



## THE WORLD'S WORST INVENTIONS

Fast food and speed cameras rank among the most hated inventions of all time. But what *really* gets you worked up? Thousands of votes were cast on the BBC website and the results, published by the BBC science magazine, *Focus*, make for a surprising read.

<p>1 _____ Bombs, guns, biological _____, you name it – innovations that go bang or cause bodily harm were the most widely frowned upon in our survey. Nuclear _____ were the worst offender, getting eleven percent of the total vote. They've only been used twice in warfare – in 1945, the US dropped the bomb 'Little Boy' on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, followed three days later by 'Fat Man' which fell on Nagasaki.</p>	<p>2 _____ A surprising silver medal for the gadget that's revolutionised communication – _____ have been available in the UK since 1985 and have been widely used since the late 1990s. Almost three quarters of Britons now own one. Despite health scares linking _____ usage to brain tumours, most studies have found there is no increased risk. Maybe it's those annoying ring tones that have put _____ here.</p>	<p>3 _____ accidents are rare but can have devastating effects. _____ plants have higher construction and operating costs than their fossil fuel counterparts, and are supported by large subsidies courtesy of the taxpayer. Waste storage is also a concern but supporters promote _____'s green status as it produces no carbon dioxide directly.</p>
<p>5 _____ Cancer-causing chemicals in _____ mean that men who smoke are twenty-two times, and women twelve times, more likely to develop lung cancer than those who don't. Smoking is also linked to other cancers and heart attacks. Pregnant smokers are at greater risk of giving birth to underweight babies. The World Health Organisation says up to twenty-nine percent of British men and nineteen percent of women smoke.</p>	<p>4 _____ The _____ haters out-voted the petrol users. Developed in the late 1880s, the modern _____ was initially the toy of the wealthy, but falling prices have made it a key part of family life. The motor industry is now booming – 63 million _____ and light trucks were produced globally in 2005. But a green fuel is unlikely to take over from petrol soon, so the _____ continues to add to our growing carbon footprint.</p>	<p>7 _____ Americans are the ultimate _____ eaters, spending an estimated \$142 billion (£73 billion) on it in 2006. But it seems our days of carefree consumption of fatty, cholesterol-rich food may be numbered, as we gradually wake up to the health risks. In 2002, some obese US teenagers filed a lawsuit against McDonald's accusing the _____ chain of fattening them up. A judge later threw out the lawsuit.*</p>

\*threw out the lawsuit – decided there was no basis for any legal action

### READING

1 Work in pairs and look at the photos. Why do you think the inventions are on the 'World's worst inventions' list? Write down one reason for each.

2A Read the article and complete headings 1–7 with the inventions in the photos.

B Read the article again. Which inventions do sentences 1–7 refer to?

- It's more dangerous to men than women. *smoking cigarettes*
- Research hasn't shown them to be dangerous.
- It's more expensive than traditional sources.
- Americans consume the most.
- It's not clear why it's unpopular.
- It was voted the worst idea of all.
- At first only rich people had one.

C Find words/phrases in the text which mean:

- disliked (invention 1)
- be extremely destructive (invention 3)
- given by (invention 3)
- increasing and becoming very successful – about a business (invention 4)
- replace (invention 4)
- first arriving (invention 6)
- limited (invention 7)
- start to realise and understand something (invention 7)

D Work in groups and discuss. Can you think of any other inventions that have been as damaging as the ones on the list? Agree on one idea and tell the class why.

### GRAMMAR articles

3A Check what you know. Complete the sentences with *a(n)*, *the* or *–* (no article). Then check your answers in the article in Exercise 2A.

- \_\_\_\_\_ World Health Organisation says up to twenty-nine percent of \_\_\_\_\_ British men and nineteen percent of \_\_\_\_\_ women smoke.
- In 2002, some obese US teenagers filed \_\_\_\_\_ lawsuit against McDonald's accusing \_\_\_\_\_ fast food chain of fattening them up.
- But it's actually \_\_\_\_\_ reality TV that's \_\_\_\_\_ main offender with three percent of \_\_\_\_\_ vote.
- Developed in \_\_\_\_\_ late 1880s, \_\_\_\_\_ modern automobile was initially \_\_\_\_\_ toy of \_\_\_\_\_ wealthy.
- In \_\_\_\_\_ America, \_\_\_\_\_ reality television's popularity has risen in the 21st century; in \_\_\_\_\_ US there are two television channels devoted to it.

B Circle the correct alternative to complete the rules. Use the sentences in Exercise 3A to help.

Rules:

- Use *a(n)/the/–* with plural and uncountable nouns when you are talking about things in general.
- Use *a(n)/the/–* with singular countable nouns when you are not talking about a particular thing, or when you mention something for the first time.
- Use *a(n)/the/–* with any type of noun when you and your reader/listener know which particular thing you are talking about, for example because it is unique or it has been mentioned before.
- Use *a(n)/the/–* with a singular countable noun or an adjective to talk about things in general.
- Use *a(n)/the/–* with most place names.
- Use *a(n)/the/–* in fixed phrases such as *in \_\_\_\_\_ 1960s*, *in \_\_\_\_\_ beginning*.

C 5.1 Circle *the* where it is pronounced /ðə/ and underline it where it is pronounced /ði:/. Then listen and check.

- The interesting thing is that many of the people who hate it are the ones who watch it.
- The automobile has done less well since the economic crisis.
- Those who voted for the car mentioned the harm it does to the environment as the biggest problem.

D Complete the rule with *vowel* or *consonant*.

Rule: *The* is pronounced /ði: / when the next word starts with a \_\_\_\_\_ sound, and /ðə / when the next word starts with a \_\_\_\_\_ sound.

page 136 LANGUAGEBANK

### PRACTICE

4 Complete the text with the correct articles.

#### Bicycle chosen as best invention

1 \_\_\_\_\_ humble bicycle has won 2 \_\_\_\_\_ UK national survey of 3 \_\_\_\_\_ people's favourite inventions.

Listeners to BBC Radio 4's *You and Yours* programme were invited to vote in 4 \_\_\_\_\_ online poll looking at 5 \_\_\_\_\_ most significant innovations since 1800.

It was 6 \_\_\_\_\_ easy victory for 7 \_\_\_\_\_ bicycle which won more than half of 8 \_\_\_\_\_ vote.

9 \_\_\_\_\_ radio came second with eight percent of the vote, and the electro-magnetic induction ring – the means to harness electricity – came third.

Despite the fact that you can find them everywhere, 10 \_\_\_\_\_ computers gained just six percent of the vote and 11 \_\_\_\_\_ internet trailed behind with only four percent of all votes cast. There were more than 4,500 votes cast in total.

People chose the bicycle for its simplicity of design, universal use and because it is 12 \_\_\_\_\_ ecologically sound means of transport.



## VOCABULARY change

**5A** Work in pairs. Match 1–8 with a)–h) to make sentences.

- 1 The internet has **transformed** the way people *g*
  - 2 The microscope **altered** people's
  - 3 The overuse of pesticides has **damaged**
  - 4 The mobile phone has **had a beneficial effect on** elderly people's
  - 5 The overuse of antibiotics has **had a detrimental effect on** people's
  - 6 Audio email has **enhanced** blind people's ability to
  - 7 High speed travel has **distorted** people's
  - 8 The microwave oven **revolutionised**
- a) food preparation
  - b) understanding of the make-up of matter.
  - c) quality of life.
  - d) resistance to disease.
  - e) the environment.
  - f) sense of distance.
  - g) access information.
  - h) communicate via the internet.

**B** Look at the verb phrases in bold in Exercise 5A and decide which phrases mean changed in a big way; are positive; are negative.

**C** Work in pairs. Which three statements in Exercise 5A do you most agree with? Give reasons.

**D** Work in groups and take turns. Explain your choices and reasons.

## SPEAKING

**6A** Choose two commonly-used inventions. Make notes about why they are important.

**B** Work in pairs. Compare your ideas and agree on the most important invention.

**C** Work with another pair. Try to persuade them that your invention is the most important.

Previously, people used to ...

Without the ... we couldn't ... we'd have to ...

**D** Work in groups. Discuss all the inventions and agree on the order from most to least important.



A Wrist radio



B Ring pull



C Bottle cap



D Jet pack

## VOCABULARY PLUS compound nouns

**7A** Work in pairs and look at the pictures above. Which inventions do you think were the least/most successful?

**B** Complete the encyclopaedia entries with the names of the inventions in the photos.

The <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ was expected to be a major **breakthrough** for transport but in the **trade-off** between safety and efficiency, safety won. The **outlook** for its future remains poor.

The <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ was expected to revolutionise communication but had a serious **drawback**: it could not be used over a long range and communication **breakdowns** were common.

As glass bottles were replaced by cans, the <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ needed a replacement that was easier to use and the **outcome** was the <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. The **downside** of the move to cans was a huge increase in rubbish volume.

**C** Match definitions 1–6 with the words in bold above.

- 1 compromise or balance between two things *trade-off*
- 2 expectations of what will happen
- 3 the failure of a system
- 4 a new discovery or development
- 5 disadvantage or weakness (2 words)
- 6 the result of something

**8A** Complete the information with examples from the entries in Exercise 7B. More than one answer is sometimes possible.

Compound nouns are usually made of two words. They can be written as separate words, e.g. *bottle top*, or a single word, e.g. <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. Or they can be written with a hyphen, e.g. <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. The plural is made by adding an *s* to the end, e.g. *breakdowns*. Several common compound nouns are made of a verb + preposition, e.g. <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, or a preposition or adverb + verb, e.g. <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. If you understand both parts of the compound, you can often guess the meaning.

**B** 5.2 Listen to seven sentences. Write the compound noun in each sentence in your notebook and underline the stress. Where does the stress usually come?

**C** Work in pairs and choose three inventions. Write an encyclopaedia entry for each one using two of the compound nouns above. Write *they/it* instead of the invention.

*They were an important breakthrough in the twentieth century. They give us relatively clean energy but they also have some serious drawbacks, including the danger of a major breakdown.*

**D** Exchange entries with other pairs and guess the inventions.

page 152 VOCABULARYBANK

GRAMMAR | conditionals (I)

VOCABULARY | advertising

HOW TO | talk about advertising

## LISTENING

**1A** Work in pairs. Complete the questionnaire on the right and make notes on your answers.

**B** 5.3 Listen to the radio programme and check your answers to the questionnaire.

**2A** Work in pairs and underline the alternative to complete what the expert said. Use a dictionary to check any new words. Then listen again and check.

- 1 Each machine would sell two hundred cans per day, unless the market was *too small/crowded/saturated*.
- 2 *Choice/Advertising/Hunger* makes people want things.
- 3 People are expected to think, 'If there are two similar products at different prices, I'll buy the *cheaper/more expensive/bigger* one.'
- 4 We intuitively feel that if something is *advertised/costs/appears on TV* more, it's better.
- 5 To make it so shiny, a food *chef/stylist/handler* has painted the meat with *oil/ink/ketchup* or maybe lacquer.
- 6 8.20 is a very *good-/aggressive-/sad-* looking time.
- 7 Blue is linked more to intellect and *technology/precision/speed*.
- 8 Seventy-five percent of young *people/children/women* prefer purple to all other colours.

**B** Work in pairs and discuss. Which statements in Exercise 2A surprised you most?

## What's your advertising IQ?



1 Imagine there's a Coke machine in the centre of town. It sells a hundred cans of Coke a day. Pepsi comes in and puts a machine right next to the Coke machine. After that, how many cans would each machine sell?

2 You want to introduce a new product to the market, for example a new lipstick. The product you want to compete with sells for five euros. Should you price your product above or below your competition?



3 What special ingredients are used to make a hamburger look so delicious in advertisements?



4 What time does a watch or clock nearly always show in adverts, and why?

5 Which colour (blue, green, orange, purple, red or yellow) is best to use in an advert for:

- a) high-tech products?
- b) drugs and medical products to indicate safety?
- c) energy drinks, games and cars?
- d) toys?
- e) food?



6 Why do you rarely see the colour blue in a food commercial?

