

9 High-Tech World

Reading

Read the text and choose the answer (a, b, c or d) which fits best according to the text.

The cost of high-tech teens

For Julie Westbrook, the final straw was the £280 her 15-year-old daughter Ruby spent on downloading music and horoscopes onto her mobile phone. For Simon Evans, it was a mobile phone bill totalling £370 for his teenage daughter's text messages. Both parents were absolutely furious that their children had run up such massive bills.

'When I was a teenager and wanted to be accepted by others, being cool meant wearing the right clothes and trainers and listening to the right music. You didn't need to spend a fortune to be cool,' says Julie. 'Nowadays though, teens seem to want to impress each other with their mobile phones, video games, computers and all sorts of other gadgets,' she adds.

These days, the cost of being cool has skyrocketed and one of the main expenses seems to be mobile phones. Teens want mobile phones in order to talk to and text their friends. Parents usually end up having to pay high mobile phone bills with charges for hundreds of minutes of calls and thousands of text messages. And as if that wasn't bad enough, teens now want mobile phones with access to the Internet. Once they get them, they start purchasing applications, known as 'apps' for short, for their phones. What they don't realise is the high cost of this new technology.

'It's very expensive to have access to the World Wide Web from a mobile phone,' Julie says. 'That wasn't explained to me when I was choosing a mobile phone plan for my daughter. She downloaded four songs and those four songs cost me nearly £100. I was so upset that I cancelled the service as soon as the contract was finished.' But that wasn't the end of it for Julie.

The next mobile phone company offered my daughter 200 minutes and unlimited texts for £19.99 a month, which seemed fair. I thought the problem had been solved, but then a bill came with another £80 in charges.



Ruby had texted a code to get horoscopes sent to her and had been charged extra. I couldn't believe it!

Julie says she hadn't realised what was involved in getting a mobile phone, or that it was going to be so complicated. She's angry with the phone companies, too, for not explaining things clearly to her. 'Don't they understand that most parents have no clue about the technologies available for mobile phones?'

Simon Evans and his wife hit the roof when they got a £370 phone bill for their daughter's extra minutes and texts. 'Lydia had sent over 4,000 text messages and spent around 20 hours on her mobile in one month,' Simon says. 'If you do the maths, you'll see that's over 130 text messages and 40 minutes of talk time a day!'

Fortunately, Julie and Simon both found ways to control their teens' phone use. Julie eventually got a plan that allowed her to log in to an Internet account and check how much the phone was being used. Simon has limited how much his daughter can use the phone by getting her a card plan. When she runs out of minutes, that's it. She has to buy another card with her own pocket money.

'It's taught her the value of money,' says Simon. 'But she's also learnt something far more important – you don't need to have the latest high-tech gadgets to have value as a person.'

- 1 What had Julie Westbrook's daughter done?
 - a cancelled her phone plan
 - b texted her friends too much
 - c spent a lot of money buying a new phone
 - d spent £280 on extra services for her phone
- 2 What does the writer think about teenagers today?
 - a They don't care if they're cool or not.
 - b It's important they have the newest technology.
 - c Their clothes are very expensive.
 - d They know how to be responsible with money.
- 3 What is Julie Westbrook's main complaint?
 - a She wasn't given enough information.
 - b She knows too much about mobile phones.
 - c Her daughter doesn't listen to her.
 - d She doesn't want her daughter to have a phone.
- 4 In the end, what did Simon Evans do?
 - a He bought his daughter a new phone.
 - b He went online to check her phone use.
 - c He made his daughter pay for part of her phone use.
 - d He stopped giving her pocket money.
- 5 What does the final paragraph suggest?
 - a Gadgets are expensive.
 - b Being trendy isn't the most important thing in life.
 - c Money has no value.
 - d We don't need gadgets.