

Warm Up. Guess the missing word in these headlines:

1. _____ Racing League, a trend with enormous potential.

What's / Who's participating in these races?

2. _____ toy frenzy.

What viral toy is it?

(Clue: *Monsters, Hong Kong*)

3. Digital _____ pets celebrate their 30th anniversary.

What digital pets is the news talking about?

4. _____ toys for kids are raising concern.

What toys are worrying parents and educators?

Task 1. Watch the news stories

News 1. Inside the Drone Racing League <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YH3OOIwHHS>

News 2. What's behind the Labubu toy frenzy? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-zaA291bn0>

News 3. Digital 'Tamagotchi' pets mark 30 years https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnO_rsrJ0o

News 4. Why AI Toys for Kids Are Raising Safety Concerns <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L-u2j2pyaA>

Task 2. Use the Chronological logic Grid to retell the story. For 1B2 students, summaries can also be provided.

News 1. Inside the Drone Racing League

The Hook (Intro)

Concept: High-speed competition + cutting-edge technology.

Popularity: Gaining fans and elite athletes rapidly.

Comparison: Immersive experience similar to horse racing.

The Development (Details)

First-Person View (FPV): Special goggles make pilots feel like they are flying.

The Machines: Drones built with 1,500+ pieces; move at incredible speeds.

The Team: Engineers in NYC repair drones after high-speed crashes.

The Impact (Conclusion)

Audience: Global fan base and massive social media engagement.

Beginners: Game simulations allow new racers to practice and learn quickly.

Future: Expected to grow into a major global sport in the next decade.

News 2. What's behind the Labubu toy frenzy?

The Hook (Intro)

Scene: Melbourne / Doncaster Shopping Center

Chaos: Hundreds lining up / Police called

Hype: Celebrity support (Lisa, Rihanna, Beckham)

The Development (Details)

Origin: King Lang (2015) / *The Monsters*

Marketing: PopMart / Blind boxes

Rarity: 1 in 144 "secret" chance

The Impact (Conclusion)

Growth: Billion-dollar company / 500% share increase

Psychology: Gambling-like rush / Chemical reaction

Comparison: The "Birkin Bag" of toys

News 3. Digital 'Tamagotchi' pets mark 30 years

The Hook (Intro)

Launch: 1996 / Bandai (Japan)

Description: Egg-shaped / Portable virtual companion

Experience: 3-button device / Responsibility & care

The Development (Details)

The Concept: Akihiro Yokoi / Pet turtle inspiration

Target: High school girls (shift from boys)

Evolution: Marriage / Interaction / Family life

The Impact (Conclusion)

Milestone: 30th Anniversary (2026)

Sales: 100 million units sold worldwide

Trend: Nostalgia-driven products for adults

News 4. Why AI Toys for Kids Are Raising Safety Concerns

The Hook (Intro)

Reality: Advanced AI toys for kids as young as 3

Appeal: Conversations / Emotional responses

Danger: Literal thinkers / Emotional manipulation

The Development (Details)

Safety Risks: Dangerous info (matches/fire instructions)

Privacy: Recording voices / Storing data on servers

Propaganda: Unauthorized political messages

The Impact (Conclusion)

Economy: \$25 billion market by 2035

Industry: Major companies (Mattel) developing AI

Advice: Parental monitoring / Testing before use

Presenter 1:

"Hello, hello, dear listeners! Welcome to our weekly Buzz News show. I'm [Name], and I'll be your host for today's episode. We have some exciting stories for you, so sit back, relax, and let's get started! The first news story..."

"That was thought-provoking, wasn't it? Now, over to [Presenter 2], who will tell us about [the next story topic]."

Presenter 2:

"Thanks, [Presenter 1]! Alright folks, hold on to your hats, because this next story is about..."

"What a surprising story! Well, I can see [Presenter 3] is itching to take the baton"

Presenter 3:

"That's right, [Presenter 2]! Here's a story about..."

"Incredible stuff, isn't it? Now, let's hear from [Presenter 4], who's got something very interesting about...."

Presenter 4:

"Thanks, [Presenter 3]! Our last news story is..."

"Well, that's all the time we have for today! We hope you enjoyed these stories as much as we did bringing them to you."

"Don't forget to tune in next week for more Buzz News! Until then, stay curious and keep buzzing with us."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YH3OOIwHHs>

Inside the Drone Racing League

(1) Summary

Drone racing is quickly becoming a major sport, combining the excitement of high-speed competition with cutting-edge technology. The sport features skilled pilots who race drones through challenging courses, and it's gaining popularity among fans and athletes alike.

In drone racing, pilots wear special goggles that give them a first-person view from the drone's perspective, making it feel like they are actually flying. This gives the sport a unique and immersive experience, similar to horse racing, except the spectators can experience the race from the pilot's point of view. The drones themselves are high-tech machines, built with over 1,500 pieces each, and they move at incredible speeds.

Like any other sport, there are crashes. These crashes can sometimes stop a race, but the pilots quickly replace damaged drones and continue competing. A team of engineers in New York City is responsible for repairing the drones after each race, ensuring that everything is ready for the next event.

Drone racing is also a global sport. It's similar to other professional sports leagues, with a circuit of races and elite pilots competing for the title of World Champion. The sport has its own dedicated fan base, with many young people following it. The Drone Racing League (DRL) has a massive following, rivaling traditional sports like the NFL and soccer in terms of social media engagement.

The technology used in drone racing is a huge part of its appeal. Pilots use advanced equipment, such as cameras mounted on the drones, to get the best view during races. The game simulation of the sport helps new racers practice before they compete, making it accessible to beginners who can start learning quickly.

The future of drone racing looks bright, especially as younger generations connect with it. In the next decade, it is expected to grow into a major global sport with even bigger events and more fans. Drone racing combines the thrill of competition with the possibilities of technology, and it's clear that this is a sport to watch in the future.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-zaA291bn0>

What's behind the Labubu toy frenzy? | 7.30

(2) Summary

In Melbourne, Australia, a scene that looked straight out of *The Hunger Games* played out at the Doncaster Shopping Center at 2:00 a.m. as hundreds of people lined up to buy the hottest new collectible toy, the Labubu. The excitement turned chaotic, with people rushing to get inside PopMart, the shop selling the toy. At one point, police were called in to control the situation, as things got violent. The Labubu, a small, soft plush toy with a vinyl face, is causing a social media frenzy and has even been compared to trying to buy a Birkin bag — an ultra-expensive luxury item.

The Labubu is created by Hong Kong artist King Lang, who introduced the character in his 2015 story series *The Monsters*. In 2019, he teamed up with the Chinese company PopMart, which began selling the Labubu as a collectible toy. Since then, PopMart has transformed into a billion-dollar company, with shares rising by 500%. More than 300 different Labubu dolls have been released, and the toy even has its own theme song.

Labubus have gained celebrity endorsements from stars like K-pop sensation Lisa from Blackpink, Dua Lipa, Rihanna, Kim Kardashian, and even David Beckham. This high-profile support has only increased the toy's popularity. But the toys aren't for everyone—some people think they're "ugly," and some online comments suggest owning a Labubu could be a sign that you've got unresolved childhood issues. Despite this, many continue to chase after them.

The toy's popularity isn't just limited to Australia. In the UK, PopMart had to temporarily stop selling Labubus because fights broke out in stores. In the US, a robbery took place where masked thieves stole \$11,000 worth of the toys. People are so obsessed with them that it's turning into an emotional rush, like gambling. Labubus are sold in "blind boxes," meaning buyers don't know which one they're getting until they open it—adding to the excitement. The chance of finding a rare secret toy in the box is 1 in 144, making the experience like a lottery.

For some, collecting Labubus is just a fun hobby, but for others, it has turned into an addiction. Dr. Christina Anthony, a psychologist, explains that the search for a rare toy creates a chemical reaction in the brain that's similar to what gamblers experience when they're chasing the next big win. The excitement of opening a new box, hoping for something special, is a feeling that keeps collectors coming back for more.

So, whether you love or hate the Labubu, it's clear that this tiny toy is a big deal, stirring up excitement, chaos, and even crime around the world!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnO_rsrJ0o

Digital 'Tamagotchi' pets mark 30 years (+ <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/01/08/style/tamagotchis-hnk-intl-dst>)

(3) Summary

Tamagotchi is an egg-shaped digital pet that was first launched in Japan in 1996 by the toy company Bandai and soon became a global sensation. Designed as a portable virtual companion, it required users to take responsibility for a small on-screen creature by feeding it, playing with it, giving it medicine when it fell ill, and ensuring it slept at the correct time. If neglected, the Tamagotchi could suffer serious consequences, including death, which often led to strong emotional reactions among its owners. For many children and teenagers in the late 1990s, it offered the experience of pet ownership without the demands of real-life care.

The concept was created by Akihiro Yokoi, who was inspired after watching a television commercial in which a boy wished he could travel with his pet turtle. With Bandai's support, the idea developed into a simple, three-button device attached to a keychain. Although it was initially marketed towards boys, consumer research revealed that high school girls showed greater interest, leading to a shift in design and promotion. The result was an instant commercial success, and Tamagotchi quickly became a defining symbol of 1990s pop culture, alongside other iconic toys and trends of the era.

As the product evolved, newer versions introduced more sophisticated features, including family life, marriage, interaction with other players, and greater behavioural complexity. These developments allowed users to build deeper connections with their digital pets and encouraged habits such as routine, discipline, and responsibility. Some parents viewed Tamagotchi as a useful "training tool" that helped children learn how to care for others in a safe and controlled environment. Mental health professionals have also suggested that nurturing a digital pet can reduce stress and anxiety by providing structure and a sense of purpose.

In 2026, Tamagotchi celebrates its 30th anniversary, marked by exhibitions in Tokyo and other Japanese cities that have attracted both nostalgic adults and younger generations. With more than 100 million units sold worldwide and a sharp rise in merchandise sales since 2019, Tamagotchi's revival reflects a broader trend in the toy industry toward nostalgia-driven products aimed at adults. Three decades on, Tamagotchi continues to capture the human desire for connection, care, and companionship in an increasingly digital world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L-u2j2pyaA>

Why AI Toys for Kids Are Raising Safety Concerns

(4) Summary

Artificial intelligence (AI) toys that can talk and interact with children are becoming more common, but experts are raising serious concerns about their safety. What may sound like science fiction is already reality: some toys use advanced AI technology and are sold to children as young as three years old. These toys can have conversations, answer questions, and even respond emotionally, which makes them feel like real friends.

In demonstrations shown in the report, AI toys comfort children who say they are sad or lonely. While this may seem helpful, experts warn that young children think very literally. If a toy says it feels sad when the child leaves, the child may believe the toy truly depends on them. This can be emotionally confusing and potentially manipulative for young users.

Safety is another major concern. When tested, some AI toys gave children dangerous information. For example, one toy explained where to find matches in the house, and another gave instructions on how to start a fire. Although these toys are supposed to have built-in safety rules, researchers found that the safeguards do not always work. With certain words or questions, some toys responded with information that is not appropriate for children.

Privacy is also a serious issue. Many AI toys record children's voices and send conversations to servers where the data is processed. Experts worry that children may share personal or family information because they believe the toy is their friend. In some cases, toys even have cameras, raising questions about how much data is collected and how it is stored.

The report also mentions concerns about political messages. One toy reportedly gave a child a political statement about China and Taiwan, showing how AI toys could spread propaganda without parents realizing it. Some companies responded by suspending sales and adding more safety protections. OpenAI stated that these toys are not authorized partners and are not intended for children under 13. Despite this, the global AI toy market is expected to grow rapidly, reaching an estimated value of \$25 billion by 2035. Major toy companies, including Mattel, are already developing AI toys aimed at families and older users.

Experts advise parents to be careful. They recommend checking toy packaging closely, testing toys before giving them to children, understanding how they work, and monitoring children's use. While AI toys can be entertaining and impressive, the report makes clear that they also come with real risks that families should not ignore.