's orbit. After the Chelyabinsk meteorite, scientists are now monitoring potential hazards even more carefully but, as far as they know, there is no danger in the foreseeable future.

Types of space rocks

Comet - a ball of rock and ice that sends out a tail of gas and dust behind it. Bright comets only appear in our visible night sky about once every ten years.



Asteroid - a rock a few feet to several kms in diameter. Unlike comets, asteroids have no tail. Most are too small to cause any damage and burn up in the atmosphere. They appear to us as 'shooting stars'.



Meteoroid - part of an asteroid or comet.

Meteorite - what a meteoroid is called when it hits Earth.



How did a quiet 16th birthday celebration turn into a full-scale riot? Read this to find out what happened when a Dutch teenager made a Facebook error.

Preparation

Match the sentence halves to make things that can go wrong at a party. Write a–f next to the numbers 1–6.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1..... Someone breaks | a. gatecrash the party |
| 2..... Loads of people you don't know | b. in your parents' bed |
| 3..... Someone spills | c. embarrassing photos from the party on Facebook |
| 4..... The neighbours complain | d. their drink on the carpet |
| 5..... Your mates post | e. an expensive glass |
| 6..... Someone falls asleep | f. about the noise |



It began as a plan for a very normal 16th birthday party. Merthe Weusthuis wanted a quiet celebration with a small group of friends in her family home in the small Dutch town of Haren. Like many teenagers, she decided to send out invitations via a social network site. But Merthe made one big mistake: she used open-access settings on Facebook, so it wasn't just her friends who could see details of the event, lots of strangers could too.

The number of invitation acceptances quickly snowballed into an avalanche. Not marking the event as 'private' meant the electronic invitation was eventually seen by 240,000 people, of whom 30,000 confirmed online that they planned to attend. To make matters worse, an unauthorised campaign was launched to promote the party by means of a dedicated website and Twitter account, which received hundreds of thousands of hits. The party became known as 'Project X Haren' after the 2012 American film *Project X* in which three high school students throw a birthday party that spins out of control. Video trailers for Merthe's party were produced, with scenes from *Project X* edited in, and they were posted on YouTube. T-shirts featuring Merthe's face were also made, all without her knowledge or consent.

Even after Merthe's parents had cancelled the party, the publicity didn't stop. Local media reported on the forthcoming event and teenagers turned up to have their pictures taken outside the Weusthuis family home. On the evening the party was to have taken place, about 5,000 teenagers began gathering in Haren, many outside the Weusthuis house. When it became clear that there was nothing to gatecrash, violence broke out and 500 riot police equipped with helmets, shields and batons were brought in to control the crowd. Shops in the centre of Haren were vandalised and looted, journalists were attacked, cars were set on fire or overturned and street signs and lamp posts were damaged.

However, Facebook was also involved in the clean-up effort in the days after the riot. A group called 'Project Clean-X Haren' was set up to gather and organise volunteers. Another group named 'Suspect-X Haren' was created to help police identify and arrest the rioters by sharing photos and videos of the event.

A number of other 'Facebook parties' have spiralled out of control, including the 16th birthday party of British teenager Bradley McAnulty in April 2012. Bradley had not posted details of the event on the internet, and had been careful to ask his friends not to, but somehow the news leaked out and appeared on Blackberry Messenger as well as Facebook. More than 400 gatecrashers invaded his family home in Poole, Dorset, causing extensive damage.

Reading skills practice: The history of graffiti – exercises

Is graffiti a vibrant urban art form or senseless vandalism? When did graffiti first become popular? Read this article to find out about the history of street art and hear from both sides of the debate.

Preparation

Are these ideas for or against graffiti? Circle *for* or *against*.

- | | | |
|--|------------|----------------|
| 1. Graffiti is a way for people to express their ideas and feelings. | <i>for</i> | <i>against</i> |
| 2. It is a waste of money cleaning it up. | <i>for</i> | <i>against</i> |
| 3. Graffiti ruins public areas and makes children afraid to play in parks. | <i>for</i> | <i>against</i> |
| 4. Graffiti makes a town look more attractive. | <i>for</i> | <i>against</i> |
| 5. Why should one person decide what public property looks like? | <i>for</i> | <i>against</i> |
| 6. Museums and art galleries now include graffiti in their collections. | <i>for</i> | <i>against</i> |
| 7. Graffiti is art. | <i>for</i> | <i>against</i> |
| 8. Graffiti is vandalism. | <i>for</i> | <i>against</i> |



The first drawings on walls appeared in caves thousands of years ago. Later the Ancient Romans and Greeks wrote their names and protest poems on buildings. Modern graffiti seems to have appeared in Philadelphia in the early 1960s, and by the late sixties it had reached New York. The new art form really took off in the 1970s, when people began writing their names, or 'tags', on buildings all over the city. In the mid seventies it was sometimes hard to see out of a subway car window, because the trains were completely covered in spray paintings known as 'masterpieces'.

In the early days, the 'taggers' were part of street gangs who were concerned with marking their territory. They worked in groups called 'crews', and called what they did 'writing' – the term 'graffiti' was first used by The New York Times and the novelist Norman Mailer. Art galleries in New York began

buying graffiti in the early seventies. But at the same time that it began to be regarded as an art form, John Lindsay, the then mayor of New York, declared the first war on graffiti. By the 1980s it became much harder to write on subway trains without being caught, and instead many of the more established graffiti artists began using roofs of buildings or canvases.

The debate over whether graffiti is art or vandalism is still going on. Peter Vallone, a New York city councillor, thinks that graffiti done with permission can be art, but if it is on someone else's property it becomes a crime. 'I have a message for the graffiti vandals out there,' he said recently. 'Your freedom of expression ends where my property begins.' On the other hand, Felix, a member of the Berlin-based group Reclaim Your City, says that artists are reclaiming cities for the public from advertisers, and that graffiti represents freedom and makes cities more vibrant.

For decades graffiti has been a springboard to international fame for a few. Jean-Michel Basquiat began spraying on the street in the 1970s before becoming a respected artist in the '80s. The Frenchman Blek le Rat and the British artist Banksy have achieved international fame by producing complex works with stencils, often making political or humorous points. Works by Banksy have been sold for over £100,000. Graffiti is now sometimes big business.

How hungry would you have to be to eat a brain sandwich? What about some fried spider? Read this to find out about the world's weirdest food.

Preparation

Match the unusual food with the country, and write a–f next to the numbers 1–6. If you don't know, have a guess!

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1..... USA | a. Horse milk beer |
| 2..... Japan | b. Brain sandwiches |
| 3..... The Philippines | c. Jellied moose nose |
| 4..... Norway | d. Duck egg (with embryo inside) |
| 5..... Mongolia | e. Smoked sheep's head |
| 6..... Canada | f. Tuna eyeball |

The world's weirdest Food

It's hard to say what is normal and what is weird where food is concerned – it all depends on the taste of the individual and which part of the world you come from. One person's nightmare is another person's delicacy. Here are a few of the strangest (or most normal) types of food from around the world.

Haggis (Scotland) A world-famous dish, haggis is made from the parts of a sheep many people would throw away. The heart, lungs and liver are mixed together with onion, spices and oatmeal, then put inside a sheep's stomach and boiled for three hours.



Brain sandwiches (USA) These are not as common as they were in the past, but in parts of Ohio you can still get fried brains served on hamburger buns. Brains don't have much flavour, so you eat the sandwiches with plenty of sauce.

Insects (Asia, Africa and South America) Many insects are high in protein and contain important fatty acids and vitamins. In Thailand it's common to find fried grasshoppers, crickets, scorpions and worms on sale in the street. In Cambodia fried tarantula are a delicacy; people eat the legs two at a time.



Hakarl (Iceland) This has been described as the most disgusting food ever. Made by fermenting a Greenland or Basking shark for two to four months, hakarl smells of ammonia (like the bleach used for cleaning). It is available all year round in Icelandic stores and often served in cubes on toothpicks.

Sannakji (Korea) Now that Japanese sushi is popular all over the world, many people are used to eating raw fish. But this Korean delicacy is quite different, since the seafood isn't dead. Sannakji consists of baby octopus which are sliced up while alive; the tentacles are still wriggling about when the dish is served. If you don't chew the octopus carefully, there's a real danger that the tiny suction cups can stick to your mouth and throat and choke you.



Fugu (Japan) Fugu is the famous Japanese puffer fish, filled with enough of the poison tetrodotoxin to be lethal. Chefs have to be trained for two to three years before they can prepare the fish. Fugu actually tastes quite bland; the excitement is in surviving the experience of eating it.

Casu Marzu (Italy) More live food, this time from Sardinia in Italy. Casu marzu is a cheese made with fly larvae, or maggots, to promote a level of fermentation that is close to decomposition. It is traditionally served with live insect larvae still inside. The tiny, translucent worms can jump 15 cm if disturbed, so many people prefer to brush them off before trying the smelly cheese.

Reading skills practice: Video games are good for you – exercises

You know all those people that told you that video games are bad for you? They were wrong. Read this to find out more.

Preparation

Write the type of computer game next to the description.

Fighting game	Role-playing game (RPG)	Strategy game
Platform game	Racing game	Shooter

1. A game that involves travelling and jumping across platforms, often with obstacles and other elements like ladders. _____
2. A game that focuses on one-on-one combat against an opponent. _____
3. A game whose main focus is combat involving guns or other projectile weapons such as missiles. _____
4. A game in which the player controls a central character. They explore the game world, solve puzzles and take part in tactical fights to complete their quest. _____
5. A game that requires careful planning and tactics to achieve victory, often from a godlike perspective over the game world. _____
6. A game in which the player races against opponents in some type of transportation. _____



For years video games have been criticised for making people more antisocial, overweight or depressed. But now researchers are finding that games can actually change us for the better and improve both our body and mind.

Games can help to develop physical skills. Pre-school children who played interactive games such as the ones available on Wii have been shown to have improved motor skills, for example they can kick, catch and throw a ball better than children who don't play video games. A study of surgeons who do microsurgery in Boston found that those who played video games were 27 per cent faster and made 37 per cent fewer errors than those who didn't. Vision is also improved, particularly telling the difference between shades of grey. This is useful for driving at night, piloting a plane or reading X-rays.

Games also benefit a variety of brain functions, including decision-making. People who play action-based games make decisions 25 per cent faster than others and are no less accurate, according to one study. It was also found that the best gamers can make choices and act on them up to six times a second, four times faster than most people. In another study by researchers from the University of Rochester in New York, experienced gamers were shown to be able to pay attention to more than six things at once without getting confused, compared with the four that most people can normally keep in mind. Additionally, video games can also reduce gender differences. Scientists have found that women who play games are better able to mentally manipulate 3D objects.

There is also evidence that gaming can help with psychological problems. At the University of Auckland in New Zealand, researchers asked 94 young people diagnosed with depression to play a 3D fantasy game called SPARX and in many cases, the game reduced symptoms of depression more than conventional treatment. Another research team at Oxford University found that playing Tetris shortly after exposure to something very upsetting – in the experiment, a film of traumatic scenes of injury and death was used – can actually prevent people having disturbing flashbacks.

The effects are not always so positive, however. Indiana University researchers carried out brain scans on young men and found evidence that violent games can alter brain function after as little as a week of play, affecting regions in the brain associated with emotional control and causing more aggressive behaviour in the player. But Daphne Bavelier, one of the most experienced researchers in the field, says that the violent action games that often worry parents most may actually have the strongest beneficial effect on the brain. In the future, we may see many treatments for physical and neurological problems which incorporate the playing of video games.



Reading skills practice: Your digital footprint – exercises

Every time you do anything on the internet you leave a trail behind you, in the same way you leave a footprint when you walk on sand or mud. Do you know how to take care of your digital footprint? Here are some tips.

Preparation

Match the words with similar meanings and write a–h next to the numbers 1–8.

- | | | | |
|--------|-------------|----|-------------|
| 1..... | suitable | a. | a track |
| 2..... | a trail | b. | to show |
| 3..... | details | c. | to leave |
| 4..... | to abandon | d. | complicated |
| 5..... | to reveal | e. | a purpose |
| 6..... | a function | f. | information |
| 7..... | complex | g. | an employer |
| 8..... | a recruiter | h. | appropriate |

Your digital footprint

Every time you go online you leave a trail. This is just like a real footprint. It reveals where you've been, how long you stayed and what you've been doing there. Every time you register for an online service, send an email, download a video or upload a photo, the information can be accessed and your digital footprint can be revealed. This shouldn't necessarily be worrying but it is advisable to be aware of your digital footprint and to be cautious and sensible when you are online.



Six top tips for taking care of your digital footprint

-  1 Don't forget to log off when you leave a website, especially if you are using a shared computer. If you don't, someone can easily pretend to be you!
-  2 Don't tell anyone your passwords and don't write them down in an obvious place. Make them more complex by using a combination of letters, numbers and punctuation marks.
-  3 Tell an adult if you come across anything online that makes you upset, anxious or concerned. There are ways to report inappropriate or abusive content and in most cases web managers respond rapidly.
-  4 Remember your favourite websites by using the history button and the bookmark function on your computer or mobile device. This is a way that your digital footprint can work in your favour, but remember to clear your browser history regularly.
-  5 If you want to post comments online, you don't have to use your own name. Invent a nickname to use instead. You can also use a picture instead of a real photo.
-  6 Protect your identity online. Be careful about who you share personal information with and always think twice before sharing details like your email, home address, school or phone number with someone.

Think about the future

All kinds of people are interested in your digital footprint. It's now quite common for colleges, universities and employers to check out the online profiles of possible candidates as part of their application process. There are cases of people having missed out on jobs and places in college because their digital footprint didn't impress the recruiters. So, remember: keep safe, don't put too much personal information online and always think carefully before you post something. Ask yourself, 'Would I be happy for absolutely everyone to see this?'