

6 LISTENING

- a **iChecker** Listen to five speakers talking about a time when they had an argument with someone. Where did the arguments start?

- 1 In the _____.
- 2 In the _____.
- 3 In the _____.
- 4 In the _____.
- 5 At _____.

- b Listen again and write the number of the speaker in each box.

The argument finished when somebody...

- A ☐ confirmed who was right.
B ☐ realized they had forgotten something.
C ☐ said something unrelated to the conversation.
D ☐ made a terrible mess.
E ☐ physically removed one of the people involved.
- c Listen again with the audioscript on p.74 and try to guess the meaning of any words that you don't know. Then check in your dictionary.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Learn these words and phrases.

avoid confrontation /ə'vɔɪd kɒnfrən'teɪʃn/

back up (an argument) /bæk ʌp/

bother (v) /'bɒðə/

bring up (a topic of conversation) /brɪŋ ʌp/

blame (sb for doing sth) /bleɪm/

change the subject /tʃeɪndʒ ðə 'sʌbdʒɪkt/

insult (sb) /ɪn'sʌlt/

insult (n) /'ɪnsʌlt/

threaten /'θreɪn/

swear word /'swɛə wɜːd/

2 READING

a Read the text quickly and answer the questions.

- 1 What is the problem with online arguments?
- 2 What does Professor Markman think is the solution?

Internet rage: a new trend?

Until now, people have usually carried out their arguments face-to-face. A disagreement occurs and each side wants to make his or her views known. But the internet has changed all this. Today, more and more people are **getting involved in** arguments online.

Many of these take place in the comments section following on from articles on news websites. The tone of some of the posts on these **threads** can be extremely aggressive. So why is everyone so angry on the internet?

Art Markman, a professor of psychology at the University of Texas, has an explanation for this. Firstly, he points out that the people who post these comments are anonymous. Nobody knows their real name or who they are, which means that they do not have to explain their actions. Secondly, the commenter and the person who is the **target** of their anger are not actually in the same room. The distance between them makes the commenter lose his inhibitions and so he becomes more **offensive**. Thirdly, it is much easier to be **nasty** in writing than in speech, according to Professor Markman.

Although Professor Markman believes in self-expression, he regards online arguments as a complete waste of time. He says that the whole point of an argument is to try to persuade someone else to agree with you. In order to do this, the people involved have to listen to each other. This sort of interaction is **lacking** on the internet, says Professor Markman. Exchanges on comment threads do not happen in real time and so people have longer to focus on their opinion and write lengthy monologues to justify themselves. In the process, they become even more convinced that they are right, and they stop listening to other people. In the end, there is a complete absence of communication and the only thing they have achieved is to work themselves up into **a rage**.

So, what is the solution? Professor Markman does not think that comment threads should be banned, but he does think that controls should be stricter. In his view, it is the news outlets themselves who should be responsible for the content of the thread. 'If, on a website, comments are left up that are making personal attacks in the nastiest way, you're sending the message that this is acceptable human behaviour', he says. Professor Markman would like site administrators to **remove** the offending remarks from the comment thread. 'Having a conversation with someone you don't agree with is a skill,' he says. Unfortunately, it seems to be a skill that some commenters are not familiar with.



b Read the text again and choose the right answers.

- 1 Arguments on the internet occur most frequently when someone...
 - a expresses an opinion in the wrong way.
 - b has a negative opinion about a website.
 - c disagrees with a comment about an article.
- 2 According to Professor Markman, arguments online are more aggressive than face-to-face arguments because the commenter...
 - a lives in a different town or country.
 - b doesn't disclose their identity.
 - c is experienced in commenting on articles.
- 3 Professor Markman thinks that online arguments have no value because people tend to...
 - a spend too long reading other people's views.
 - b make too many mistakes in their comments.
 - c ignore other people's opinions.
- 4 In Professor Markman's view, an online argument usually results in the participants...
 - a feeling angry.
 - b avoiding a particular website.
 - c writing fewer comments in the future.
- 5 Professor Markman believes that news websites should...
 - a stop allowing people to comment on their articles.
 - b monitor comment threads more carefully.
 - c prohibit certain people from posting comments.

c Look at the highlighted words and phrases in the text and try to work out their meaning. Then use them to complete the sentences.

- 1 She had a particularly nasty customer last week, who made her cry.
- 2 I was the _____ of a lot of criticism after the article I wrote last week.
- 3 Since he retired, he has been _____ local politics.
- 4 When he was a child he used to get into a _____ when he didn't get what he wanted.
- 5 I found your comment about my friend's appearance extremely _____.
- 6 The police will _____ any vehicles which are illegally parked.
- 7 I feel there is something _____ in my life.
- 8 Internet _____ are often dominated by a small number of angry people.