BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English
Can AI solve crime?

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Beth

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Beth.

Neil

And I'm Neil. Don't forget that you can find a transcript and a quiz for this episode on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Beth

Now today, Neil, we're talking all about solving crime. Do you think you'd be a good detective?

Neil

Actually, no, Beth. I think my brain's not very good with details! Today, we'll be talking about how artificial intelligence might help detectives and the police investigate crimes. But first, I have a question for you, Beth – in the UK, lots of people enjoy watching fictional detectives on TV. These programmes are called murder mysteries and tell the story of a detective solving a crime. In 2020, a magazine called the Radio Times asked readers who their favourite TV detective was. So, who do you think was the most popular? Was it:

a) Sherlock Holmes,
b) Hercule Poirot, or
c) Miss Marple?

Beth

Surely it's Sherlock Holmes?

Neil

Well, you sound very sure, but I will reveal the answer at the end of the programme. Now, when the police are investigating crimes in the real world, their techniques are often quite different from what we see on television.

Beth
Yes. Solving crimes involves collecting and reviewing lots of evidence, like DNA, fingerprints, or CCTV.

Neil
All of this work takes a lot of time. So, can AI help police speed up the work and even solve crimes? That's the question listener Alastair had for BBC Radio 4 programme The Artificial Human. And host Aleks Krotoski wanted to know more.

Aleks Krotoski
So, Alastair, why are you asking this question? Tell us a little bit more about yourself and **where you're coming from**?

Alastair
So, my name's Alastair and I'm a serving police officer. My **background** is with investigation. I'm looking at artificial intelligence and thinking, "**What can it do for me**?"

Beth
Alex asks Alastair to explain **where he's coming from**. This means explain his perspective or point of view. In informal English, we'll often ask someone, "Do you get **where I'm coming from?**" And we're asking whether they understand our opinion or perspective.

Neil
Alastair explains that he's interested in how artificial intelligence could help solve crimes, because he's a police officer with a **background** in investigations. If you have a **background** in something, it means most of your previous work or experience was related to something. For example, I work as a producer at BBC Learning English now, making programmes, but my **background** is in classroom teaching.

Beth
Alastair talks about using artificial intelligence for training and asks, "**What can it do for me?**" This means, "How can artificial intelligence help or improve something?"

Neil
When a crime happens, police officers have to collect and review a lot of information to find evidence. When you have a lot of information to review, it can

---

be difficult to know what's important and find patterns which might be relevant to the crime.

Beth
But Professor Ruth Morgan, an expert in crime and forensic science, thinks AI could help speed up police work, as she told BBC Radio 4's The Artificial Human.

Ruth Morgan
I think we're seeing a **renaissance** in the pattern-recognition forms of evidence, so finger marks, footwear marks. There's been lots of challenges with those forms of evidence over the last ten years, probably going a little bit **out of favour**. And yet what we're beginning to see now with AI is that you can take a photo of a mark with your phone, compare that mark to the database and get **real-time** insight.

Neil
Ruth says that there is a **renaissance** in looking at patterns in evidence, such as finger marks or footwear marks. **Renaissance** means new interest or activity in a particular topic or area.

Beth
This kind of evidence went a little bit **out of favour** over recent years because of the excitement around DNA evidence. If something is **out of favour**, it is less popular or appealing.

Neil
But AI could mean that patterns in finger marks or footwear marks are useful in solving crimes again. This is because AI can be used to compare a picture of a mark with a database of pictures from other crimes and get **real-time** insight. The adjective **real-time** means the information is presented at the same time that it's happening.

Beth
Yes. AI can compare lots of information very quickly, which makes finding patterns in evidence much easier and more reliable.

Neil
There are some problems with using AI to solve crimes though.

Beth

To find these patterns, lots of private information would need to be collected, and police usually have to give clear reasons why they need access to certain information in their investigations.

Neil

It's unlikely an AI-powered robot would ever replace a detective anytime soon!

Beth

Yes, and that reminds me of your question, Neil. I said that Sherlock Holmes was maybe the most popular detective. Was I right?

Neil

You were absolutely right. And I think people should try the quiz on our website to find out how much they know as well. It's at bbclearningenglish.com. OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with the expression **where you're coming from**, which means your opinion or perspective on something.

Beth

Your **background** is the area that you have the most work experience in.

Neil

The question '**what can this do for me**?' means 'how can this help or improve things?'

Beth

Renaissance means new interest or activity in something.

Neil

If something is **out of favour**, it has become less popular or appealing.

Beth

And the adjective **real-time** means information is presented as it is happening.

Neil

Once again, our six minutes are up. Head to our website to find more episodes of 6 Minute English at bbclearningenglish.com. Bye for now!

Beth
Bye!

VOCABULARY

where (someone) is coming from
someone's opinion or perspective

background
the area that someone has most experience in

what can (something) do for me?
how can (something) help or improve things?

renaissance
new interest or activity in a subject

out of favour
less popular or appealing

real-time
information is presented as it is happening