



House and home

You are going to read a review of a TV programme about homes of the future. For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

The homes of the future viewed from today

Mark Finchley reviews TV series *Tomorrow's Homes* Having just watched the whole of Channel 8's TV series *Tomorrow's Homes*, I've been wondering about how anyone can predict the future of domestic life. You'd imagine that if you knew what architects and technology companies were developing now to make life easier, more exciting and more beautiful, you'd have a pretty good idea of what to expect in tomorrow's homes. In reality, it's more complicated, and just as much about what we'll choose to hang on to from **today's** – the things that are 'future-proof'. In the 1950s, people thought that in the twenty-first century household tasks would be done by labour-saving devices or robots – with food pills for dinner. Yet people still wash up and cook, even though the technology exists that makes neither of these tasks necessary.



Tomorrow's Homes, however, dared to make predictions which it turned into reality using an average home belonging to a family called the Forseys. Four miles of cable were installed in the house so that all the electrics, from lights to the fridge, could be controlled via the internet, and various other devices and gadgets were introduced in addition to this. The family were then filmed as they got used to their new home life. Programme presenter Harry Thwaites is also a consultant who spends his work life imagining the future, so testing out his

ideas for the programme was a fascinating experiment for him. His approach was to use technology that was not totally brand new, but had only recently become more affordable. CCTV cameras for security have been around for years, for example, but they are no longer only an option for the mega-rich.

The Forsey family consists of a husband and wife with four children and two grandchildren. They appear to be very natural and ordinary on the programme, and it was always interesting to see how they reacted to the technology they were testing. One example that **sticks** in the mind is when Janine, the mother, enters her reconstructed, all-white home (after successfully unlocking her new front door by using her thumb print as a key), and she immediately bursts into tears – quite understandably it has to be said. A short while later, her husband Ben gets locked out because the skin on his thumb is too rough. As the series progresses, however, they slowly come to accept the technology, and even start to believe it could have some value in their lives.

I was keen to see during the show if anything emerged as potentially future-proof, and there were some great examples. To help Janine deal with various worries, she was provided with a mind-controlled relaxation tool. This was a kind of headband connected to a DVD, which, incredibly, she could control with her thoughts. When she relaxed mentally, she made an image of the sun go down, as it would at night, on the DVD. When she had tried the gadget and achieved the sun set, she was asked how effective the gadget had been. Janine commented, 'Nothing can compare to a nice cup of tea and a good soap opera!'

1. The writer makes the point in the first paragraph that predicting how homes will be in the future
 - A requires detailed study of architectural trends.
 - B is impossible if you only look at new developments.
 - C has been very difficult until now.
 - D is made easier by programmes and articles about them in the media.
2. What does 'today's' refer to in the first paragraph?
 - A current ideas
 - B the present reality
 - C the homes we currently live in
 - D modern architecture
3. According to the second paragraph, the technology installed in the Forseys' house
 - A was chosen to match the specific needs of the family.
 - B was previously only used by a limited section of the population.
 - C was still too expensive for anybody except the wealthiest.
 - D was tried out by experts before the family used it.
4. What does 'sticks' mean in the third paragraph?
 - A blocks something
 - B remains there
 - C corrects an error
 - D highlights something
5. According to the third paragraph, how did the family members react to the new technology?
 - A Their attitude towards it became increasingly positive.
 - B Some of them adjusted more quickly to it than others.
 - C The parents struggled with it throughout the series.
 - D Some of their responses to it were surprising.
6. How did Janine feel about the mind-controlled relaxation tool?
 - A She was amazed at what it was capable of.
 - B She thought it would work if used with other things.
 - C She found it totally useless.
 - D She preferred more traditional methods of relaxation.