SALÓN DE IDIOMAS

Happy Thanksgiving

B2 ENGLISH

LISTENING PRACTICE



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Accede a los audios:



O haz clic aquí para acceder a los 10 ejercicios de listening B2

Consulta las soluciones: Ejercicios de listening B2 con respuestas explicadas

EXERCISE 1

A Different Way of Working

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You will hear a radio interview about the introduction of a four-day working week. For questions 1-5, choose the correct answer: A, B or C. You will hear the recording twice.

1. What initially made Helen sceptical about the four-day working week?

A. Employees might struggle to complete their tasks in less time.
B. Companies would find it difficult to attract new staff.
C. Customers would object to changes in opening hours.

2. What does Helen suggest about the company's improvement in productivity?

A. Employees achieved more because they were encouraged to work at a faster pace.
B. Better results came from changing how working time was used.
C. Staff became more productive after gaining greater control over their schedules.

3. What particularly surprised the company's management?

A. Employees reported higher levels of satisfaction than expected.
B. Productivity improved despite initial difficulties between departments.
C. Staff appeared to need fewer days off for health reasons.

4. What concern does Helen express about the four-day working week?

A. Some employees may face increased pressure to perform.
B. Most companies will eventually reduce employees' salaries.
C. Younger workers may find the arrangement less attractive.

5. What is Helen's overall attitude towards the four-day working week?

A. She believes it should become standard practice across all industries.
B. She supports it, provided organisations introduce it thoughtfully.
C. She thinks its advantages are likely to disappear over time.

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EXERCISE 2

What Makes a Good Learner?

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You will hear a talk about learning habits and how people remember information. For statements 1–6, write T (True), F (False) or NG (Not Given). You will hear the recording twice.

1. The speaker admits that she once relied on a study technique she now considers ineffective.

○ True ○ False ○ Not Given

2. In the speaker's workshop, participants who studied in the evening remembered more than those who studied in the morning.

○ True ○ False ○ Not Given

3. The workshop participants continued using the study techniques after the experiment ended.

○ True ○ False ○ Not Given

4. Some participants initially felt that changing between subjects made their learning less effective.

○ True ○ False ○ Not Given

5. The speaker recommends checking study materials immediately after finishing each section.

○ True ○ False ○ Not Given

6. Participants with demanding work schedules found the suggested learning strategies more difficult to apply.

○ True ○ False ○ Not Given

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EXERCISE 3

The Journey That Didn't Go to Plan

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You will hear someone describing a trip that turned out differently from what they had expected. Complete sentences 1–6 with NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS for each answer. You will hear the recording twice.

1. One of the speaker's plans was to capture the evening light near an old _____.

2. The original train service was cancelled because of a _____.

3. The replacement bus had to avoid the _____ because of the weather conditions.

4. The speaker obtained directions to her accommodation at a local _____.

5. A woman gave the speaker a _____ to help her find her accommodation.

6. Instead of following her original photography plans, the speaker spent the evening enjoying a _____.

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EXERCISE 4

Small Changes, Big Differences

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You will hear five people talking about a change they made to their everyday lives. Match Speakers 1–5 with their MAIN reason (A–G). There are TWO extra options. You will hear the recording twice.

Why did each speaker decide to make a change?

A. They wanted to feel more connected to other people.

B. They hoped to become more physically active.

C. They realised they were spending money unnecessarily.

D. They wanted to set a better example for someone else.

E. They felt their personal interests were being neglected.

F. They needed to reduce the pressure caused by their daily routine.

G. They were encouraged by someone else's positive experience.

Speaker 1: _____
Speaker 2: _____
Speaker 3: _____
Speaker 4: _____
Speaker 5: _____

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EXERCISE 5

Can Cities Become Greener?

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You will hear an interview with an environmental specialist about making cities greener. Answer questions 1-5 using NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS for each answer. You will hear the recording twice.

1. Which parts of existing buildings could be used to create new green spaces?

Answer: _____

2. What ongoing expense can make these projects difficult for local authorities?

Answer: _____

3. What can green areas do to help cities deal with heavy rainfall?

Answer: _____

4. What kind of events does Emma consider more useful than simply collecting residents' opinions online?

Answer: _____

5. Which factor should councils compare before and after adding vegetation?

Answer: _____

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EXERCISE 6

Behind the Community Festival

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You will hear a festival organiser describing how a community event came together. Put events A–F in the order in which they ACTUALLY happened, from first to last. The speaker does not describe them in chronological order. You will hear the recording twice.

The six events are NOT in chronological order.

A. Local residents were recruited to help organise the event.

B. The organisers decided to give the remaining money to a local charity.

C. A school agreed to provide an alternative location.

D. Bad weather forced a last-minute change to the programme.

E. The original venue became unavailable.

F. Incorrect information in the festival publicity was corrected.

1st: _____
2nd: _____
3rd: _____
4th: _____
5th: _____
6th: _____

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EXERCISE 7

The App That Promised Too Much

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You will hear two colleagues discussing a productivity app. Each sentence contains ONE factual mistake. Replace only the INCORRECT information shown in square brackets with the correct information, using NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS. You will hear the recording twice.

1. The app was originally developed for [individual freelancers].

Correction: _____

2. Maya was persuaded to try the app by [an online advertisement].

Correction: _____

3. The team missed a deadline because notifications had been [enabled] during the initial setup.

Correction: _____

4. Following complaints from users, the developers introduced [a cheaper plan].

Correction: _____

5. Both speakers eventually agree that the app works best for [complex projects].

Correction: _____

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EXERCISE 8

Choosing the Right Course

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You will hear a course adviser describing four evening and weekend courses for adults. Complete the table with NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer. You will hear the recording twice.

Main Courses		
Course	**Schedule / detail**	**Information to complete**
Digital Photography	Wednesday evenings	Bring your own (1) _____
Creative Writing	Tuesday evenings	Final project: a (2) _____
Introduction to Coding	Saturday mornings	Duration: (3) _____ weeks
Furniture Restoration	Thursday evenings	Bring an old piece of (4) _____

Additional information		
Course	**Schedule / detail**	**Information to complete**
Creative Writing	Fees	Reduced fee available to people who are (5) _____
All four courses	Registration	Deadline: (6) _____ November

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EXERCISE 9

The Truth About Healthy Habits

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You will hear a podcast conversation about healthy habits and common misconceptions. For questions 1–5, choose TWO correct answers (A–D) for EACH question. You will hear the recording twice.

1. What do the speakers suggest about establishing healthy routines?

A. Introducing several changes simultaneously may make a routine difficult to maintain.
B. Detailed schedules are generally more effective than flexible plans.
C. Routines should be adaptable when everyday circumstances change.
D. Having specific goals can make people less willing to adjust their habits.

2. What does Dr Reed say about physical activity?

A. Group activities offer greater benefits for people who struggle with motivation.
B. Ordinary daily activities can contribute to a person's overall level of movement.
C. Structured exercise is usually more sustainable than informal physical activity.
D. Enjoying an activity may encourage someone to keep doing it.

3. What do the speakers agree about sleep habits?

A. The activities people do before bed can affect their ability to relax.
B. Getting additional sleep at weekends is the most practical solution to irregular schedules.
C. Evening habits may need to change as part of improving sleep routines.
D. Maintaining a fixed bedtime is more important than the number of hours slept.

4. What concerns does Dr Reed express about online wellbeing advice?

A. Research findings are sometimes presented without their original limitations.
B. Advice based on personal experience may not be suitable for everybody.
C. Personal experiences are generally less trustworthy than advice shared by researchers.
D. People often misunderstand research because the original studies contain conflicting results.

5. What conclusions do the speakers reach about building healthier habits?

A. Reviewing a routine regularly is more valuable than maintaining it consistently.
B. Progress should be measured against the achievements of people with similar goals.
C. Improvements can be meaningful even when they happen gradually.
D. Maintaining a habit over time matters more than following it perfectly every day.

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EXERCISE 10

Who Should Decide the Future of Our Cities?

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You will hear a radio report about plans to transform a neighbourhood. The report has FOUR sections. For questions 1–4, choose the summary (A, B or C) that best describes the MAIN message of each section. You will hear the recording twice.

1. Section One — The proposal

A. The council has decided to abandon a regeneration project following opposition from residents.
B. An urban development proposal has attracted support and criticism because of its potential impact on the neighbourhood.
C. Local businesses have persuaded the council to prioritise commercial development over public spaces.

2. Section Two — The residents' perspective

A. Residents oppose the project mainly because they believe it will reduce the availability of affordable housing.
B. Residents generally support the proposal but want the work completed more quickly.
C. Some residents welcome the improvements but feel their everyday needs have not received sufficient attention.

3. Section Three — The planner's response

A. The planner recognises the limitations of the original proposal and explains how consultation can influence its development.
B. The planner argues that public participation is useful only after technical decisions have been finalised.
C. The planner suggests that residents' concerns are largely based on misunderstandings about the project.

4. Section Four — The wider conclusion

A. Urban regeneration succeeds when experts are given enough freedom to implement their proposals.
B. Effective urban planning requires technical expertise alongside meaningful public participation.
C. Local communities should have complete control over planning decisions that affect their neighbourhoods.

Consulta las soluciones: Ejercicios de listening B2 con respuestas explicadas

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Audio scripts

Exercise 1 — A Different Way of Working

PRESENTER (M, British): The idea of working four days instead of five sounds appealing, but can it actually work in practice? To find out, we're joined by workplace consultant Helen Carter, who's been helping businesses experiment with shorter working weeks. Helen, welcome to the programme.
HELEN (F, British): Thanks for having me.
PRESENTER: Now, I understand you weren't particularly enthusiastic about the idea when you first came across it.
HELEN: That's right. I wasn't against giving people more time off, obviously. My concern was whether companies could maintain the same output. If you're removing an entire working day, something has to change. I assumed people would either fall behind or end up working longer hours on the remaining days.
PRESENTER: And did that turn out to be the case?
HELEN: Not quite. One company I worked with discovered that employees were spending an extraordinary amount of time in meetings that achieved very little. Once they introduced stricter limits on meetings and reduced unnecessary reporting, people suddenly had more time to concentrate on their actual responsibilities. Interestingly, they didn't have to work faster. They just had fewer interruptions.
PRESENTER: So it was more about changing the way people worked than simply reducing their hours?
HELEN: Exactly. Although, to be fair, it wasn't all straightforward at first. Some teams struggled to coordinate their schedules, particularly when they needed colleagues from other departments. But once those arrangements settled down, the results were encouraging. We'd expected employees to feel more satisfied, and they did. What surprised management, though, was a noticeable reduction in sick leave. People seemed to have more time to rest, deal with personal matters and generally look after themselves. Of course, we can't say the shorter week was the only reason, but the figures were encouraging.
PRESENTER: That all sounds rather positive. Surely there must be some disadvantages?
HELEN: Absolutely. One thing I worry about is that some employers might expect people to squeeze five days' worth of work into four without changing anything else. That could create more stress rather than less. And in certain industries, particularly those providing services throughout the week, you need careful planning to make sure customers aren't affected.
PRESENTER: Some critics also argue that it's simply not realistic for smaller businesses.
HELEN: Well, I wouldn't go that far. Small businesses may actually find it easier to experiment because decisions can be made more quickly. But they often have fewer people available to cover essential tasks, so there's less room for error. It really depends on the type of business.
PRESENTER: So, would you recommend a four-day week to every employer listening?
HELEN: I'd recommend exploring it, certainly, but not introducing it overnight. Organisations need to examine how their teams operate, identify what can be improved and involve employees in the process. There's no single model that works everywhere. The mistake would be treating it as a fashionable benefit rather than a serious change in working practices.
PRESENTER: Helen Carter, thank you very much for joining us.
HELEN: My pleasure.

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Audio scripts

Exercise 2 — What Makes a Good Learner?

SPEAKER (F, American): When people ask me how to become better learners, they usually expect me to recommend a clever memory trick or a special study method. But after years of running learning workshops, I've come to realise that some of our most familiar habits aren't particularly helpful.

Take rereading, for example. When I was at college, I used to go through my notes again and again, convinced that recognising everything on the page meant I had learnt it. The problem was that recognition isn't quite the same as being able to remember something independently. It took me a surprisingly long time to understand that difference.

A few years ago, I ran a workshop in which participants experimented with different ways of studying. One question we explored was whether the time of day made a difference. Some people preferred studying before breakfast, while others felt more comfortable working in the evening.

Interestingly, although several participants were convinced that they performed better late at night, the morning group actually remembered more of the new vocabulary when we checked a week later. That doesn't necessarily mean everyone should become an early riser, of course. People's routines and responsibilities vary enormously.

Another issue we explored was how learners organise the material they're studying. Most participants initially preferred concentrating on one subject for a long period before moving on to another. It felt organised, and they could see themselves making progress.

However, when we encouraged them to switch between related topics during a study session, some became frustrated. They felt they were learning less because recalling information seemed more difficult. Yet, when we tested their understanding several days later, many had retained more than they expected.

That experience highlighted something I've noticed repeatedly: learning that feels comfortable isn't always learning that lasts.

There's also the question of when to check your answers. I often see students reading a section of a textbook and immediately looking back over it to make sure they've understood everything. Instead, I suggest closing the book and trying to explain the main ideas from memory before checking the original material. Even if you struggle, the attempt itself can reveal what needs more attention.

Of course, none of these strategies offers a perfect solution. What works for one person may need adapting for another, especially when time is limited.

But if there's one message I'd like you to remember, it's this: don't judge your learning simply by how easy studying feels. Sometimes the activities that require the greatest mental effort are the ones that help you remember information for longer.

SALÓN DE IDIOMAS

Audio scripts

Exercise 3 — The Journey That Didn't Go to Plan

SPEAKER (F, Australian): Last spring, I decided to spend a weekend in a small town on the south coast. I'd been working ridiculous hours for weeks, and all I wanted was somewhere quiet, preferably with a decent view of the sea.

I'd booked a little guesthouse just outside town and planned to spend most of Saturday taking photographs. There's an old lighthouse on the headland, and I'd seen some incredible pictures of it just before sunset.

Anyway, things started going wrong before I'd even left the station.

My train was supposed to depart at nine, but when I arrived, the departure board was full of delays. At first, I thought it was another staffing problem. It turned out there'd been a signal failure further down the line, and eventually they cancelled the service altogether.

The railway company arranged replacement buses, which sounded straightforward enough. Unfortunately, heavy rain the previous night had caused flooding along the coastal road, so our driver had to take a much longer route through the hills.

By the time we reached the town, it was nearly four o'clock. I was tired, hungry and starting to wonder why I hadn't just stayed at home.

Things got even better when I realised my phone battery was completely flat. Normally, that wouldn't have bothered me, but I'd saved the directions to the guesthouse on my phone and hadn't thought to write down the address.

I spotted a small bakery across the square and went inside, hoping somebody could point me in the right direction. The woman behind the counter was incredibly helpful. She tried explaining the route, but when she realised I was getting confused, she pulled out a paper map and marked the guesthouse on it.

She also mentioned that I should head back into town that evening because something special was happening.

To be honest, I wasn't particularly interested. I just wanted to drop off my bag and get to the lighthouse before the light disappeared. But by the time I'd checked in, it was far too late.

So, instead, I wandered back into the centre and discovered that the town was hosting a local music festival. There were musicians playing in the streets, food stalls everywhere and people dancing outside the cafés.

I ended up spending the entire evening there, chatting with locals and listening to bands I'd never heard of.

I never got my sunset photograph. But looking back, I think the best part of the weekend was something I hadn't planned at all.

SALÓN DE IDIOMAS

Audio scripts

Exercise 4 — Small Changes, Big Differences

SPEAKER 1 (F, British): I used to think having a packed schedule meant I was making the most of my time. I'd go straight from work to the gym, then rush home to cook dinner, answer messages and prepare for the next day. Eventually, even weekends started feeling like a list of jobs to get through. So I decided to stop planning every spare minute. These days, I deliberately leave a couple of evenings completely free. At first, I felt guilty about doing nothing, but I've noticed I'm much more relaxed. I still exercise regularly, just not at the expense of having time to myself.

SPEAKER 2 (M, American): For years, I had a habit of buying lunch on my way to work. It was convenient, and I never really thought about the cost. Then I checked my bank statements while planning a holiday and couldn't believe how much those small purchases added up to. I started preparing meals at home, usually enough for several days. A colleague had been doing something similar for ages, though I only understood the appeal when I looked at my own spending. The food's probably healthier, too, but that wasn't what persuaded me to change.

SPEAKER 3 (F, Australian): When my daughter started secondary school, she became increasingly interested in what I was doing on my phone. One evening, she pointed out that I was always telling her to put hers away while checking mine during dinner. She was absolutely right, which was rather embarrassing. I decided we should both keep our phones out of the dining room and spend more time talking properly. It's actually been lovely having those conversations again, although I won't pretend I've stopped checking my messages altogether. I just wanted my behaviour to match what I was asking of her.

SPEAKER 4 (M, British): When I first moved to the city, I thought the hardest part would be getting used to my new job. Surprisingly, that went quite smoothly. It was everything outside work that took longer to settle into. I'd spend Saturdays exploring different neighbourhoods, trying new cafés or going to the cinema, but after a while, doing everything on my own started to lose its appeal. A neighbour eventually persuaded me to join a local cooking group. I'm still not much of a chef, but now my weekends involve familiar faces, shared plans and conversations that have nothing to do with work. It's made a bigger difference than I expected.

SPEAKER 5 (F, American): A couple of years ago, I realised that almost everything I did had a practical purpose. I worked, took care of the house, went shopping and occasionally met friends. There was nothing particularly wrong with my routine, but something was missing. Then, while clearing out a cupboard, I came across some sketches I'd made years earlier. I remembered how easy it used to be to lose track of time when I was drawing. So I signed up for a weekly art class. A friend suggested I might eventually sell some of my work, but that's really not the point. I wanted to spend time doing something simply because I enjoyed it, without worrying whether it was useful.

SALÓN DE IDIOMAS

Audio scripts

Exercise 5 — Can Cities Become Greener?

PRESENTER (M, British): Many cities are getting hotter, busier and more polluted. But is there actually room to make them greener? Joining us today is environmental specialist Dr Emma Walsh, who's been advising local councils on urban sustainability projects. Emma, welcome.
EMMA (F, Irish): Thanks. It's lovely to be here.
PRESENTER: When people imagine greener cities, they usually think of creating new parks. But surely that isn't always possible?
EMMA: Not at all. In densely populated areas, finding enough land for a traditional park can be extremely difficult. But we tend to overlook spaces that already exist. Take the tops of buildings, for instance. Rooftop gardens can introduce vegetation without taking up additional space at street level. Even relatively small projects can make a difference, provided they're designed properly.
PRESENTER: That sounds promising. Is it expensive?
EMMA: Well, the initial installation isn't necessarily the biggest problem. Some councils receive grants or work with private companies to help cover those costs. What they sometimes underestimate is the expense of keeping everything in good condition afterwards. Plants need watering, damaged structures need repairing, and someone has to take responsibility for regular maintenance. Without that, even a well-designed project can deteriorate quite quickly.
PRESENTER: And what about the environmental benefits? Can adding plants really make much difference?
EMMA: It can, although we need to be realistic. A few trees won't solve a city's pollution problems overnight. But green spaces can help reduce temperatures, particularly during hot summers. And there's another benefit that receives less attention: when heavy rain falls on streets covered in concrete, water often has nowhere to go. Soil and vegetation can absorb rainwater, reducing the amount that flows directly into drainage systems.
PRESENTER: So we're talking about much more than making neighbourhoods look attractive.
EMMA: Exactly. Although appearance matters too. People are generally more likely to spend time in public spaces that feel welcoming.
PRESENTER: Do residents usually support these projects?
EMMA: Many do, but not everyone agrees about what should be introduced. Some residents might prefer more trees, while others worry about losing parking spaces or areas used for outdoor activities. That's why I encourage councils to organise community workshops before making final decisions. It gives local people an opportunity to discuss proposals, raise concerns and suggest alternatives. Simply asking them to complete an online survey isn't always enough.
PRESENTER: Finally, how can we tell whether these projects are actually successful?
EMMA: We need to look beyond how many trees have been planted or how attractive a neighbourhood appears in photographs. Those things are easy to report, but they don't tell us much about environmental impact. For example, councils could record summer temperatures in the same area before and after introducing vegetation. That would provide useful evidence of whether the changes are having the intended effect.
PRESENTER: Dr Emma Walsh, thank you for joining us.
EMMA: My pleasure.

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Audio scripts

Exercise 6 — Behind the Community Festival

SPEAKER (F, American): When we started planning our neighbourhood festival, we imagined a relaxed afternoon with live music, food stalls and activities for children. What we actually got was probably the most stressful few months of my life! But somehow, everything worked out.

Looking back, the most memorable moment was probably the morning of the festival itself. We'd planned several outdoor performances, but the weather forecast had been getting worse all week. Then, just as the musicians were arriving, heavy rain started pouring down. We had to move the performances into the main hall and rearrange the timetable. It was chaotic for about an hour, but the audience didn't seem to mind.

Actually, we were lucky to have that hall at all. Our original location had been a public park, with a nearby community building available in case we needed somewhere indoors. Unfortunately, about three months before the festival, the council informed us that essential repair work would prevent us from using the site.

At that point, I thought we'd have to cancel the whole thing. We'd already chosen a date and started contacting performers. Thankfully, after several unsuccessful enquiries, the headteacher of a local school offered us the use of the school grounds and assembly hall. That decision really saved the festival.

Once we had somewhere to hold it, we could focus on getting people involved. That was roughly two months before the festival. We put out a call for volunteers, and within a couple of weeks, nearly thirty residents had offered to help. Some contacted local businesses, while others arranged activities or helped plan the food stalls.

I should mention that the festival eventually raised more money than we'd expected. We'd always intended to cover our expenses through stall fees and small donations, but attendance was surprisingly high. A week after the event, when we'd settled all the bills, we voted to give the remaining funds to a local charity supporting families in difficulty. That was a lovely way to finish the project.

Of course, there were a few embarrassing mistakes along the way. About two weeks before the festival, someone noticed that the printed posters showed the wrong starting time. We'd made a change to the schedule, but the person designing the publicity hadn't received the updated information. Luckily, we caught the mistake before too many posters had been distributed. We corrected the online announcements immediately and replaced the printed copies over the following days.

Despite all those difficulties, I'd organise another festival without hesitation. The best thing wasn't the music or even the amount of money we raised. It was seeing neighbours who'd barely spoken before working together and enjoying something they'd created themselves.

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Exercise 7 — The App That Promised Too Much

MARK (M, British): So, Maya, are you still using that productivity app you recommended a few months ago?
MAYA (F, British): TaskFlow? Yeah, although I'm not quite as enthusiastic about it as I was at the beginning. The advertising made it sound as though it could solve practically every organisational problem.
MARK: I remember seeing those adverts. Wasn't it designed mainly for people working independently?
MAYA: That's what I assumed too, but apparently it was originally developed for small teams. The company only started marketing it to freelancers later, once they realised there was a demand for simpler planning tools.
MARK: Interesting. Was it the advertising that convinced you to download it?
MAYA: Not really. I'd seen the adverts, but I wasn't particularly interested. Then a colleague showed me how her team used it to organise a project. Watching her demonstrate it made it seem much more practical than the promotional videos.
MARK: I can understand that. I tried it myself last month, actually. It was fine at first, but then we missed an important deadline.
MAYA: Oh, was the app responsible?
MARK: Well, not exactly. We'd assumed it would automatically remind everyone about approaching deadlines. It turned out we'd disabled notifications during the initial setup without realising it. The deadlines were there all along; we simply weren't being alerted to them.
MAYA: That's frustrating. Although to be fair, some of the problems I've had were definitely the app's fault. It used to freeze occasionally when I uploaded large files.
MARK: I've heard other people mention that. Didn't the developers recently release an update?
MAYA: They did. A lot of customers had complained that they couldn't access their projects while travelling, especially when the internet connection was unreliable. So the developers finally introduced an offline mode. Apparently, the next update will focus on performance, but I haven't noticed much improvement in that area yet.
MARK: What about the price? I thought they were planning to make the subscription cheaper.
MAYA: They talked about reviewing their pricing, but nothing's changed so far. In fact, that's one of the reasons I'm still unsure whether it's worth keeping.
MARK: I suppose it depends on what you're using it for. We tried managing a fairly complicated project with it, and the number of different settings became a bit overwhelming.
MAYA: Exactly. I find it useful when I just need to divide a straightforward task into smaller steps or keep track of a few deadlines. But once you've got several teams and dozens of overlapping responsibilities, things become harder to manage.
MARK: So perhaps it's better suited to simple projects than complicated ones?
MAYA: That's my experience, anyway. It's useful, just not quite the miracle solution they promised.

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Audio scripts

Exercise 8 — Choosing the Right Course

SPEAKER (F, Canadian): Good evening, everyone, and welcome to Riverside Learning Centre. It's lovely to see so many people interested in our autumn programme. I'm going to take you through four of our most popular courses and explain a few practical details that might help you decide which one to choose.

Let's start with Digital Photography. This course runs on Wednesday evenings and is designed for people who already enjoy taking pictures but want to understand how to use light, composition and camera settings more effectively.

Now, you don't need expensive equipment. Some people have asked whether a professional camera is compulsory, but it isn't. However, you will need to bring a digital camera of your own. Smartphones are useful for taking everyday pictures, of course, but they won't be suitable for all the practical exercises we'll be doing.

Next is Creative Writing, which takes place on Tuesday evenings. The course explores different ways of developing characters, creating believable dialogue and organising ideas into a narrative.

Although participants will experiment with poetry and other short forms, the final assignment is a short story. Don't worry if you've never written fiction before. The tutor is particularly good at helping beginners build confidence.

We're also offering Introduction to Coding on Saturday mornings. Unlike last year's programme, which lasted twelve weeks, the new version runs for eight. We've redesigned it to focus more closely on practical skills that beginners can use straight away.

You'll learn how simple websites are structured and how to solve basic programming problems. We provide computers, so there's no need to bring a laptop, although you might find it useful to practise at home.

Our fourth course is Furniture Restoration, held on Thursday evenings. It's particularly popular with people who enjoy practical work and want to give old objects a new life. We supply basic tools and protective equipment, but you'll need to bring an old piece of furniture to work on. It doesn't have to be valuable or particularly large. In fact, we recommend starting with something small, such as a wooden chair or bedside table.

Now, a quick word about fees. Most of our courses have a standard registration fee, although there are some exceptions. Creative Writing offers a reduced rate for people who are unemployed. Students and retired residents can also apply for financial assistance, but the conditions are different, so please speak to reception if either of those applies to you.

Finally, registration. You'll find November the fifteenth printed on some of our older leaflets, but please don't rely on that date. Because tutors need additional time to prepare materials, the deadline has been brought forward to the twelfth of November for all four courses.

Places are limited, so I'd encourage you to register early if there's something that interests you.

And that's everything from me. I'll be happy to answer any questions after the session.

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Audio scripts

Exercise 9 — The Truth About Healthy Habits

JASON (M, American): Welcome back to Everyday Questions, the podcast where we take a closer look at the advice we hear all the time. Today we're talking about healthy habits, and I'm joined by wellbeing researcher Dr Olivia Reed. Olivia, thanks for coming in.

OLIVIA (F, American): Happy to be here.

JASON: Let's start with something familiar. Every January, people announce they're going to eat better, exercise more, sleep longer and completely transform their lives. Why do so many of those plans fall apart?

OLIVIA: Often because people attempt too much simultaneously. They build these ambitious schedules that might look impressive on paper but leave very little room for ordinary life. Then something unexpected happens, and suddenly the whole routine seems impossible.

JASON: So are you saying we shouldn't set goals?

OLIVIA: Not at all. Goals can provide direction. But there's a difference between having a clear objective and expecting every day to go exactly as planned. A useful routine needs enough flexibility to survive a busy week or a change in circumstances.

JASON: That makes sense. Now, exercise is another area where people seem to have pretty strong opinions. Some insist that unless you're exhausted afterwards, you haven't really achieved anything.

OLIVIA: That's a misleading way to think about movement. Structured exercise certainly has benefits, but everyday activities matter as well. Walking to the store, taking the stairs or doing some gardening can all contribute to being more active.

JASON: I suppose the difficult part is keeping it up.

OLIVIA: Exactly. And that's where personal preferences come in. Someone who genuinely enjoys dancing may find it easier to continue than someone forcing themselves through a workout they dislike. Group classes can help certain people stay motivated, while others are perfectly happy exercising alone. Neither approach is automatically better.

JASON: Let's move on to sleep. I've heard people say that if they don't get enough during the week, they can simply catch up at the weekend.

OLIVIA: It's more complicated than that. Extra rest may help someone feel better, but it's not a guaranteed way to undo the effects of repeatedly sleeping too little. What interests me is how often people focus entirely on the number of hours they sleep while overlooking what happens beforehand.

JASON: You mean things like checking your phone late at night?

OLIVIA: That can be one example. Some people also work right up until bedtime or follow routines that make it difficult to switch off. A more consistent wind-down period may be useful, although no single schedule suits everyone.

JASON: Speaking of advice, I can't open social media without seeing somebody recommending a new morning routine or a supposedly life-changing habit.

OLIVIA: And sometimes those people are describing something that genuinely helped them. The problem begins when a personal experience is presented as proof that everyone else should do the same.

JASON: But surely some of that advice is based on research.

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OLIVIA: Certainly, and research can be valuable. However, findings are sometimes simplified until the qualifications disappear. A study showing a modest benefit under particular conditions can suddenly become a headline promising dramatic results for everyone. That doesn't mean the person sharing it is deliberately dishonest, but the message can still be misleading.
JASON: So what's the most useful advice you can give someone who wants to live a little more healthily?
OLIVIA: Start with something manageable and give it time. People often abandon a change because they don't notice dramatic results after a few days. But gradual improvements still matter. And if you miss a day or something doesn't go perfectly, that doesn't mean you've failed. What matters is being able to return to the habit and maintain it over the longer term.
JASON: Less pressure, more patience?
OLIVIA: That's a pretty good summary.
JASON: Dr Olivia Reed, thanks so much for joining us.

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Exercise 10 — Who Should Decide the Future of Our Cities?

[SECTION ONE — narrator announces: Section One.]

REPORTER (F, British): Across the country, local authorities are investing in projects designed to make urban neighbourhoods more attractive, accessible and environmentally friendly. But deciding what those improvements should look like is rarely straightforward.

In the town of Westbridge, the council has proposed transforming a large public square. Under the plans, part of the existing car park would be replaced with trees, seating areas and a pedestrian-friendly space for community events.

Supporters argue that the square is currently dominated by traffic and offers few opportunities for people to spend time outdoors. Others question whether removing parking spaces will discourage customers from visiting local shops.

The council insists that no final decision has been made. Nevertheless, the proposal has already sparked considerable debate about whose priorities should shape the future of the area.

[SECTION TWO — narrator announces: Section Two.]

REPORTER: Among those following the debate is long-term resident Sarah Mitchell.

SARAH (F, British): I actually like the idea of having more trees and somewhere pleasant to sit. At the moment, the square isn't exactly inviting. But the plans seem to have been drawn up without much thought about how people use the area.

My mother, for example, has limited mobility. If you remove parking spaces close to the shops, how is she supposed to get there? And several small businesses rely on customers who drive in from nearby villages.

I'm not suggesting we keep everything exactly as it is. Far from it. But surely we can improve the square without making daily life more difficult for the people who depend on it.

REPORTER: Sarah says residents were initially shown detailed drawings but given few opportunities to suggest practical changes.

[SECTION THREE — narrator announces: Section Three.]

REPORTER: Urban planner Daniel Price has been involved in developing the proposal.

DANIEL (M, British): One of the difficulties with projects like this is that we begin with technical objectives: reducing traffic, increasing green space and making streets safer. Those are important goals, but they don't automatically tell us how a neighbourhood works in practice.

In Westbridge, the first design was based largely on transport data and surveys of the physical environment. Since then, conversations with residents have highlighted issues we hadn't fully considered, particularly access for people with reduced mobility.

We're now exploring alternatives, including keeping some accessible parking and improving public transport connections. Those possibilities still need to be assessed, but public feedback has already influenced the discussion.

Consultation shouldn't be a formality carried out simply because the regulations require it. It should help us recognise the limitations of our initial assumptions.

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[SECTION FOUR — narrator announces: Section Four.]

REPORTER: The debate in Westbridge reflects a much wider challenge. Cities need to respond to environmental pressures, growing populations and changing patterns of transport. Yet the people affected by these decisions do not always share the same priorities.

Technical specialists can assess costs, safety and environmental impact. Residents, meanwhile, bring an understanding of everyday needs that may not appear in planning documents.

Neither perspective provides every answer. And inviting people to comment does not mean that every suggestion can be adopted.

Perhaps the most important lesson from Westbridge is that improving a place involves more than producing an attractive design. It requires a process in which professional knowledge and local experience genuinely inform one another.

For Community Today, this is Rachel Morgan reporting.

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