

You may think the idea of getting entertainment on your telephone is new, but it is not. Here is a brief history of the telephone that may surprise you.

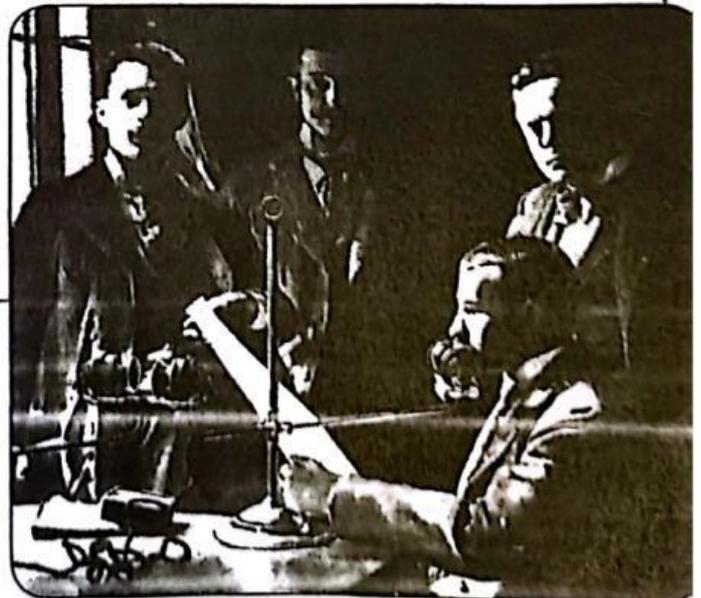
People first began to use telephones in their homes in the 1880s. At that time, telephones were expensive items and only the wealthy could afford them. Around the same time, companies in Europe and the U.S. began to offer customers the opportunity to listen to music, live theater and news over the telephone.

One of the most famous telephone companies at that time was Telefon Hirmondo in Hungary. This company offered the best entertainment service. In 1893, they began to offer the latest news, weather reports, plays, concerts and even language lessons over the telephone. The service was offered in many public places and to businesses at a price that many people could afford.

A year later, another company, Electrophone, opened a broadcasting service in London. For £5 a year, which was a lot of money then, customers could listen to plays and concerts over the telephone. They were given two receivers\*, so two people could listen to the broadcasts at the same time. To listen to a performance, customers called the company and said which performance they wanted to hear. Then Electrophone connected them to the theater. While listening to a performance, customers were unable to receive calls. However, if there was an emergency call, the operator would interrupt the performance to put the call through.

In the beginning, Electrophone's service was expensive and the quality of the broadcast was poor, but its popularity grew. By 1908, Electrophone was broadcasting from about 30 theaters. During World War I (1914-1918), Electrophone offered their service for free to wounded\* soldiers in hospitals. However, as radio became popular in the 1920s, the public preferred the free broadcasts and finally, in 1925, Electrophone stopped broadcasting.

Only 70 years later, with the arrival of the Internet, did people begin to receive news and entertainment on telephones once again.



\*receivers שפופרות, מקלטים / جهازي استقبال

\*wounded פצועים / جرحى

# Reading Comprehension

## Getting the Facts

- 1 Why didn't everyone have a telephone in the 1880s? (lines 1-6)  
.....
- 2 Listening to music on telephones first became possible in ... . (lines 7-11)
  - a. 2000
  - b. 1893
  - c. 1925
  - d. 1908
- 3 List two services Telefon Hirmondo offered. (lines 7-11)
  1. ....
  2. ....
- 4 1. Circle the correct answer, True or False. (lines 7-11)  
Only the wealthy could afford Telefon Hirmondo's entertainment service.  
TRUE / FALSE  
2. Copy the words from the text that helped you answer.  
.....
- 5 Complete the sentence. (lines 12-19)  
Customers were given two receivers so .....
- 6 Why did the operator sometimes interrupt an Electrophone customer?  
(lines 12-19)  
.....
- 7 What did Electrophone do for soldiers during World War I? (lines 20-25)  
.....
- 8 Complete the sentence. (lines 20-25)  
Electrophone's service became less popular in the 1920s because .....

## Putting It Together

- 9 How are today's phone services similar to phone services in the past?  
.....  
.....

## Personal Response

- 10 Besides talking, what else can you do on your cellphone?  
.....