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

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**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.

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**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          leave a lot to be desired          squeezed
bugging           on the upswing                  staying abreast of
chipping in       on your own                    stocks
expired           perks                          to death
in a flash        pressing                       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?

Send your MP3 to help@espressoenglish.net for evaluation!

This is a free sample lesson from the Everyday English Speaking Course 2:

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### Comprehension Questions

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### Vocabulary Quiz

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