

IS STUFF WINNING?

1 I another book today and have put it with a pile of unread books on my new table. There's no more space on the table, which also has on it digital , coffee cups, and some clothes I 5 need to put away in my bedroom. But my bedroom is also full of . I pick up my phone. My email inbox contains 243 unread emails. I've already three calls this morning.

2 I know that I want less stuff in my life, but at the 10 moment, the stuff is winning. I seem to spend all my time buying things and then them away, when really I'd like more time for family, friends, and . The good news is that now 15 there is an excellent website to help people like me, called The Minimalists. When Ryan Nicodemus and Joshua Millburn set up this website, they had 52 visitors in the first month. Two years later, the website has over two million visitors a month.

3 Nicodemus explains how it . He was working 20 between sixty and eighty hours a week and spending his free time buying more products to make himself feel better. One day, he to start working fewer hours and to get rid of all his stuff. After a while, he realized he was 25 much happier, and he wanted to share his ideas with other people. So he set up the website with Millburn to give to others about how to become "minimalists."¹ On the website, there are

30 blog posts and lots of practical ideas. One of these ideas is to play the thirty-day minimalism game. On day 1, you out, sell, recycle, or give away one object in your life. Then on day 2, two objects. On day 3, three objects.

35 In the same way that stuff can fill the space in our homes, some people think that there is a problem with having lots of stuff in our . Often people go online because they don't want to be doing nothing, so they keep their brains busy with activities. According to a 40 recent survey, most people born between 1980 and 2000 use their phones when they have nothing to do: 46% check social media, 43% play games, and a fifth do some online shopping.

45 In the same , some people said they were bored with their screens and online life. For example, 27% said they were of watching TV, and 14% were bored of social media. So perhaps we need to simplify our heads in 50 the same way Nicodemus and Millburn have simplified their homes. Spending more time away from our devices could be the first step this.

¹minimalist (n) /'mɪnɪməlɪst/ a person who uses a small number of things in their work and life

4 Read the article quickly. What is it mainly about? Choose the best option (a, b, or c).

- a Some people are buying too much stuff and need to spend less.
- b Some people are bored because they have nothing to do.
- c Some people are trying to have less stuff in their lives.

5 These sentences (a–e) are missing from the ends of the paragraphs in the article. Read the article again and match these sentences with the paragraphs (1–5).

- a All these people are interested in leading a "minimalist" life.
- b They buy more stuff in order to avoid getting bored.
- c Maybe one way to begin is by going offline for fifteen minutes a day and seeing if you feel better!
- d By the end of the month, you'll have thrown away lots of your stuff.
- e I also need to reply to a few text messages from work.

Critical thinking fact or opinion?

6 The sentences below (1–6) are from the article. Which sentences:

- a give facts?
- b give the author's opinion?
- c report other people's opinion?

- 1 My email inbox contains 243 unread emails.
- 2 The good news is that now there is an excellent website to help people like me.
- 3 When Ryan Nicodemus and Joshua Fields Millburn set up this website, they had 52 visitors in the first month.
- 4 Some people think that there is a problem with having lots of stuff in our heads.
- 5 Some people said they were bored with their screens and online life.
- 6 Spending more time away from our devices could be the first step toward this.