

UNIT 2: DIGITAL LIFE 5

A. LISTENING

1. You are going to hear part of a radio interview with a man called Simon, who is a usability expert. Click on the following box: and scroll to LISTENING 2:

24 How does Simon explain the meaning of usability? A It considers design from different points of view. B It focuses on the use of an object. C It focuses on the attractiveness of an object.	25 What does Simon say about the design of the traditional potato peeler? A People think it is too complicated. B It is not as easy to use as modern versions. C It is still popular.
26 What was the problem with the cash machine? A The instructions were difficult to read. B The instructions were in the wrong order. C There were too many instructions.	27 What area of usability is Simon no longer involved in? A household appliances B software C websites
28 What does Simon think is the main cause of poor web design? A Planning is carried out too quickly. B There are technical problems. C The design is too simple.	29 What does Simon say about most companies now? A They do not realise the importance of good design for websites. B They appreciate the need to keep their customers happy. C They offer training in usability.
30 According to Simon, what kind of people enter the field of usability? A computer programmers B people who have just finished university C people from other areas of work	

2. You will hear five short extracts in which people are talking about digital books. For questions 19-23, choose from the list A-H what each speaker says. Click on the following box: and scroll to LISTENING PART 3:

A I can see the words very clearly.	19 Speaker 1
B I only read digital books when I travel.	20 Speaker 2
C I can't always find what I want in digital format.	21 Speaker 3
D I wouldn't consider replacing all my paper books with digital books.	22 Speaker 4
E I always have a new digital book ready to read next.	23 Speaker 5
F I like the quality of the pictures.	
G I don't find digital books particularly convenient.	
H I appreciate all the extra features.	

B. READING

Read the article about 'smart homes', where many electrical devices are connected to the internet and can be controlled from smartphones.

Write a summary about the advantages of living in a smart home AND the problems that can be caused by the technology in smart homes. Your summary should be about 100 words long (and no more than 120 words long). You should use your own words as far as possible. You will receive up to 8 marks for the content of your summary, and up to 8 marks for the style and accuracy of your language.

Smart homes

If you own a television, you will probably have a remote control that allows you to turn the television on and off, change channels and adjust the volume from across the room. You may also have a remote control for your central heating or your air-conditioning system. Remote controls like these have been a common sight in many people's homes for a long time, but, in recent years, many more 'smart devices' have been developed. Now, with a smartphone and internet connection, it is possible to control a range of household appliances from wherever you are, either inside your home or even outside it. On the other hand, the cost of installing such systems is high, which is why they are still not a feature in every household.

Imagine you have walked to a station, 15 minutes from your home, and you are about to get on a train. It suddenly occurs to you that you didn't get around to closing the kitchen window. Rather than walk all the way back and miss your train, you can save a lot of time by using an app on your phone to check, and close it for you. So your home security is also improved.

With digital set-ups of this kind, your system won't work if the internet crashes. We all know how frustrating this can be. Also, advanced electronic devices are expensive to repair. But let's assume that everything is working; studies have shown that one of the top benefits of introducing smart systems into the home is that you save energy. Smart devices can help us to avoid making mistakes like

accidentally leaving our lights on for long periods of time, for example.

So, will most people's homes in the future be smart homes? That certainly seems likely; many newly built houses and apartments are fully equipped with smart technology, and many homeowners are gradually converting their older properties into smart homes.

Will different groups in the population be affected in different ways by the introduction of smart systems? Research has shown that having access to the type of technology used in smart homes allows elderly people, for example, to be more independent. While younger people might have less of a problem keeping on top of the housework or the gardening, these types of jobs can become more challenging as people get older. Smart devices can help them to continue to do these things themselves without having to rely on others. However, elderly people sometimes have difficulties dealing with change and learning how to operate smart devices may cause them anxiety. This is something that engineers and designers need to bear in mind.

Of course, one unfortunate consequence of all this new technology is that, with so many devices and appliances becoming linked to wider networks, personal information could become even more accessible to other people. This is an issue that we will have to deal with.
