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
**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
A 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 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!

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## Answers

### Comprehension Questions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>True</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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### Vocabulary Quiz

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. chipping in</td>
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<td>2. on your own</td>
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<td>3. leave a lot to be desired</td>
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<td>4. browsing</td>
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<td>5. on the upswing</td>
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<td>6. in a flash</td>
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<td>7. perks</td>
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<td>8. bugging</td>
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<td>9. expired</td>
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<td>10. squeezed</td>
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<td>11. pressing</td>
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<td>12. won't cut it</td>
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