

LEARNING SKILLS 2

WORKBOOK LISTENINGS

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1 **Boy:** So, are you sure you really want to come to Venice? I know you were thinking about seeing somewhere new.

Girl: Well, I have got a long list of other places I'd like to visit, but I'm always happy to return to Venice. I suggest avoiding the main tourist area by Saint Mark's Square, though. It's so crowded.

Boy: Remember, it's going to be my first time to Venice so I'd like to go despite the crowds. Please come with me. I don't want to go alone!

Girl: OK, but only if we get there by 6.00 am when it's empty, then return to the hotel for breakfast.

Boy: That's OK by me.

2 Some people never take them. Others make them a part of their daily routine. I'm talking about naps – those short periods of sleep during the day. They can reduce tiredness, make us more alert and improve our mood, but experts agree that there are some things you should avoid. Firstly, you might be surprised that the experts suggest that 10-20 minutes is the ideal length for a nap. This will refresh you without affecting your sleep at night, unlike a longer nap. Choose a nice, quiet, dark place away from distractions. The bedroom is one idea, but a comfortable armchair in a different room can be just as effective.

3 **Girl:** What did you think of the film?

Boy: It was OK. It was a Wes Anderson film, so I knew what to expect. It wasn't one of his best, though.

Girl: I loved it. The cinematography, the set design; it was all so aesthetic.

Boy: Oh, of course. He's definitely got his own unique style. I've been a fan since he started his career, which is why I felt this film was a disappointment. In my opinion, the plot was too predictable. It's also a shame Bill Murray didn't have a bigger part. His cameo was hilarious and the character should have had more time on screen.

4 In 2015, a new TV series hit the screens in the USA. *The Good Doctor* stars British actor Freddie Highmore, who has been nominated for a Golden Globe for his performance as the autistic doctor Shaun Murphy. The show is a fascinating drama set in a California hospital and, now that the sixth season has finished, we have a special treat for fans. For the first time ever on British TV, you can see the show it was based on, made in South Korea in 2013. There are 20 episodes for you to enjoy. Tune in every Monday at 8.00 pm.

5 **Girl:** I'm glad I came.

Boy: Were you considering not coming?

Girl: Yes, I don't know anyone here apart from Suzie, but it's great to see her getting married. I'm Danielle, by the way.

Boy: I'm Craig.

Girl: Oh, you're Suzie's cousin who's moved to Australia.

Boy: That's right. And you taught English with her in Thailand, yes? I visited her once, but I don't think you'd arrived at that point.

Girl: No, I'm sure I would have remembered you! I still live there, if you fancy visiting again!

Boy: That sounds great. It's not too far from Australia! Come on, let me introduce you to some of the family.

6 The Bristol South election took place yesterday and the winner was the Liberal Democrat candidate Stella Myers. Although this has been a Conservative stronghold for many years, their candidate was not popular and had been expected to lose. However, as only 24% of voters turned out, it's difficult to judge how popular the new winner really is. The election was also a chance to see the government's new ID policy in action and, surprisingly, despite fears of confusion, there was little evidence of any difficulties. It may cause more headaches at the general election when a higher number of voters show up.

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Presenter: Continuing our series about India, today we are looking at one of the most remarkable tourist attractions in the country, the Toorji Ka Jhalra Stepwell in Jodhpur. Here to tell us about it is Amanda Teller, whose book about Jodhpur's architecture has just been published. Welcome, Amanda. The pictures in your book are magnificent! Can you tell us about the stepwell we see here?

Amanda: Thank you. First of all, I'll explain what a stepwell is. We all know that a well is a hole in the ground from which water can be obtained. Stepwells serve the same function, but they are huge, beautiful constructions with, as the name suggests, many steps which you can walk down to get to the water. They are mostly located in the drier, north-western provinces and many of them are incredibly decorative – like a palace or temple.

Presenter: What is special about the stepwell in Jodhpur?

Amanda: Well, I have to admit that it isn't the most impressive stepwell in the country. The Chand Baori is the deepest, with a total of 3,500 steps and 13 levels, and it is absolutely stunning. The stepwell in Jodhpur is very close to the centre of this vibrant, friendly city which is one of the most popular destinations in the province of Rajasthan, due to its market places and its old city, which is painted blue.

Presenter: Is it expensive to visit?

Amanda: No. In fact, like most stepwells, entrance is free and it's open 24 hours a day. Perhaps, if they become more popular, this will change, but for now, they are public places. You can see local children diving into the water and families just sitting on the steps enjoying the cool of the evening.

Presenter: You mentioned the design. Does it have any carvings or sculptures like some of India's famous temples?

Amanda: Yes, it was built by the wife of Jodhpur's ruler in 1740. There are carvings of cows and horns on the building and as you descend the stairs towards the water, you pass many beautiful statues of gods and goddesses. In addition, there were special platforms built where lamps were lit at night and which now serve as diving boards for the local children.

Presenter: I would love to visit one of these places. Thank you so much for telling us about stepwells.

Amanda: You're very welcome.

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1 I've loved Martin Freeman from when I first saw him in *The Office*, then in *The Hobbit* and finally in *Sherlock*. He always plays kind, gentle characters, so I was surprised when I saw that he was going to be in the crime series *Fargo*. He was only in the first season, but he was brilliant playing a villain! I didn't watch the later seasons as I figured they wouldn't be good without him. Some of my friends said that Season 4 was a let-down and that it should have finished earlier.

2 Back in the 90s, everyone I knew was glued to the screen watching *Friends*, except me. I thought it was just going to be a silly American sitcom. I used to hear my friends discussing each episode and using all the catchy phrases from the show. When the final season came to an end, my friends were upset. Then, several years later at university, I had to write an essay on a popular show's cultural influences, so I watched a couple of episodes and to my surprise, I couldn't stop. By the time I graduated, I had watched all ten seasons and was also upset that it had come to an end!

3 *The Office* was a huge hit in Britain. It was written by comedian Ricky Gervais and was different to anything else I'd seen. I watched it over and over again. One of the best things about it was the casting and a number of the actors have gone on to have successful careers since then. I like the fact that, despite its success, there were just two seasons followed by a Christmas special. Often, shows go on for far too long and the writers start to run out of ideas after a while.

4 When the series *Wednesday* started, it was amazing how quickly it took off at our school. After a couple of weeks, you knew exactly who was a fan of the show. Its followers were dressed in black and the school had to bring in a new rule about wearing heavy make-up. The cast is brilliant and I'm addicted. I can't wait for the next season to begin! I hope they keep making it for years and years! I'll be sad if it finishes soon.

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Presenter: There had been a lot of talk in the past about the increasing population of the world and its effects on the planet. It seemed as if the number of people would continue to grow until, finally, the planet would be overwhelmed, leading to famine, extinction of species and our own very existence. Now, although the population trends have changed completely, they are still alarming. My guest today, Joseph Sanderson, is here to explain why.

Joseph: Thank you. Let's look back to 1963, when the fertility rate – that's the number of births for each woman aged between 15-59 – reached 5.3. Prior to this time, fertility rates had been even higher, but they were balanced by high death rates. With improvements in health care, though, by the early 1960s the world's population was growing rapidly. However, since then, the fertility rate has been falling and by 2021, it was down to 2.3, not that much higher than the rate of 2.1 which is required to keep the population constant.

Presenter: I know there has been a lot of talk about Japan's low fertility rate. Could you expand on that?

Joseph: That's right. Japan's fertility rate fell below 2 by 1980. For a while, the population continued to rise, as births still outnumbered deaths, but gradually, it meant that there were fewer and fewer women in the population of child-bearing age. The population reached a high of about 128 million in 2009, but since then it has been starting to fall. If trends continue, the population could fall below 100 million by the middle of this century and to about 60 million by the year 2100.

Presenter: So, why is this happening in Japan?

Joseph: It isn't just Japan. In fact, Japan's fertility rate in 2020 was 1.37, and there were a number of countries with lower rates. The lowest in the world was South Korea's which had dropped to just 0.84 births per woman. China's rate, which was between these two countries, is a very interesting case. In 1979, the government, alarmed by its rising population, brought in a one-child-per-family limit, making it illegal to have more children. Now, with an ageing population, the country is once more encouraging families to have more children in order to boost the population.

Presenter: So, what are the predictions about future population trends?

Joseph: By 2022, the UN felt there was a 50% chance that the population would stop growing before 2100 and already this fall is expected to happen much sooner. Birth rates are declining all over the world and it is now thought that, apart from in Sub-Saharan Africa where the population is predicted to continue to rise, it will fall everywhere, in some places dramatically.

Presenter: Why is this so worrying? Isn't the world overpopulated?

Joseph: The problem is that as populations age, there are fewer people in the workforce and more money is required for health services for the elderly. The question is how to pay for it. One possibility is encouraging immigration to fill in the gaps in the labour market but, of course, immigrants grow old too and also need looking after in their old age. Some countries have tried offering more financial help for people wanting to start a family, which has had very limited success, but nowhere near enough to raise the birth rate sufficiently. A possible solution could be Artificial Intelligence, as it can be used to do many of the jobs done by humans nowadays. It may not matter that there are so few people of a working age. This solves the worry about looking after the elderly, but doesn't address the lack of children being born. However, what may save us as a species is that, as populations fall, prices of accommodation should decrease due to lower demand, and people may once again decide they can afford to have more children.

Presenter: Well, thank you for explaining all this. At least other living species will be happy if human domination of the planet diminishes a little.

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Presenter: What happens when two Hollywood stars decide to take over a football club in a relatively unknown town in Wales? The outcome of this is unbelievable, and that's what we're going to be talking about tonight. Although the Welsh town of Wrexham, situated in the north-east of the country, not far from the border with England, is one of the oldest settlements in Wales, most people visiting the Welsh coast or mountains generally drive past without stopping. But recently, it has caught the public's attention because of its local football club, and here to tell us why is sports journalist, Jack Simmons. Welcome, Jack.

Jack: Thank you. Yes, the local football club has existed since 1864, but it has never been particularly successful or popular, appealing only to a small number of locals.

Presenter: Until recently, that is.

Jack: That's right. In February 2021, Ryan Reynolds, perhaps best known for starring in the *Deadpool* films, and Rob McElhenney, an actor and writer, took control of the club. It all started when a friend of theirs, British actor Humphrey Ker, introduced them to the sport, and Rob McElhenney became so passionate about the game that he decided he wanted to own a football club. Ryan agreed to join him, not so much because of a love of football, but because he likes being involved in businesses and making them successful.

Presenter: They wanted a team which played in the English League, but Wrexham is in Wales.

Jack: Yes, but the main Welsh clubs have been playing in the English League for about 100 years now. Rob and Ryan researched different clubs and Wrexham seemed like a good choice. The club's history, not just as the oldest team in Wales, but also as the third oldest professional football club in the whole world, helped, but more importantly, the club had excellent relations with its supporters and was an essential part of the community.

Presenter: The locals must have been delighted.

Jack: I think at first there were a few doubts. Were they just doing this for publicity? Would they get bored quickly? Would they try to interfere with the playing side of things, despite not really having any knowledge of the sport? However, the two Hollywood stars showed a genuine interest in the sport, investing in the stadium and the women's team.

Presenter: And has the takeover brought success to the team?

Jack: Yes. In the first year after the takeover, Wrexham once again came very close to getting promoted, barely losing out to another famous old club, Grimsby. However, higher attendances and increased sales of merchandise from the club shop to their new fans in the town and abroad, boosted the club's finances. Their average crowd rose from 3,705 in the year before they took over, to 7,962 in Rob and Ryan's first season. It rose again to 9,625 in 2022-2023, when, finally, they came top of their league and moved up to the fourth level of the English Football League.

Presenter: And what about the future?

Jack: For the football club, which will be one of the richest and best-supported teams at their level, more success is definitely possible. Meanwhile, the town of Wrexham, or should I say city, as it was coincidentally awarded that title in 2022, is also enjoying success. There has been a sudden increase in curious visitors from all over the world, evidence of which can be found in the guestbook at the local visitor information centre. It now includes comments by tourists from Japan, South Africa, Australia and other faraway places. In fact, you could say this has been the biggest thing to hit Wrexham since the discovery of coal in the 15th century.

Presenter: It's a great story and I wish the club and the city all the best for the future.

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Presenter: While popular tourist destinations all over the world are suffering from the problems of mass tourism, one unique town in Italy has welcomed the recent increase in visitors, which is helping to save it from disappearing. Here to tell us more is our Italy correspondent, Amelia Sturridge. Welcome, Amelia.

Amelia: Thank you. The town in question is Civita di Bagnoregio, about 120 km north of Rome. This tiny old village sits on a rock on top of a cliff and the only way to reach it is to walk across a 300-metre-long bridge. When you arrive, you enter into a forgotten world of old stone houses and picturesque squares. There is little to do there apart from wander around and look in the handful of souvenir shops, or sit outside enjoying a meal or a drink, but it is well worth the effort of travelling there.

Presenter: So, is it a popular destination?

Amelia: Yes, despite its remote position, which makes it rather time-consuming to visit, it receives around 10,000 visitors a day during peak season. That may not sound much compared to the huge numbers who go to Rome, Venice or Florence, but we're talking about a town with a population of around ten people, as the vast majority of those working in the shops and restaurants commute from the neighbouring town.

Presenter: Why are there so few residents there? Is it that small?

Amelia: No, but it isn't an easy place to live in. The nearest town is Bagnoregio, a few kilometres away. Even though locals can park closer to the village than tourists, they still have to carry their shopping across the bridge, or cross it to work, school or for entertainment. However, that isn't the biggest problem. In the Middle Ages, the town's population was around 3,000, but in 1695, an earthquake caused a lot of damage and led to a lot of residents leaving. However, the population was still about 600 early in the 20th century. The main problem is that the town is slowly disappearing.

Presenter: Why?

Amelia: The rock that the town is built on is not a hard rock like granite. There is a layer of hard volcanic rock, but underneath this is soft clay. The rain gets into the clay and washes it away and when it is dry, the wind carries it off. Water from the river also causes erosion, and so parts of the town are just crumbling away and the cost of strengthening the cliffs is enormous. However, thanks to the Internet, interest in the town has started to grow. As with many other picturesque places, a few photos appeared on social media and it soon became a view that others also wanted to have in the background of one of their "selfies". The more photos that appeared, the more popular it became. When the town decided to charge an entrance fee, something that is easy to do as there is only one way to get to the town – over the bridge, the publicity gave tourism a further boost and, with over a million visitors in 2019, funds became available to pay geologists to find a way to conserve the town.

Presenter: So, the future is optimistic, isn't it?

Amelia: Yes, but there are still some worries. There is some evidence that tourist numbers are causing more erosion in the village, which might threaten the town. Experts need to decide what a sustainable number of visitors might be, so that if necessary, restrictions could be imposed on the numbers of tickets sold each day. At the same time, the village is hoping to gain UNESCO World Heritage recognition, which will attract more people. There's also an idea to develop tourist attractions in the local area, so that more tourists may decide to come for more than just a day trip, spending more money and helping to boost the local economy and employment. It's a difficult balancing act, but at the moment, the locals are definitely trying to attract rather than deter tourists.

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Presenter: Finland has just come top of an international survey. What was the survey about? Our guest, Lumi Kristen, a long time resident of Finland, is here to tell us. Welcome, Lumi.

Lumi: Thank you. Yes, once again we have been voted the happiest country in the world, beating our fellow Nordic country, Denmark, which came second, with Iceland third and Sweden jumping up to 4th place. We have kept the same top spot for six years, taking over from Norway in 2018.

Presenter: How is this ranking of happiness calculated?

Lumi: The survey consists of a detailed questionnaire. The questions are on a variety of aspects of life, including financial security, social services, health benefits and so on.

Presenter: So, why do you think Finns are so happy?

Lumi: Firstly, we are a society that values equality. Even when some people are financially better off than others, they try not to show off about it. In fact, some of the wealthiest people in Finland drive old cars. There is less envy in society and, instead of comparing what we've got to others, we enjoy and appreciate what we have. A famous Finnish proverb goes, "Whoever is happy should hide it", meaning that speaking of one's good fortune could reverse it.

In addition, there is very little poverty in Finland and education and employment opportunities aren't based on social class. Anyone from any background can benefit from excellent public education and healthcare, which is so good that there is very little point in paying to go private.

Presenter: How are these public services paid for?

Lumi: Like other Nordic countries, we pay quite a high rate of tax, but, in return, every citizen gets all the help they need from the cradle to the grave, as the saying goes. New parents get generous amounts of paid leave from work to be with their new child, as well as a free box of useful baby care items. Pensions and care for the elderly are also very generous.

Presenter: I've also read that Finland is a relatively safe country.

Lumi: That's true. There was an experiment conducted in 16 cities worldwide in which 12 wallets were left in the street, with the equivalent of \$50 and the owner's details inside each one. One of the cities was Helsinki, where 11 of the wallets were returned. While not perfect, it was the highest number in any of the cities. There's a level of trust amongst people here which I believe adds to their overall level of happiness.

Presenter: That's impressive, but when I was in Finland a few years ago, I didn't see many people laughing, or even smiling very much.

Lumi: Of course, Finns smile and laugh when they're having fun, but generally speaking, Finns are emotionally introverted, so expressions of both joy and anger are not really displayed. Some outsiders think that Finns are unfriendly because they're not as talkative as people from other countries. I just think that Finns are reserved. However once you get to know a Finnish person, you might be surprised, or perhaps even a bit uncomfortable, by their direct, honest approach.

Presenter: One thing that people often mention when talking about Finns is *sisu*. Can you explain what this means?

Lumi: Yes, it's a unique Finnish concept that can be roughly translated as not giving up during times of difficulty. It allows people to learn from failures or hardship. For example, if you are in a difficult situation, you can look at it as an experience to learn from. Perhaps this way of thinking leads to Finns receiving higher marks on the happiness test than other nationalities.

Presenter: Well, thank you so much, Lumi, for explaining why Finns are the world's happiest people.

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Presenter: Are you sitting comfortably? Well, perhaps you shouldn't be, because this morning's programme is about the dangers of today's inactive and sedentary lifestyle and how we can change it. My guest is Dr Anne Carter, a specialist in the effects of lifestyle on our health. Welcome, Anne. So, what problems are caused by too much sitting?

Anne: Well, studies show that too much sitting can have a great number of consequences. One of the earliest studies about this was in the 1950s involving bus drivers and bus conductors, who used to sell tickets once passengers got on the bus. They were constantly on their feet, unlike the drivers who sat most of the day. The survey found that the drivers had twice the risk of heart attacks than the conductors.

Presenter: So, obviously we need to get up and move around.

Anne: Yes, but it may require more than that. Interestingly, it seems that if you sit too much at one time, it can have a negative impact on your health, regardless of how many physical activities you did that day. So, if you go out for a walk, or even a run for an hour, but you spend the rest of the time at a desk, or in front of the TV, you still face the same risks as any other person who sits too much. I'm not saying that walking isn't important, but it's just that it isn't enough on its own. People need to constantly move around while sitting.

Presenter: Why is that so?

Anne: Research shows that prolonged sitting affects the body's circulation and sugar levels and, despite exercise, you may find yourself putting on weight and becoming at risk of heart disease and diabetes. Prolonged sitting can also cause pain in the lower back, the knees and the neck. Fortunately, there are exercises that can help. The other problems, however, are much more serious.

Presenter: A lot of people might assume that this is mainly a problem which affects older people, or those with desk jobs, but that's not entirely true, is it?

Anne: No, a World Health Organisation report, based on data from 1.6 million people in 146 countries, found very worrying results about adolescents aged between 11 and 17. In total, 80% of the participants failed to meet the recommended minimum level of exercise of one hour per day, with girls slightly less active than boys. It appears that 85% of girls and 78% of boys are doing less exercise than they should.

Presenter: Is this because of excessive screen use?

Anne: To a great extent, yes. Young people tend to sit more than previously, although, of course, sitting for hours in front of the television has been a problem for decades. But, as well as sitting and spending more time on their phones and other devices, young people also seem to walk less when going out. There is evidence that parents are less willing to allow them to go out unsupervised than in the past, preferring to drive them instead.

Presenter: What problems does prolonged sitting cause young people to experience?

Anne: Well, there is the obvious direct cause of weight gain, especially when combined with a poor diet. Heart problems, although rare, can affect younger as well as older people and there are proven links between a sedentary lifestyle and mental health. One of the main problems for young people, though, is that such a lifestyle becomes a habit which is hard to break. Several surveys have found that the more physical activity you get as an adolescent, the more likely you are to continue to be active later in life. And we have to remember that the recommended one-hour-a-day guideline is still far less activity than most young people got 50 years ago. It really is a bare minimum rather than an ideal amount.

Presenter: It's certainly a serious problem that we all need to be aware of. Thank you and let's get walking!