


02 TIME FLIES

In this lesson

- Practise reading for detailed understanding.
- Study and practise words and expressions connected with time.
- Focus on how to describe trends.
- Talk about trends in your country.

Speak for yourself

- 1  Listen to three people describing the same problem. What is it? Which person do you most sympathize with?




- 2 Do you have enough time? What three things would you do if you had more time?



Reading

Detailed understanding

- 1 Before you read *The mad rush to save time*, predict three things the writer will discuss.
- 2  **Against the clock!** You have **four minutes** to read the whole text and check your predictions.

THE MAD RUSH TO SAVE TIME

Time has become a **scarce commodity**. Everyone wants more of it. The refrain 'If only I had more time' echoes around offices and homes in the western world; 'hurry sickness' is becoming the malaise of the new millennium. All over the world, people are working longer and longer hours, and struggling to fit more and more into every day. Symptoms include jabbing the 'door close' button on lift doors to save the two to four seconds required for it to do it on its own, and an inability to do one thing at a time, so that every journey becomes a phone call opportunity.

Technology is speeding up the world. All over the globe, there has been a massive increase in sales of laptops and mobile phones (with a hands-free set so that you can do something else at the same time); and we wonder however we managed without pagers, remote controls, and e-mail. We live in an instant, insistent world. Advertisements read 'Having trouble keeping up with yourself?' We yearn for the slower pace of life we remember in the dim and distant past, but enthusiastically sign up for e-mail, messaging services, evening classes, even time management classes. The result is parents with a **lack of quality time** to spend with their children, and surveys showing that working couples are seeing less and less of each other these days, and that rows over time spent on domestic chores and childcare are becoming a major cause of marital discord. The idea of doing nothing has become terrifying, a sure sign of worthlessness.

Like any commodity that has become scarce, **time has become a battleground**. In what is supposed to be the world of the consumer, firms are stealing time from customers. It is now perfectly acceptable to be asked to hold **the instant** the phone is answered. This saves the company time, but costs you time. We are engaged in a constant, subtle war over time. If politics of class dominated the last century, the politics of time could dominate this one.

Of course, there is a class dimension to the rush culture. One of the biggest transitions of the past few decades has been to take the previous relationship between time and status – the rich had lots of time, the poor had little – and reverse it. While bankers in the City are now at their desk at 7 a.m., in the good old days 'bankers' hours' meant 10 a.m. till 4 p.m. with a decent lunch break. Moreover, to be seen to have time to spare is a sign of low status; when arranging lunch, **it is not done** to be available too soon. Similarly, being late is moving from being a sign of rudeness to a sign of status.

A **two-tier time society** is gradually being built, with the money-rich, time-poor on one level, and the money-poor, time-rich on the other. The rich are working longer and longer hours in order to compete with each other. At the same time, they are employing others – cleaners, nannies, childminders, gardeners, and fast food outlets – in order to allow them to work all the time. Meanwhile, more and more of us are putting ourselves on **the treadmill of constant activity**, taking on an increasingly heavy workload, and never stopping for a moment to ask ourselves why.

The Observer

Did you notice...?

☞ The rich had lots of time, the poor had little.

The can be used with some adjectives to describe groups of people.

- the rich / the well-off / the poor / the less well-off / the unemployed
- the elderly / the middle-aged / the young
- the blind / the deaf / the disabled

Make generalizations about some of these groups of people.

3 Read the text again and explain the expressions in **bold**.

4 In pairs, find ...

- 1 two examples of 'hurry sickness'.
- 2 five examples of time-saving technology.
- 3 three consequences of not having enough time.
- 4 one example of how companies steal time from customers.
- 5 two situations where having no spare time has become a sign of status.

5 Do you agree with the writer? Why / why not?

Vocabulary

Expressions connected with time

1 Choose the correct word or words. In pairs, check what the expressions mean in a dictionary.

- 1 Let's go out for a drink for (old / past) times' sake.
- 2 We're living in rented accommodation for the time (present / being).
- 3 I haven't seen Rob for (donkey's / elephant's) years.
- 4 I don't remember that song – it was before my (time / times), I'm afraid.
- 5 We arrived at the station just (in / on) the nick of time.
- 6 The pace of life was slower in (the past / former times).
- 7 We had to get up at the (crack / scratch) of dawn to catch the plane.
- 8 She decided to go to Paris on the (impulse / spur) of the moment.
- 9 The coach will leave at five o'clock on the (point / dot).
- 10 It's (high time / more than time) we bought new carpets.

2 Choose four expressions and make true example sentences.