

Lesson 42: Discussing the News

Two roommates, Patrick and Winston, discuss their newspaper subscription and news in general. Listen to their conversation and mark the statements below “True” or “False.”

Listening Comprehension

True or false according to the dialogue?

1. Patrick doesn't remember the e-mail Winston sent
2. The *Springtime Examiner* subscription has already expired
3. Winston is not sure whether or not he will renew it
4. Patrick is distracted by a text from a friend
5. Patrick likes getting news instantly
6. Winston dislikes online news because staring at a screen is bad for your eyes
7. Winston admits that instant notifications are good in emergencies
8. Winston is concerned that people are losing the ability to think critically
9. Patrick believes that change is inevitable
10. Patrick and Winston will split the cost of the newspaper subscription

Conversation Text

Winston: Hey Patrick, did you get the email I **forwarded** you last week?

Patrick: Umm, I'm not sure... what was it about? Could you **refresh my memory**?

Winston: The message saying that our *Springtime Examiner* subscription **expires** at the end of the month.

Patrick: You're not seriously considering **renewing** it, are you?

Winston: I'm *definitely* renewing it. What I want to know is if you're gonna **chip in**.

Patrick: Oh, come on, Winston, **get with the times!** Pretty much everyone in our generation gets their news online.

Winston: You can't call that *news*. What people read online is **fluff**. It's like pure sugar that **rots** your brain, with a few facts thrown

Vocabulary

forwarded = received an e-mail from someone else and re-sent it to a new person

refresh my memory = remind me

expires = comes to an end, isn't valid anymore

renewing = to renew a subscription means to pay for it and keep it active for another period of time in the future

chip in = contribute money to a shared expense

get with the times! = update/modernize yourself

fluff = (slang) content that isn't meaningful, it just exists to fill up space

rots = makes something decay, decompose

in to make you *think* you're **staying abreast** of the news. Plus, the internet **plays fast and loose with** the facts.

Patrick: (*distracted*) Ah!

Winston: What?

Patrick: The little software company I invested in last week – it's **on the upswing**. I get notifications about **stocks** on my phone.

Winston: See? **Case in point!** You can't even follow our conversation because you're distracted by your notifications. It's another thing that **bugs me**. Everything is so instantaneous. Do you *have* to know what's happening with your stocks at this very moment? Why can't it wait until tomorrow?

Patrick: Because I don't *want* to wait until tomorrow. Why should I? That's one of the **perks** of living in the twenty-first century. Something can happen on the other side of the world, and the news reaches me **in a flash**.

Vocabulary

staying abreast of = staying updated, accompanying the latest information

plays fast and loose with the facts = does not carefully check or prove

on the upswing = on a trend of increase or improvement

stocks = elements of the stock market, the state of the economy

Case in point! = this is a good example of what I was just talking about

bugs me = annoys, bothers me

perks = benefits

in a flash = very quickly, instantly

Winston: Yeah, you learn the **bare essentials**, but the coverage **leaves a lot to be desired**. They take one or two points and talk about them **to death**. So you might find out that there was an earthquake in California, or a **volatile** situation in the Middle East, but –

Patrick: You're saying that's not important? What if your brother was in California when the earthquake hit? You'd want to know he was safe as soon as you could!

Winston: Well, sure. That's what technology *should* be used for: **spreading the word** in emergencies. But **when it comes to** a complex, serious issue, a few **soundbites** or a simple notification just **won't cut it**. Not everything can be **boiled down** to a few bullet points to **browse** on your phone.

Patrick: But it doesn't hurt to have the bullet points.

Winston: Yes! *Yes!* It absolutely *does* hurt! If you **dumb things down** for quick consumption, people are going to get used to it. They're going to start thinking a political

Vocabulary

bare essentials = basic facts/fundamentals

leaves a lot to be desired = is not as good as it should be

talk about them to death = talk about them excessively

volatile = unstable and may "explode"

spreading the word = sharing information with many people

when it comes to = an informal way to say "regarding"

soundbite = a very short audio or video clip

won't cut it = won't be sufficient

boiled down = summarized, reduced to the essentials

browse = look at casually

dumb things down = make things overly simple

campaign or a **pressing** social issue can be **squeezed** into the amount of space it takes to read the weather forecast. People already have a much shorter **attention span**, and our critical thinking skills are **going downhill**, too.

Patrick: You may have a point, but you're **swimming against the current**. People aren't going to go back to reading dense papers if they can stay informed with less effort. Things change. Newspapers were once the height of progress, and now they're becoming **antiquated**.

Winston: Well, I'm still going to renew my *Springtime Examiner*.

Patrick: I figured you would. But **you're on your own** for the subscription fee.

Vocabulary

pressing = urgent, needing immediate attention

squeezed = compressed into a small space

attention span = the amount of time someone is able to focus on something

going downhill = becoming worse

swimming against the current = going against the trend or the majority of people (also: swimming against the tide)

antiquated = old-fashioned, no longer relevant

you're on your own = you're responsible; you won't have help

Vocabulary Quiz

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Three words are not used.

browsing

bugging

chipping in

expired

in a flash

leave a lot to be desired

on the upswing

on your own

perks

pressing

squeezed

staying abreast of

stocks

to death

won't cut it

1. All our relatives are _____ to buy a new TV for grandma.
2. I won't have time to cook today, so you're _____ for dinner.
3. His table manners _____. He was chewing with his mouth open, for goodness' sake!
4. I enjoy _____ at the bookstore, even though I never buy anything.
5. The number of people buying homes is _____, so construction companies are building more housing.
6. If someone breaks into your house, this security system will alert the police _____.
7. Getting to visit new places is one of the _____ of being a flight attendant.
8. I've got a song stuck in my head and it's been _____ me all day!
9. Sorry, you can't use this coupon. It _____ yesterday.
10. The ride wasn't very comfortable because there were nearly a hundred people _____ into the bus.
11. We don't have much time for this meeting, so let's talk about the most _____ concerns first.
12. If the company wants to hire someone with a doctorate, then my master's degree _____.

Speaking Task

Do you identify more with Patrick or with Winston? Explain your beliefs on “instant notifications” and our relationship with technology. Do you tend to be an early adopter (use new technology as soon as it comes out) or do you prefer the old-fashioned ways of doing things?

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Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. True
10. False

Vocabulary Quiz

1. chipping in
2. on your own
3. leave a lot to be desired
4. browsing
5. on the upswing
6. in a flash
7. perks
8. bugging
9. expired
10. squeezed
11. pressing
12. won't cut it