

AUTHENTIC LISTENING

Listen to these extracts from Erin McKean's TED Talk, and repeat the sentences. Listen especially to the speed of her speech, and try to match her pace and intonation. (track 58)

- 1 Every language is just a group of people who agree to understand each other.
- 2 That rule lives in your brain. You never had to be taught this rule, you just understand it.
- 3 So we've been talking about this for a long time.
- 4 And I think that is, well, stupid.
- 5 'Motel' is a blend of 'motor' and 'hotel'.

Choose the correct option to complete the sentences.

- 1 If you look at the word NASA, you'll / you would notice that the letters come from "National Aeronautics and Space Administration".
- 2 If we didn't borrow words from other languages, we don't have / wouldn't have the word "kumquat" in English.
- 3 If the word "brunch" did not exist, what do we call / would we call a late breakfast?
- 4 If you want a job making dictionaries, you should / should have become a lexicographer.
- 5 If you hadn't been taught what a "wug" was, you would still know / will still know how to form the plural, "wugs".
- 6 If you learn a language as a child, you understand / would understand some grammar rules unconsciously.
- 7 If you use unusual words when you speak, people will pay / paid more attention to what you say.
- 8 If we didn't create new words in English, how do we name / would we name new technologies?

WATCH Choose the best options.

1 What is the main topic of this TED Talk?

- a Dictionaries are useful tools.
- b English grammar is so complicated it's easy to make mistakes.
- c It's OK to be creative with language.
- d A lot of English words come from Japanese.

2 According to McKean, what are the two types of rules language has?

- a old-fashioned rules and modern rules
- b formal rules and informal rules
- c rules based on Latin and rules based on German
- d unconscious rules and learned rules

3 What is McKean's attitude towards grammar rules?

- a They shouldn't stop people from inventing words.
- b They help you decide whether a word is acceptable.
- c They explain confusing patterns.
- d They are the only rules we should follow.

4 According to McKean, how are words like hats?

- a Both words and hats come in many forms.
- b Both words and hats are used by humans.
- c Both words and hats have "natural" and "learned" rules associated with them.
- d You can find the word "hat" in the dictionary.

5 How does McKean organize her recommendations about creating new words?

- a She begins by telling a story.
- b She describes six ways to form new words and gives examples.
- c She compares and contrasts word formation in English with other languages.
- d She starts with simple words and ends with complex words.

6 Why does McKean say, "OMG"?

- a to give a humorous example of a word formed with the first letters of a phrase.
- b to show shock that the audience likes NASA.
- c to emphasize her point that anyone can create new words.
- d to demonstrate that she disagrees with formal grammar rules.

VOCABULARY

Match the words (1–6) with the sentences that show their meaning (a–f).

1 get your meaning across	a It's always a good idea to use polite behaviour.
2 manners	b Miguel was very sad when his team didn't win the basketball tournament.
3 grab	c During the storm, the electricity company warned people that fallen power lines could seriously injure them.
4 heartbroken	d Lily works for her school newspaper; she decides what information should be included in each version.
5 edit	e When you know more words, you have more ways to explain your ideas.
6 electrocute	f When you say something surprising or unexpected, you can attract people's attention.