

Mobile phones have transformed the way we communicate

Level 1 • Elementary

1 Warmer

Answer these questions and then talk about your answers in class.

Do you have a mobile phone?

Did you have a mobile phone five / 10 / 15 years ago?

Do you know anyone between the ages of 18 and 60 who does not have a mobile phone?

How many mobile phones are there in your home?

2 Key words

Write the words from the article into the gaps. The paragraph numbers will help you choose the right words.

market

rival

potential

masts

impact

1. a person, team or business that competes with another _____ (para 2)
2. _____ are tall metal structures used for sending radio and television and telephone signals. (para 3)
3. the possibility to develop or make something bigger and better in the future _____ (para 3)
4. _____ is another word for *effect* or *influence*. (para 3)
5. the total number of people willing to buy a particular product _____ (para 4)

subsidizing

tariff

itemized billing

portable

boom

6. Something that is _____ is easy to carry or move, so that you can use it in different places. (para 4)
7. A _____ is a sudden increase in the popularity of something. (para 6)
8. paying some of the cost of goods or services so that they can be sold to other people at a lower price _____ (para 7)
9. the prices charged for supplying gas or electricity or for providing a telephone service _____ (para 7)
10. a type of phone bill that gives the details of every individual call made from that phone _____ (para 8)

persuade

meters

interchangeable covers

iconic

external aerial

11. very famous and well known, and believed to represent a particular idea _____ (para 10)
12. a long thin piece of metal used to receive signals placed on the outside of a phone _____ (para 10)
13. things that you put over your phone in order to protect it; these ones can be changed for different ones so that the phone has a different look _____ (para 10)
14. to make someone do something by giving them reasons why they should _____ (para 11)
15. pieces of equipment which measure how much of something such as gas, electricity or water you have used _____ (para 12)

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In just 25 years, the mobile phone has transformed the way we communicate

Richard Wray

Friday 1 January 2010

- 1 On New Year's Day, 1985, Michael Harrison phoned his father Sir Ernest to wish him a happy new year. Sir Ernest was chairman of Racal Electronics, the owner of Vodafone, and his son was making the first-ever mobile phone call in the UK.
- 2 Later that morning, comedian Ernie Wise made a very public mobile phone call from St Katherine's Dock, in east London, to announce that Vodafone was now open for business. A few days later, its only rival, Cellnet, owned by British Telecom (BT) and Securicor, was also open for business.
- 3 At that time, mobile phones weighed almost a kilogram, cost several thousand pounds and, in some cases, you could only talk for a total of 20 minutes. Vodafone had just 12 masts in and around London, while Cellnet started with just one single mast. Neither company had any idea of the huge potential of wireless communication and the dramatic impact that mobile phones would have over the next 25 years.
- 4 "We thought there would only be about a million ever sold and we would get about 35% of the market. BT thought there would be about half a million and they would get about 80% of the market," remembers Sir Christopher Gent, former Vodafone chief executive. "In the first year, we sold about 15,000 to 20,000 phones. The portable Motorola was about £3,000 but most of the phones we sold were car phones from companies such as Panasonic and Nokia."
- 5 Hardly anyone believed there would come a day when mobile phones were so popular that there would be more phones in the UK than there are people. But in 1999 one mobile phone was sold in the UK every four seconds, and by 2004 there were more mobile phones in the UK than people.
- 6 The boom was a result of more and more competition – which pushed prices down and changed the way that mobiles were sold – and the move to digital technology.
- 7 In 1986 BT changed the way that mobile phones were sold in the UK. "We started subsidizing handsets to make the price of the phones cheaper," Sir Christopher recalls. Ever since then, the mobile phone networks have subsidized the price of a phone. Cellnet also changed its prices: it reduced its monthly charge and introduced local call tariffs.
- 8 Because they had more competition, companies cut prices to attract more customers. Orange introduced per second and itemized billing which helped to give it a strong position in the market. In 1999 Virgin Mobile had a big success with the new idea of pre-pay phones.
- 9 The way that handsets themselves were marketed was also changing. Nokia, a company from Finland, made the step from phones as technology to phones as fashion items with the Nokia 3210.
- 10 The Nokia 3210 is iconic because it is the first phone that did not have an external aerial. In the late 1990s Nokia realized that the mobile phone was a fashion item: so it offered interchangeable covers which allowed people to personalize their phones.
- 11 The mobile phone industry has spent the last few years trying to persuade people to do more with their phones than just call and text. This resulted in the fight between the iPhone and its touch screen rivals – including Google's new Nexus One.
- 12 John Cunliffe, chief technology officer at Ericsson in north-west Europe, believes the future for mobile telephony will come from connecting machines to wireless networks. Everything from company vehicles and smart electric and water meters to people's fridge freezers will one day be able to communicate.
- 13 "What we have at the moment is 4.5 billion handsets worldwide, Ericsson believes that number will be 50 billion by 2020," he says. "This is all about machine-to-machine communication, touching all aspects of our lives."

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First published in *The Guardian*, 01/01/10

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3 Comprehension: Find the information

Join the sentence halves to summarize the article.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. The first-ever mobile phone call in the UK ... | a. ... itemized billing and pre-pay phones in the UK. |
| 2. Vodafone and Cellnet were the first two ... | b. ... was made in 1985. |
| 3. In 1985 a portable handset ... | c. ... machine-to-machine communication. |
| 4. In 1999 one mobile phone was sold ... | d. ... than people in the UK. |
| 5. There are now more mobile phones ... | e. ... external aerial made Nokia's 3210 handset a fashion item. |
| 6. Digital technology and increased competition ... | f. ... cost around £3,000. |
| 7. Interchangeable covers and not having an ... | g. ... to persuade people to do more with their phones than just call and text. |
| 8. Providers Orange and Virgin introduced ... | h. ... has helped the mobile phone to become available to everyone. |
| 9. The mobile phone industry has been trying ... | i. ... mobile phone providers in the UK. |
| 10. The future of the mobile phone lies in ... | j. ... in the UK every four seconds. |

4 Language: Collocations

1. Match the words in mobile phone A with the words in mobile phone B to make common word pairs from the article.

A

1. open for
2. wireless
3. dramatic
4. monthly
5. pre-pay
6. fashion
7. company

B

- a. charge
- b. impact
- c. phones
- d. vehicles
- e. business
- f. communication
- g. item

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2. Check your answers by finding the word pairs in the article.

3. Now use some of the collocations to fill the gaps in these sentences.

- The little black dress is a famous _____.
- Some people have _____ to use in an emergency.
- Many people pay a _____ for digital television.
- Some big firms have _____ which their employees can use when they need to travel on business.
- Global warming has had a _____ on the ice in the Arctic.

5 Discussion

Compare the mobile phone you have now to the very first one you had. First write notes into the table and then talk about your phones with other people in your class.

	my current mobile phone	my first mobile phone
features (e.g. camera, radio, etc.)		
design (e.g. shape, weight, colour, etc.)		
cost (e.g. cost of handset, costs of phone calls, etc.)		

6 Webquest

Search the Internet for information about Google's Nexus One phone and answer these questions:

- When was it launched?
- What can you do with it?
- What does it look like?
- Is it already available in your country?
- If so, how much does it cost?
- Would you buy one?

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KEY

2 Key words

1. rival
2. Masts
3. potential
4. Impact
5. market
6. portable
7. boom
8. subsidizing
9. tariff
10. itemized billing
11. iconic
12. external aerial
13. interchangeable covers
14. persuade
15. meters

3 Comprehension: Find the information

1. b
2. i
3. f
4. j
5. d
6. h
7. e
8. a
9. g
10. c

4 Language: Collocations

- 1.
1. e
2. f
3. b
4. a
5. c
6. g
7. d
- 3.
- a. fashion item.
- b. pre-pay phones
- c. monthly charge
- d. company vehicles
- e. dramatic impact

Teacher's notes

If your students own smart phones or iPods they may be interested to know that there are many free downloads or 'apps' available which will help them learn and revise English via their handsets. These include podcasts, vocabulary trainers, language games and dictionaries. One way to find the latest is by going to www.apple.com and to the iTunes store and typing in words such as 'English' or 'vocabulary trainer' or 'dictionary'.