

## Lesson 42: Discussing the News

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*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

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**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