

1. Family Issues

 Listening ComprehensionTrack 7. 

Some Risks of Living Together

Tracy O'Leary: Taking the life of cohabitation for a test drive before committing to a marriage has become enormously popular. And yet, with the failure of so many cohabiting relationships, and the swollen divorce rates of couples who cohabit before marriage, such a widespread cultural practice deserves critical examination. What's so bad about living together?

Kevin Livingstone: Couples who live together are gambling and losing in 85 percent of the cases. Many believe the myth that they are in a 'trial marriage.' Actually it is more like a 'trial divorce,' in which more than eight out of ten couples will break up either before the wedding or afterwards in divorce. First, about 45 percent of those who begin cohabiting, do not marry. Those who undergo 'premarital divorce' often discover it is as painful as the real thing. Another 5-10 percent continue living together and do not marry. These two trends are the major reason the marriage rate has dropped 50 percent since the 1970s. Couples who cohabit are likely to find that it is a kind of a substitute for the real thing, marriage. Those who get married after living together are 50 percent more likely to divorce than those who remain separate before the wedding.

Tracy O'Leary: Isn't cohabitation practical sometimes?

Kevin Livingstone: No, never. I've recently read an interesting study that reports that even a month's cohabitation decreases the quality of the couple's relationship. Cameras were placed in living rooms, which recorded that couples who began their relationship living together were more negative when they discussed an issue, more demeaning, more frivolous, more likely to deride the other person. Couples who had never cohabited, by contrast, had much more respect for one another, and settled issues more amicably. Thus, negative patterns of behaviour learned in cohabitation came into the marriages and destroyed a higher percentage of them.

Tracy O'Leary: You recommend that cohabitating couples move out before they get married. Is that ever realistic? Or do couples just laugh at the suggestion?

Kevin Livingstone: Given the fact that cohabitating couples are 50 percent more likely to divorce than those who remained apart, there is no more important step that could increase the couple's odds of a lifelong marriage than separating before the wedding. Is it practical? I strongly think so. Is it likely? No. Not without a supportive couple that mentors the premarital couple and makes arguments based on data and psychology that is persuasive. We have persuaded some couples to separate, and others to at least move into separate bedrooms until the wedding. That discipline increases each person's self-respect and respect for their partner. We tell the story of a couple who took this step in our new book, *Some Risks of Living Together*.

Tracy O'Leary: Is there a generation gap in behaviours related to parenthood and cohabitation?

Kevin Livingstone: Definitely. Younger adults tend to worry less about the stigma attached to having a child or living together without being married. Unwed mothers in the past looked very different from their counterparts today. In the past, in about two-thirds of all births to unmarried women, the mother was truly single and there was no man in the picture. Now, about half the women who have a child out of wedlock are living with a man at the birth. Birthrates for unmarried women

have been going up for people in their 30s and probably in their 40s as well, while they've been going down for teenagers.

Tracy O'Leary: And has the public's opinion changed concerning unwed mothers?

Kevin Livingstone: Well, there is no singular *public opinion* on these matters, but, even though single motherhood is more common than in the past, some studies have also found that public opinion about unmarried childbearing remains strongly negative.

Tracy O'Leary: I see. Some studies show that cohabiting couples with the best economic prospects are the ones who get married.

Kevin Livingstone: Actually, we've found just the opposite. Men who earn the most are least likely to marry, but also less likely to break up with their partners. Another surprise was the couples who were the most alike – those who shared religions, were near the same age, and had similar levels of education – were not more likely to marry than couples with significant differences in background. Although there is a belief that couples who are more alike will have more stable relationships, it doesn't seem to be the case. Moreover, our results indicate that couples who use cohabitation as a trial period to test compatibility are far less likely to marry than couples who agree that there are definite marriage plans and a specific wedding date.

Tracy O'Leary: Well, thank you for sharing all these findings of yours with us. I'm sure that we can find much more surprising information in your book.

2. The Individual

Listening Comprehension

Track 14. 

Young Ladies Consuming Alcohol

Very often young ladies in institutes of higher education may be drinking to excess to impress or charm their counterparts of the opposite sex. However, a new study suggests that college guys actually are not quite so impressed when women become their drinking buddies.

The new study discovered that despite the fact that, traditionally, men tend to consume alcohol more than women, an overwhelming majority of women overestimated the amount of alcohol a typical guy would appreciate his female friend to drink. According to the lead author of the study, Jim Carpenter, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at Cornell University, women have steadily been drinking more and more over the past 20 years or so.

There is also a great misperception in women when they think that men find excessive drinking sexually attractive and appealing, according to the scientist. Some women also believe that a guy would most likely want to be friends with a woman who consumes as much alcohol as he does. This idea also plays a role when ladies engage in excessive drinking.

For their study, the researchers invited 3,616 college students from two U.S. Universities to complete an online survey during the 2008 spring semester. All the participants were between the ages of 18 and 25, sixty-two per cent of them being women. The women were asked several questions such as how many drinks they believed a typical young man would like his female

friends to drink during some event, as well as the maximum number of alcoholic beverages they thought the men would like their lady to drink. Then they had to assume, on average, how many shots or glasses they thought a woman would have to drink in order to make a guy consider being friends with her, want to date her or find her sexually attractive. The researchers also asked the women to give approximates of how much they drank on a weekly or monthly basis, and how much alcohol they thought the average female student at their institution consumed in any given week. The men, in turn, were asked their actual preferences.

When the results were calculated, it turned out that 71 per cent of young ladies overestimated the men's actual preferences of drinks in any given case. On average, they overestimated by one-and-a-half drinks. In addition, 26 per cent of women said that guys would most likely prefer to be buddies with women who drank 5 or more drinks. But most importantly, the researchers found that in reality, men actually prefer half that amount. They also realized that the women who overestimated the preferences of the opposite sex, were themselves more likely to engage in excessive drinking.

Dr Carpenter says that although not all young ladies are consuming alcohol just to get the attention from the guy they are attracted to, this survey may provide some explanation as to why more and more women start drinking at dangerous levels. The scientist hopes that the information based on the survey will be useful for universities and public health organizations in order to curb binge drinking among college women. The researchers are continuing their investigation into this matter and are now involved in a follow-up study that would analyse men's ideas about how much they think women want them to drink. The scientists believe they will figure out if this perception has a similar effect on increased risky drinking.

3. Holidays and Celebrations

Listening Comprehension

Track 21.

Valentine's Cards

Most people think that making a Valentine card for their loved ones is more thoughtful and sincere than buying one. This may be true, only under the assumption that when you make something, you are always thinking of that person when you are making the cards.

But let's be honest. For those of us who are horrible at crafting and have tried to make gifts or cards, we are most likely to have experienced some kind of frustration when we are making the gifts, rather than thinking about how happy our loved ones will be when they receive the cards. This may be caused by the fact that the cards do not look like how you have imagined them in your mind.

So what constitutes a sincere and thoughtful card? I would say these could be some of the factors:

- 1) How much consideration has gone into coming up with the card
- 2) How much time has gone into making the card

3) And finally, the reaction of your loved ones

We make cards or gifts to surprise our loved ones and to communicate with them that we care about them so much that we have gone out of our way to make something that can be easily bought otherwise. It's true that those are some of the reasons why we make cards or gifts. But these reasons only spring from our assumption that our loved ones will like the cards that we made and that they find the act of making cards or gifts thoughtful.

If it is the consideration and time that count in coming up with a perfect card for our loved ones, then buying one could easily fit into those categories. Going to various card stores to find the perfect card is takes both time and consideration.

We have to think about what kind of card we think will be best for the occasion, so it needs consideration. We also have to take time to go find 'the' card. So unless we just take 2 seconds to buy a card, the process of looking for and finding the card takes just as much consideration and time as making a card, and is just as thoughtful.

What's also very important is how our loved ones react to the card. If we had taken the time and effort when buying card, we are more likely to come across that perfect card which also looks good to communicate to our loved ones our message.

On top of that, if we have successfully communicated our message to the loved ones with a card we bought, in the same way as we would have with a hand-made card, then the only difference between the two types of cards is that the card we bought would look nicer and be a bit more expensive than a hand-made card.

Under the assumption that we are not good at making cards and that we take the time and effort to find 'the' card, the whole notion that a hand-made card is more thoughtful than a card that we buy more or less becomes unimportant.

4. Shopping

Listening Comprehension

Track 28. 

The Appeal of Outlet Malls

If you, like many men and women, tend to favour a particular clothing designer, you typically enjoy browsing stores that are known to carry that designer's clothing lines. Clothing stores that carry brand collections can be very appealing to many consumers. A trip to a wholesale shopping mall can also provide access to a designer's clothing lines, and perhaps, in the process, save the consumer a buck or two. Wholesale shopping malls are a popular destination for many people hoping to make any number of different purchases. There are 3 main reasons why wholesale shopping malls are an extremely popular destination for many consumers.

The first of several reasons why these stores appeal to a large number of folks is the highly discounted retail prices. Consumers looking for bargains can take advantage of huge savings. Sometimes the savings can be as much as seventy-five percent off of the original price. The quality of merchandise at outlet stores is most often just as good as you could find at any regular retail

store. Occasionally outlet stores do contain non-standard merchandise but such merchandise will be clearly labelled for the consumer. Most often what you find at the outlet store of a favourite retail supplier is simply overstock materials which have been removed from first run stores to make way for new items as a new fashion season approaches. Therefore, if you are looking for a deal, particularly in off season wear, those deals should most definitely be plentiful. Retailers would much rather make a small profit on their merchandise than none at all, so be sure to watch for phenomenal deals and take advantage of the major discounts.

The second big reason people are drawn to these stores is because of the wide selection of products available for purchase. A great assortment of merchandise can be found throughout the tables and racks at any particular outlet store. Filled with overstocks, discontinued items, slow sellers, and the aforementioned out of season wear, outlet stores contain a variety of items. It is true that the amount of merchandise does vary by size, with less popular sizes being more plentiful. However, most outlet stores try to carry a suitable selection in every possible size and style. The staff at outlet stores is constantly unpacking recent arrivals, which keeps the inventory ever changing. Most stores you enter will truly be overwhelming in the volume of merchandise available.

The third reason outlet stores are popular destinations is because of their convenience. Outlet stores are typically grouped together in one area, making a trip to the outlets a chance to visit maybe even as many as one hundred retail manufacturers. No matter what you may need, chances are at least one in the large group of outlet stores carries it. Sport shoes, dish-ware, sunglasses, lingerie, houseware, books, music, and clothing can all be found on a trip to the outlet stores. Going to just one central location for all your purchases saves time, gas, and the inconvenience of finding multiple parking spaces. Another great plus is that maps are placed in locations throughout the outlet area, providing simple directions to all available stores.

5. Services

Listening Comprehension

Track 35. 

Interview with Henry McPherson

Interviewer: Welcome to the studio Mr McPherson. Can you introduce yourself and tell us a few words about your business?

McPherson: My name is Henry McPherson, Silver Star Car Rental and Shuttle Services founder. Silver Star is a 100% family owned company that was formed in 2001 to offer the industry a real choice when it comes to tour operating services. We view our target market as both local and international corporate organisations. Services offered include conference shuttles and tours.

Interviewer: What were you doing before launching your tourism business and what inspired it?

McPherson: I was working for various car rental companies for 6 years, which include some internationally operating car rentals. I loved my job because I was dealing with different types of people and I developed a passion for the car rental business and delivering excellent service. After the last company I was working for closed down, I decided to open my own business because I

believed I had all the necessary knowledge to do so. Luckily it worked out because I'm still in this tourism business.

Interviewer: What is your educational background?

McPherson: I was not privileged enough to continue with my studies after I matriculated and when my business started to take off, I enrolled for some short business courses to help me run my business with ease and knowledge.

Interviewer: What do you do to stay abreast of your sector?

McPherson: I regularly read magazines and get newsletters from different tourism organizations to keep me updated. And every year I attend several national and international fairs to make contacts and find new markets. These events provide Silver Star a platform to market ourselves both nationally and internationally and boost our sales. We get to network with a lot of different people and gain more clients. Our tourism business belongs to some professional trade organizations, such as TABS and WTS, too.

Interviewer: What are your short and long term goals for your business?

McPherson: The short-term goals include expanding my business into different branches nationally and increasing the size of our vehicle fleet. As for long-term goals, I want my business to be recognized internationally as a first choice car rental and shuttle service company. Also, I'd like to have branches at most important international airports.

Interviewer: What are major challenges that are a stumbling block to growing your tourism business?

McPherson: On the tour operator side it's not getting enough of the tour packages. On the car hire side it's not having enough vehicles. But we work hard to find some solution.

Interviewer: How can potential clients reach your business?

McPherson: Apart from calling us, they can visit our website which is user-friendly and gives a clear understanding of our services. We also operate a telephone hot line and give detailed information about the services available.

Interviewer: Mr McPherson, thank you for coming to the studio.

6. Clothes and Fashion

Listening Comprehension

Track 42.

Gloria Pellegrini

Nowadays the world of fashion is in great demand, and there is great competition to be on top in the glamour world. Modelling is really popular in fashion industry, and Gloria Pellegrini is one of the most popular models in the fashion industry today.

The Italian-born beauty leads a glamorous life in front of the camera, modelling for the best-known fashion houses.

Tall and androgynous with a shock of platinum blonde hair, Pellegrini's striking and distinctive look which is reminiscent of Carla Sedgwick, has also proven to be a hit on the catwalk. Gloria entered the world of modelling, signing with a small modelling agency in Milan at the age of 15. Now she is one of the busiest models in the world. She has modelled clothing for fashion designers like Fendi, Gucci, and Versace over the past five years. Her position as one of the UK's most exciting models was confirmed by an appearance on the cover of Italian Vogue in August 2005, followed by American Vogue in March 2006 and British Vogue in June 2006.

Despite her considerable success, Gloria is still somewhat uncomfortable about standing out. She is over six feet tall in heels and it makes her feel uneasy.

Pellegrini has appeared in high profile advertising campaigns for the likes of Armani, Burberry, Cacharel and Mulberry, appearing as the face of the latter alongside the legendary Carla Wilson. She is also the face of Henry Miller's renowned House of Miller label.

To make your career in the fashion or modelling industry, you have a lot of choices, such as glamour model, bikini model, fashion model, internet model, child model, web model and many more. It's very tough to be at top in any of the modelling fields since it needs maximum hard work and endurance. But there are examples from which future models can get inspiration. One of them is Gloria Pellegrini, a glamour female model, who has the perfect model looks.

Effortlessly cool, Gloria's personal style will also have every fashionista drooling. Playfully punk, she thinks nothing of teaming masculine brogues with a delicate dress and colourful tights. She's also a fan of leggings, bold prints and eye-catching make up, all of which will be winging their way onto the high street as Pellegrini cements her reputation as a style icon.

In addition to having the body of a supermodel, Gloria also has the soul of an artist. The Florence native indulges her artistic side by taking pottery classes in London. She says she goes there three times a week, and enjoys these afternoons very much because the classes relax her enormously. Though making pottery demands a lot of concentration, she loves the feeling of creating things.

An ardent tea drinker, she is tipped to be the next Kate Moss and she is certainly becoming the brightest star in British fashion. Christopher Kane, a London-based fashion designer, is just one of the fashion industry insiders who believe Pellegrini could be the next big thing. He thinks that every decade, there is a girl of the moment and, right now, that moment belongs to Gloria.

7. Places to Live

Listening Comprehension

Track 49. 

Hotel Design

Susan James: What did you strive at when designing your latest super-luxury hotel in one of the flashiest districts of one of the world's busiest cities?

Marc Evans: My goal was to build silence, to create a quiet but magnificent retreat from the noise and the harshness of the city surrounding the hotel. I aimed at an atmosphere of a quiet haven

away from the worries of everyday life. I wanted to create an atmosphere of gentle luxury where the guests can meditate and relax.

Susan James: Yet we are not talking about a boutique hotel, but a big one in a very high building.

Marc Evans: Yes, there are altogether 200 rooms and suites on 80 floors, and indeed the first impression one gets is not that of restraint. I drew on simple but rich materials to create an impression of hushed drama based on feelings and thoughts to emphasize the importance of mental recreation as opposed to entertainment or work.

Susan James: How did you manage to create a combination of contemporary and traditional, international and local?

Marc Evans: I achieved that by playing on scale, size, and heights, as well as carefully selected materials. At ground level, there is a bamboo-lined driveway beneath a head-craning 40-foot archway, followed by a succession of airy, decadently spare chambers where the ceiling height jumps from 43 feet down to 28, then to 11 and back up to 26. The effect is meant to be that of compression and decompression, grandeur and intimacy, drawing on the indigenous tradition of courtyard houses.

Susan James: Could you describe some parts of the hotel that best reflect your ideas?

Marc Evans: By employing soft-glowing white plaster to cover entire wall in the ground-level approach sequence I aim to evoke the historic whitewashed canal towns nearby. In the reception area visitors are greeted by an oblong desk with a front of faux tortoiseshell. The reception forms a frame to the view since its windows offer a glimpse of the townscape.

Susan James: The hotel chain is famed for the delicious meals it offers. What kind of environment did you design for these culinary adventures?

Marc Evans: First of all, the tea salon is outfitted like a living room, with its chocolate-brown carpet, round black tables, and plush cream armchairs – accompanied by folding stools intended for resting handbags on. To create a place for quiet reflection, overhead, an ethereal white lacquered ceiling seems to dissolve into the sky outside. To precede the main restaurant, there is a café with red leather-upholstered barrel chairs and *verre églomisé* panels. In the main restaurant, luxury and quiet are emphasized. Comfortable high-backed chairs are covered in off-white cotton-linen, wall surfaces give the impression of snowy lacquer, and ceiling tiles are silvered glass. The nearby bar, on the other hand, is designed to resemble a gentleman's smoking lounge with its leaf-green and tan leather wrapping.

Susan James: Finally, what are the rooms like?

Marc Evans: They are spacious, luxurious and calm. The rooms are studies in contrast between natural wood and honed stone, blackened furniture and lacquer. There are privacy-enhancing recessed entries, wood-veneered cabinetry, and bathtubs with infinity edges. In the suites the design is even more luxurious in an opulent understated way. The multipurpose rooms and the swimming-pool area, where an 82-foot infinity pool was specially engineered so it wouldn't slosh with the building's natural sway, are all also designed to reflect luxury, hence the use of black wood and chrome.

Susan James: Thank you very much for this inviting description. I can hardly wait to experience that luxury myself.

8. Environmental Issues

 Listening ComprehensionTrack 57. 

Green Lifestyle

Originally trained as a biologist, Jimmy Woodland, Ph.D., is today an environmental activist and writer. He is currently campaigning against wasteful practices and constantly voicing his concern about the gravity of the global ecological crisis and the dangers of hazardous waste. Green Planet asked him about green lifestyle and toxic waste.

Helen Aberdeen: Please tell us why you find it so important to battle wasteful practices?

Jimmy Woodland: Since our current lifestyle produces too much waste that is hurting our health and environment, our world is going to be a difficult and unhealthy place for our children. I think this should be sufficient motivation for anybody to make the transition to a greener life. We must be aware that the rate at which our wastes are leaking toxins into the environment is accelerating rapidly while our non-renewable natural resources are depleting.

Aberdeen: What do you think are the first steps we as consumers should take?

Woodland: Of course we should recycle and reuse as much as possible, but I find that conserving resources is too often forgotten about. There are so many simple things we can do from our own home, and workplace as well, to help to save our planet. We can start by conserving electricity. Not only does electricity typically come from non-renewable fossil fuels, but the process also releases greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide which accelerate global warming. So it is really important to use energy-efficient appliances and lighting, and be moderate in the use of the heater or air conditioner, as well as turn these down when we plan to be away. Proper insulation is crucial in saving energy when heating and cooling the home. But even small things like unplugging your laptop, mobile, and other devices after charging them help. We should also be conscious of how much water we use. I do not mean only taking showers instead of baths, but also only switching on the washing machine and the dishwasher when there's a full load to wash. We should not waste water when gardening either. It's a good idea to collect rainwater to water our plants and lawns. If we have the resources, we can also install a grey-water system to recycle the water used in washing into our toilet system.

Aberdeen: Recycling is talked about a lot these days. Is there anything you feel should be added to the usual advice?

Woodland: In addition to not slipping out of collecting and disposing waste separately, it is vital to give old items to charity instead of throwing them away. We should do our best to find a new home for our old furniture and appliances, as well as donating our clothes, shoes and bags to charities. Shelters for the homeless, for example, are often happy to receive furniture, appliances, bedding and clothes. Of course composting kitchen waste does not only reduce the clogging up of landfills, but also helps your plants to grow healthy.

Aberdeen: Would it not be better to stop using appliances that are not energy efficient instead of donating them for further use?

Woodland: Well, this is a much debated issue. I feel that instead of adding to the waste that we are rapidly drowning in, we should use what we have, and when we need to buy something new, do

our best not to add to the waste heaps. Of course, when buying new items, we must not forget to make sure that the production of these is as environmentally friendly as possible, and not just to look at their energy consumption. What is more, when buying food and drink, we should consider where it comes from in terms of transport as well. So buying local produce is a good option.

Aberdeen: Hazardous waste is also a great concern of yours. Is this something we as individuals can do something about?

Woodland: Besides exercising whatever power we have as consumers, voters and opinion-formers to stop the production and dumping of hazardous waste, we can also take simple steps in our household, as a part of greener lifestyle. We can choose not to buy products which require the production of hazardous waste, we should constantly attempt to influence policymakers, and consciously produce less hazardous waste ourselves. We individuals also often throw out goods without realizing that they are headed for a landfill and could be dangerous for the environment, and consequently to us and our children. Unfortunately, hazardous waste materials can easily find their way into the ground, and eventually into our bodies. Instead of using toxic materials like oil-based paints and thinners, wood preservatives, pesticides, herbicides, non-recyclable batteries, and potentially dangerous household cleaning products, we should choose non-toxic alternatives that, when disposed of, do not constitute hazardous waste.

Aberdeen: All this sounds very reasonable, but also a bit overwhelming. It sounds as if we should devote almost all our time and energy to green practices.

Woodland: Living a green life is indeed a conscious lifestyle choice, and a choice I don't think we can avoid making. Once you get into the routine of saving energy and making environmentally friendly choices, it becomes a second nature and does not really need any effort. To get into the habit of green living without stress, you may want to change your lifestyle gradually, and only introduce some green things at a time, and new ones when these have become a routine. It is vital, however, to convince your family about the importance of going green.

9. Education and Work

Listening Comprehension

Track 65. 

How to Choose Your Future Job

One of the most common mistakes made by job seekers when embarking on a career is not taking a step back to explore what career would really suit them. All too often it can be easier to take the first job that is offered to you, only to regret it at a later date because you become unhappy in the role. So, now I would like to give you some tips that will help you to evaluate what is right for you in a new position, and thereby minimise the number of career mistakes you make in the future.

The first step in making successful career choices is to understand where you have come from. This means that you should take time to identify your existing skill sets and achievements. Once this has been achieved, you can move on to the next step of mapping your abilities to the next job opportunity.

If you're not clear about what you want to do, or where you can see your career developing, there are many sources you can use to help you formulate your strategy. A good starting place is recruitment consultants. They know a great deal about a broad spectrum of careers, so becoming buddies with one early on in your career is a must. Career counselling is another possibility, but it can be expensive to pay for consultations with experts. Networking and meeting other experts who are further down the line in their career paths is another good route to information and advice. You should also keep in touch with the alumni you studied with – you'll be surprised where some of your contemporaries end up, and you never know which connections might prove to be mutually beneficial in the future.

If you can find a career choice that is compatible with your attitude, values and personality, you will greatly increase your chances of long-term career success and satisfaction. It's so important to work in a field that constantly interests and stimulates you, not one where you are reluctant to go to work each morning. Unfortunately, a high percentage of people don't enjoy their jobs, which is rather sad when you think how much time is spent at work. So don't be pushed by outside influences into a field that doesn't interest you. You won't be sufficiently motivated, and that will show, and become a barrier to success and satisfaction.

Once you have decided which industry niche can offer you the career path you are looking for, spend time researching individual companies. Use the Internet to keep abreast of what is happening to the performance of these companies and find out more about what life is like for other people who have joined them. If possible, find ways to meet individuals from these companies at career fairs or industry conferences.

Most people only start looking for a new opportunity when they are unhappy. This often leads to them leaving their existing job without sufficient preparation, and therefore making a bad choice of the new position. To avoid this you should always keep abreast of the market, especially when things are going well. The best time to search for your next career move is when you are happy in your existing role. Firstly, if you do decide to meet prospective new employers, you will be approaching them from a position of strength. Secondly, you will not be under pressure to accept a job, so if it doesn't quite meet your criteria, you will be able to stay where you are and wait for the right one to come along.

One more thing: never make a career choice based on money. I know this may sound crazy but choosing your first job or changing your job for money usually only offers short-term benefit. If you find yourself chasing money, you will ultimately price yourself out of the market and therefore dramatically reduce the opportunities available to you in the future. A much more productive approach is to focus on building your skills and identifying jobs that will add value to your skill base and offer you progression. That will make your CV increasingly attractive to future employers.

10. Health Issues

 Listening ComprehensionTrack 73. 

Obesity as a Global Problem

Two years ago, when it was announced that more than a billion people worldwide were overweight – easily outnumbering the 800 million who were malnourished – people looked up from their Big Macs in shock. Then they went back to eating, pushing the number of overweight people to its current number, an astonishing 1.6 billion. And it's not just Americans, or even Western cultures; obesity has become a global problem. James Miller has a new book that goes a long way towards explaining why that happened. 'We are Fat' puts the blame for the ever-growing obesity crisis on some well-known villains: sugary drinks, couch-potato lifestyles and yes, cheeseburgers. But Miller also reveals some less obvious culprits: evolutionary biology, for instance, and a host of other forces beyond any individual's control. A professor of global nutrition at the University of Alabama, he spoke with Our World's Jane Goodman.

Our World: Your thesis is that we're all getting fat because we're eating more and moving less. That makes sense for individuals: if I sit around eating donuts, I'll gain weight. But you're talking about whole countries – the whole world, really. So what is going on?

James Miller: The constant thing we've heard in America for the last 20 years is 'You fat, gluttonous Americans, you should feel guilty. You're overweight and it's your fault. But all of a sudden, we're seeing the same problems in places where 20 years ago all they worried about was hunger: in Egypt, and among blacks in South Africa, and in China, where a third of adults now are overweight and obese. In Mexico, nobody was overweight 15 years ago; now 71 percent of Mexican women and 66 percent of men are. When you get to this kind of point, you've got to step back and say, 'Wait, what is going on?'

Our World: But what's happened?

James Miller: What's happened is that from 30 years ago to today, we've had an exponential explosion in what we can think of as the 'obesogenic environment.' You see food available everywhere. You can't move more than 100 feet without seeing a caloric beverage. In most of the world, it used to be that people mostly drank water, and today they're consuming more and more sweetened beverages. Fruit juice didn't even come into being until the late 1950s, except for what you squeezed at home, and milk – there was some, but people didn't drink so much of it.

Our World: Have people stopped drinking water?

James Miller: No, I don't think so. The average American has not changed the amount of water he consumes in the last 30 years or so. But he's added 22 ounces of caloric beverages to his diet, and that's 300 extra calories per day. Then you match that kind of diet with human biology. We naturally prefer sweet and fatty foods because of what those foods used to mean for survival when we were hunter-gatherers. They had the nutrients we needed, and they let us store more energy for the hungry season.

Our World: And now, for most people, there is no hungry season.

James Miller: Right. But we're still eating the same kinds of foods. From the beginning of humanity, we've always wanted to have tastier food and less work to do. These are innate drives, and we can't change our biology.

Our World: It's not just about what we eat. People around the world are said to be less active now, too.

James Miller: Yes, that's true. When I started working in South Korea in the '80s, everyone biked to work. Today it's dangerous to bike, so people take mass transit or cars or motorcycles, and kids under 12 are banned from biking because it's not safe. They don't walk, either.

Our World: It is estimated that by 2020 two-thirds of the global burden of disease will be attributable to chronic non-communicable diseases, most of them strongly associated with diet.

James Miller: Well, at the moment it seems so. The nutrition transition towards refined foods, foods of animal origin, and increased fats plays a major role in the current global epidemics of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, among other non-communicable conditions. Sedentary lifestyles and the use of tobacco are also significant risk factors. The epidemics cannot be ended simply by encouraging people to reduce their risk factors and adopt healthier lifestyles, although such encouragement is undoubtedly beneficial if the targeted people can respond. Unfortunately, increasingly obesogenic environments, reinforced by many of the cultural changes associated with globalization, make even the adoption of healthy lifestyles, especially by children and adolescents, more and more difficult.

Our World: I see. So, it's not just Americans anymore; the whole world is becoming obese, and we have more than just the advent of cheap cheeseburgers to blame.

Thank you, Professor Miller.

11. Hobbies and Pastime Activities

Listening Comprehension

Track 80. 

Hobbies

Mary: For me, the most exciting moment in my life is to spend my free time with my pet fish. And I can give you an endless list of reasons why I think this is so.

Watching your fish swim is indeed fun and exciting and the best part is that it helps you to relax after a stressed out day at work. It may sound strange, but to every fish enthusiast it is a hobby that will never become boring as there is always something new to discover and try out. You can sit in front of the aquarium for hours and as the time passes by, the feeling and enthusiasm will still be there and will never fade.

The more you commit yourself looking after them, the more attached you are to your pets and the more you love them. You will grow fond of their actions, their movements, chasing around from one corner to another, feeding on their favourite fish food and you can even name every single fish with funny names based on their appearance.

Fish keeping is also considered a family affair and provides the opportunity for everybody to share the joy and experience. It helps to teach and bring out the sense of responsibility in our inner self. Fish keeping also makes us realize the importance of caring for others.

Fish keeping also teaches us valuable knowledge and helps us learn about water chemistry, biology, and mechanical know-how, especially handling pumps and filters. The hobby has played a major role in bringing out my interest in different subjects, mainly chemistry, which I initially considered the most dull and boring field of study. Soon after I got involved in keeping fishes and found out that they are actually related to one another, my perception has changed. And because of that, I have started to develop interest in learning more about chemistry so that I can apply my knowledge towards this exciting hobby.

John: Retro gaming is considered by many to be a fad, but there's a dedicated group out there making sure these games never become forgotten. They're the collectors, the die-hards, and they know what they're doing. It's overwhelming to someone new to the hobby, yet collecting video games isn't particularly different from collecting anything else because it does present its own challenges.

Do not go into this hobby with an 'I'll buy it all' attitude. When you first start out, take it small and think of what you want to play the most, not collect. That's where your base should be, and it also gives you a purpose for doing this. What systems do you want to collect? Do you want to relive the days of your youth? Do you want to experience games you've never tried?

Starting small makes things seem less overwhelming. If you blindly go in and buy everything you see, you'll realize just how much trouble this can be. It's better to take it slow, breathe, think it through, do some research, and then start the hunt for games.

Loose games, whether CD-based or on cartridge, are always worth less than complete ones. Manuals and boxes will always bring the value up, as well as special items, like maps or hint books.

The same goes for the consoles to play all of your new games on. Ensure all the cables are included, including controllers. If possible, check the console yourself by hooking it up before purchasing. If not, simply ask when the system was last used. These things rarely become defective unless extremely abused, but there's no reason to take an unnecessary risk, so have some sort of assurance.

There's an easy way to finance this hobby, which can be expensive. Buying in lots will always be cheaper, and don't turn an offer down simply because you already own a few games. Those can be resold online, or even traded for games you do want. In some cases, you may find a few games you were searching for and can resell ones you already had at a profit. Not only did you get to add to your collection, you made some extra cash on the side. That's a sign you're doing things right.

If you have chosen to be a member of this quickly growing segment of the gaming industry, welcome. The most important thing to remember here is to have fun.

12. Sport

 Listening ComprehensionTrack 87. **The Beneficial Effects of Boxing**

If you want to improve your health and physical fitness, a boxing training program may be what you are looking for. As well as building body strength and fitness it can also go a long way to improving your personal confidence. Of course, by taking part in boxing workouts you will also improve your fighting form.

People who have tried boxing as a form of exercise find it to have very positive results because arms and legs usually gain a lot of strength and become more defined in shape. However, the benefits are not all physical. People also find that they gain a greater sense of inner strength and feel more emotionally balanced.

Boxing as a form of training and exercise became part of the larger fitness training arena a few years ago. There are great benefits of boxing workouts on muscle toning and the cardiovascular system. It was the release of many videos featuring Tae bo and kick boxing workouts that made boxing rise in popularity.

The many innovative variations on boxing such as power punches, defence, and punch and kick exercises have all the components of aerobic exercise. As you progress, you will find your strength will build along with your confidence as you are taught how to execute punch and kick moves more effectively for a far more intense workout.

Kicks and punches which are performed in various combinations on blocks are done with an imaginary opponent. There are also training facilities with the necessary equipment, such as punch bags and so on. In some cases there may even be a real opponent to hit, but they have very good padding on their hands, of course!

Kick boxing is an excellent way to burn off excess calories because in just one hour of doing it you can expect to use in the region of between 350 and 500 calories. It is also very good for maintaining a good heart rate of somewhere between 75% and 85%. This has been proven to be the ideal rate for anyone in training or exercising.

Boxing as exercise is beneficial for the whole body. As well as increasing arm and leg strength through the repeated sparring and jogging whilst punching at the same time, it also helps increase resistance and strength while greatly enhancing the reflexes and flexibility of all your muscles.

The workouts involved help to greatly enhance balance and co-ordination, which in turn gives your body a great form and increased stability, and also allows joint movements to be more flexible giving fantastic results in physical fitness.

What's more, in the training process you will learn a great deal about defence skills which, in today's world, could prove to be invaluable. A great sense of satisfaction, self confidence, motivation and relaxation can also be gained from training.

The stresses and strains of modern living can be lifted and any anger and aggression which may be building up inside can be released and lifted, giving more peace of mind and helping you relax more.

A number of aerobic fitness instructors do recommend some boxing training instruction for people starting out because it allows each individual to take things at their own pace depending on how fit you are already. The other extreme is boxing classes which will push you to your limit. In this case it is important that you have a safe environment fully trained instructors on hand and that you are already physically fit.

13. Culture and Entertainment

Listening Comprehension

Track 94. 

The Future of Art Institutions

Interviewer: Welcome to the studio, Mr Davies. Museums and galleries are said to be slower in developing marketing skills than their theatrical, orchestral and operatic counterparts. However, some of them have proved themselves courageous marketers in recent years. Could you please mention some examples of how Europe's great art institutions are trying to transform themselves into modern centres of entertainment?

Mr Davies: Good afternoon everybody. Well, fortunately there is a growing number of museums and art galleries that have realised the importance of modernisation for their survival. As a first step, these institutions have started to employ marketing managers who know the challenges of the fast-changing world. For example, Charles Mills in The Victoria & Albert Museum has established a club to talk to that segment of the population that have previously been outside the institution's traditional visitor profile.

Interviewer: Who are these people?

Mr Davies: The target audience is young people who couldn't go to the museum during the day because of their work or other commitments. Now they can go in the evening since the club is open two evenings a week. The restaurant is open then, and there is some music, so they can meet their friends and talk about the exhibitions.

Interviewer: That sounds a great idea!

Mr Davies: Yes, it is. Moreover, I know of an art gallery which opened on April 12 in Bradford and has been constructed with the help of donations and sponsorship worth £2.5 million. They are targeting the Indian community living in the town because they have realised the significance of expanding their audiences to areas other art institutions are not yet attracting. They are also planning to do mailings to other towns with an Indian community as well as to sell the gallery through a roadshow, visiting, for example, Liverpool and London.

Interviewer: Hm. And can you mention some examples abroad?

Mr Davies: Certainly. In Germany, Spain, Italy, and France, museums are scrambling to create bigger, more-dazzling exhibition spaces, smart new restaurants and shops, study centres and inviting public areas. As people want more than the old-style museum, art institutions are driven to become more an arm of the entertainment and education industries rather than the academic institutions they used to be. I've seen the plans for the expansion of the cultural centre in Madrid

that is hoped to raise its cultural profile to match that of London. New galleries will increase the Prado's current exhibition space to more than 160,000 square metres, not including the 13,000 square metres for cafés, restaurants, theatres and offices, all linked by tree-lined paths. There's another ambitious museum expansion going on in Germany, in Berlin. The \$2.1 billion project to restore Museum Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the city centre, aims to turn the island into the largest art complex in Europe, covering all the major cultures in six museums, filling 88,000 square metres. And a British architect, David Chipperfield, has been commissioned to create a striking new entrance to the whole complex.

Interviewer: Thank you, Mr Davies, for coming and sharing all this information with us.

14. Media

Listening Comprehension

Track 101. 

Cookery by the Best

Now that the immensely popular cookery show *Cookery by the Best* is once again drawing to a close, we decided to have a chat with Drew Hope, one of the former finalists and favourite of the viewers. Keep tuned to find out what has happened since that memorable contest.

Liz White: Unlike you, most of the contestants are professional or semi-professional chefs. What made you decide to participate in the contest?

Drew Hope: I'm not quite sure what was the biggest reason. I suppose it was a combination of different things like wanting a career break, wanting to prove that I'm not too old to learn new tricks and, of course, friends and family, who have been telling me that I'm a wonderful cook since I started cooking. I used to do quite a lot of cooking and entertaining before I got too entangled in my career in law.

White: Can you remember your feelings on the day of the interview?

Hope: There seemed to be hundreds of us and when people started to tell me how they had been preparing, I felt absolutely terrified. They all seemed to have been practising for ages. I mean things like practising one single dish ten times, and having friends and family members who all seemed to work in the food business to judge their performance. I had done nothing like that in terms of preparation and had almost made up my mind to walk out when I was called in to talk to the judges. Then I just got a hold of myself, and managed to stay calm. I think I even put in a joke or two.

White: What was it like to cook in the show kitchen and being followed by the cameras?

Hope: At first it felt really odd, and I was completely out of my comfort zone. It was really a weird experience since I hadn't been in front of cameras before and never realized that they would be right in my face. And like you said before, I have no formal cooking training and had never worked as a professional chef, so I found that my knowledge was not quite as good as I had thought and that there really was a terrible lot to learn from the professionals running the show as well as the other contestants. I think it was not until the third or fourth episode that I started to feel that I was

in the right place, or that I actually had earned the right to be there. Then when people started to greet me in the streets and wish me well, well that was a great feeling and I believe it helped me to get over many obstacles.

White: Yes, you were one of the viewers' great favourites and we still get many questions about what happened to you since then.

Hope: Well, if you want to know if taking part in the show changed my life, the answer is yes and no. For some time after the show I thought I'd open a restaurant, but I came to the conclusion that I really love cooking as a hobby, and do not want to spoil the enjoyment by making it into a profession. At first I was asked to do some demonstrations mostly at charity events and appear in some cookery shows, but that died out fairly quickly since I wasn't doing anything connected to cooking, like others who pick up writing in magazines or hosting their own shows or even starting their own signature dinner kits or designing their own pepper mills. As a matter of fact, had I decided to remain in the cooking business, first I would have had to do a diploma course at a cookery school to be taken seriously. I wasn't really good enough to be picked to work at a Michelin starred restaurant. So, no, I never turned into a real chef, or professional cook.

White: What is the yes part then? Did participating in the show change you as a person?

Hope: Yes, I suppose it did. I learned a lot about myself as a person. Taking part in the show made me realize that I can be good at many things, and that I do not have to be the best to feel good about myself.

White: So do I get it right that you have given up cooking and gone back to your original career in law?

Hope: Again, this is a yes and no answer. I have indeed gone back to practising law, but I never took it up on the scale I used to. I used to work for a big firm, but now I'm running my own business from home. As for cooking, no, I'd never give it up totally. Like I said, I find it is a very good hobby, and I try to learn how to make at least one new dish every week. It could be anything from a main course to a fancy pastry. On a strictly personal level I have taken up giving dinner parties again and on a slightly more professional level, there has been some talk about working on a cookbook as a co-writer.

White: That's good news for those who have been wanting to hear from you. Thank you for coming and I wish all the best in both your careers.

15. Communication; Keeping in Contact; Computers

Listening Comprehension

Track 109. 

Postal Merger

Private equity firm Candover Partners is preparing to buy and merge two specialist UK postal firms to create a new rival to the Royal Mail.

It has offered to pay almost £350m for DX Services, which provides next-day business-to-business mail deliveries – mainly involving documents between solicitors related to house sales. If that

deal goes through, Candover will then buy Secure Mail Services for an unnamed sum. Secure Mail Services delivers items such as passports, cheque books and credit cards.

Candover's offer for DX has the backing of the company's board and the holders of just over 28% of the shares.

Candover said the combination of DX and Secure Mail Services would create the largest independent end-to-end service in the UK postal market, handling 270m items a year and employing 1,840 people.

According to Candover, the new enlarged firm will provide a worthwhile alternative when customers are considering a move from using the Royal Mail.

Since the postal market was fully opened to competition at the start of the year, the Royal Mail has been under growing challenge from rival companies. Among other rivals, TNT is reported to be planning end-to-end, that is, collection to delivery services in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Manchester.

The Royal Mail estimates that more than a million items are handled by private operators each day through access agreements. Under these agreements, the companies collect and, in some cases, sort mail that is then delivered by the Royal Mail. It believes the annual total could rise to 3bn, which is equal to almost one in every seven letters, by the end of the year.

16. Travelling; Tourism; Transport

Listening Comprehension

Track 117.

Tips to Business Travellers

First of all, I'd like to greet you and ensure you that time spent on planning and preparing for a business trip is time well spent. Smart planning can help you make the most of your travel time.

The first step in planning a business trip, however, is to make sure that the trip is necessary or whether the trip can be avoided to have more time for immediate tasks that have to be done at your own workplace. It may be possible for you to handle the same issues via email, on the phone, in a letter, or by a video or teleconference. Should that not be possible, consider sending someone else to represent you. Not only will it save you travel time but can provide a valuable learning experience for junior associates to develop greater levels of maturity and expertise.

Secondly, there is no point in heading off for a trip unless you are certain that you have a complete grasp of the situation. If the trip does not involve urgent issues, schedule the trip for a more convenient time. Rescheduling is particularly important if an important decision maker wouldn't be able to meet you since they have other appointments or are travelling themselves. In addition, you can also try inviting the other party to come visit you. This will save you time and enable you to be more prepared to make a good presentation.

If the trip is necessary, it can still enhance rather than detract from your productivity. As long as your business trip is well-planned, it can be time-efficient. When making arrangements, have someone who's knowledgeable, such as an office assistant, travel agent, or company travel

coordinator, take care of the travel details. Do not forget to confirm your appointments before having your flights booked, and be sure that they avoid scheduling times that would have you arriving or departing around rush hour.

To save time and energy, maximize your itinerary by grouping appointments together. If there is someone else you can visit on the same trip, do it. It is also worthwhile to plan activities to keep you productive during layovers, like making phone calls, reading, or conducting appointments.

Make a thorough appointment schedule with everything you'll need to know. Do not only list the date, time and location of each appointment and the directions to get there, but also the name, address, phone number and email address of each business contact. It is also a good idea to try to get a home or a mobile phone number in case you need to make contact after business hours, for example, about a change in plans. Have this information on paper as well as on your mobile or PDA. Also give a copy of your schedule to your family and colleagues as well.

Make a checklist of business and personal items you'll need. You will need your files and documents. It is best to organize all business documents you will need for the trip in either a single binder or a series of binders. Take a disc for all the electronic files you need, and be sure you back up your work on a second disc that you can leave at the office. You will also need your mobile, BlackBerry or PDA. Do not forget about the charger, and batteries for calculator and dictaphone if you take them with you. You will be travelling with your laptop. To make the most of it, take an extra telephone cord so that you can use it in your hotel room in case there is no wireless access and the phone jack isn't conveniently located.

When packing your clothes, do not forget to consider the climate and weather. Pack as light as possible, but bear in mind the dress code and office culture of the company you are visiting. If you are not sure what to expect, it is best to dress quite conservatively. A dark-coloured suit is a safe option, as long as you remember to take a spare blouse or shirt. If possible, fit all your belongings in one suitcase you can take in the cabin of the plane.

Time spent on careful planning of a business trip is not time wasted. It is time well spent and you will be amply rewarded by getting the best possible results from your trip.

17. Globalisation; Consumer Society

Listening Comprehension

Track 124. 

Biological Invasion

I am going to give a short overview of how globalization has contributed to biological invasion and what can be, and is indeed being, done to prevent the invasion of alien species to indigenous flora and fauna.

Although humans have traded and transported alien species for millennia, with the era of accelerated globalization, the world has entered a new phase in the size and diversity of biological invasions. The present circumstances make it imperative to develop methods of risk assessment and to seek new opportunities for managing invasive species.

Globalization is driven primarily by the search for growth in income, and understandably, there is an apparent correlation between GDP and the diversity and richness of non-indigenous floras and faunas for many regions in the world. Island ecosystems are particularly exposed to merchandise imports in biological invasions since these ecosystems are greatly exposed to trade.

Since the 1950s technical and logistical improvements have vastly accelerated the ease of transporting commodities across the globe. This process has hindered the traceability of goods and made intercepting pests more difficult. The new land, sea, and air links both in international trade and human transport have created new pathways for the spread of alien species. This makes it imperative to make scientific developments that enable invasive species management to move at the speed of globalized commerce.

Demand for commodities enhanced by increasing transport networks has made pathway risk assessment the new frontier in the prevention of biological invasions. The routes of introduction that arise from contaminant, stowaway, corridor and unaided pathways are increasingly complex in both aquatic and terrestrial biomes. This complexity can best be dealt with by concentrating on comparable approaches to risk assessment. These approaches are facilitated by common features which make it possible to generate risk maps. Risk maps that highlight potential invasion hotspots make it possible to improve prevention strategies. To create effective risk maps, we have to bring together spatial data on climate suitability, habitat availability and points of entry, and create demographic models that include natural and human-mediated species dispersal.

Up to now, most attempts to model the pathways of invasive species have focused on unfolding the likelihood of invader establishment. In the future, the focus should be on modelling explicit management strategies, such as optimal detection and inspection strategies, as well as assessment of the effectiveness of different management measures. With this focus, much can be done to protect our environment from the harmful effects of biological invasion.

18. Public Life and Social Issues

Listening Comprehension

Track 132. 

Whales

Joanna Johnson was trained as a biologist, and later took up communication studies to complete her PhD on whales' communication systems. She has recently been publishing about the effects of global warming on whale populations, and Green Planet asked her about the present situation.

Marcus Townsend: Welcome to the programme! Can you please start by giving us some basic facts about whales?

Joanna Johnson: Thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk about my favourite topic. As you may know, whales live in all of the world's oceans, at different locations, depending on their species. They usually live between twenty and forty years, but some healthy and lucky whales can live as long as eighty years. Most of us know that they, like all mammals, breathe air into their lungs, and feed their offspring on milk. What may come as a surprise is that they have some hair, though not very much.

Townsend: That is really a surprise, at least to me. Don't whales look rather like fish?

Johnson: Yes, indeed, they look a lot like fish with their streamlined bodies, and most species also have a dorsal fin on their backs just like fish do.

Townsend: Fish use their gills for breathing, what about whales?

Johnson: Whales breathe through their blowholes which are located on the top of their heads, so they can remain submerged. Baleen whales have two blowholes and toothed whales have one.

Townsend: Are there other differences between the two kinds?

Johnson: Yes. First of all, baleen whales are named after the comb-like fringe on their upper jaw that they use for filtering plankton, small fish and crustaceans. Baleen whales are the largest species of whale. Toothed whales, as you can guess from their name, have teeth, and they prey on fish, squid, other whales and marine mammals. They sense their surroundings by what we call echolocation.

Townsend: Can you say just a few words about how whales communicate?

Johnson: Yes. If you have ever seen a TV programme or a film about whales, you may have noticed that they are quite active. They jump high out of the water, and thrust their tails out of the water to slap them on the water's surface. This is most probably a warning to other whales about danger nearby. The most intriguing whale communication, however, is their use of lyrical sounds. The sounds are quite loud and can usually be heard for many miles. Whales use their songs to court, to navigate and to cooperate when feeding.

Townsend: How is global warming threatening whales?

Johnson: Like all marine creatures, whales are also under a great threat due to the effects of global warming. The rise in sea level and the changes in sea temperatures are making whales quite vulnerable since they may well not be able to adapt quickly enough to survive. The Arctic and Antarctic whale populations are under the greatest threat due to the climate change affecting their environment. Of course it is also worrying that food sources for whales are also being depleted. For example, the krill population is declining fast, and krill is the main food source for many large whale species.

Townsend: What other dangers are whales facing?

Johnson: Whaling is the probably the biggest threat, though things changed for the better to some extent when the International Whaling Commission introduced a moratorium on commercial whale hunting that is still in effect. However, the moratorium was introduced only when many whale populations were already severely depleted, and, unfortunately, there are exceptions to this moratorium. Some countries and aboriginal communities are still allowed to continue their yearly whale hunts. What makes the situation worse is that several species of small whales are caught when people fish for other species. Besides fishing and hunting, exposure to pollution and contaminants also threatens whales. It is also widely believed in the scientific community that underwater sonar testing by the navies of various countries leads to whale beachings for whales that use echolocation systems for deep diving.

Townsend: How can we protect whales?

Johnson: Fortunately, more and more people are realising the threat whales are under, and realising what an enormous loss it would be if the whales disappeared. There are a number of international NGOs that are making their voices heard and are taking steps to protect whales, as

well as individuals who campaign to prevent all forms of whale hunting. We must do our very best to stop any attempt to lift the moratorium on commercial whale hunting and also to condemn so-called scientific whaling. And, of course, all efforts to protect our environment and stop global warming will benefit whales as well as humans.

19. Science and Technology

Listening Comprehension

Track 138. 

New Findings of Astrophysicists

The moon is the brightest light in the night sky. We've sent space missions there, people have written countless songs and poems about it and now, astrophysicists are providing new insight on how the Earth's moon was created and what makes it special. The moon is certainly the most dramatic thing in the sky, so people have had ideas about where it came from since the beginning of time.

According to some scientists, the Earth's moon formed just 30 to 50 million years after the sun was formed, when an object of the size of Mars collided with the Earth, and released a giant cloud of dust along with the moon. Now, after examining a cluster of about 500 stars with the Spitzer Space Telescope, the researchers found very little evidence of collisions. If there had been such an event, large amounts of dust would have remained in the solar system long after the creation of a moon. The telescope would indirectly observe pieces of dust that had absorbed light from the star in their solar system and become warmer than the surroundings.

The Spitzer Space Telescope was launched on August 25, 2003, and it detects the infrared energy radiated by objects in space. Most of this infrared radiation is blocked by the Earth's atmosphere and cannot be observed from the ground. Spitzer allows scientists to peer into regions of space that are hidden from optical telescopes. Many areas of space are filled with vast, dense clouds of gas and dust that block the view. Infrared light, however, can penetrate these clouds, allowing astrophysicists to peer into regions of star formation, the centres of galaxies, and into newly forming planetary systems. Infrared light also provides information about the cooler objects in space, such as smaller stars which are too dim to be detected by their visible light, extrasolar planets, and giant molecular clouds.

You may never look at the moon in quite the same way again. Scientists say that we should be a lot more thankful when we go out at night and find our way around through the full moonlight or just admire what it looks like. Astrophysicists believe that moons like the Earth's form in only five to ten percent of planetary systems in our universe.

20. The European Union

 Listening ComprehensionTrack 145. 

EU Summit Meeting

Divisions over how to fight global warming threatened yesterday to overshadow a summit meeting aimed at making the European Union the world leader in the battle against climate change.

European leaders are expected to approve plans to achieve a 20 % cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 as part of an effort to reduce the bloc's dependence on oil and gas imports. But governments of the union's 27 member countries have conflicting opinions about issues like whether renewable energy targets should be binding and whether nuclear energy should be supported.

Speaking before the meeting, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, whose country holds the rotating European Union presidency, said the need to use more renewable sources was a matter of urgency. 'It's not five minutes to midnight,' she said. 'It's five minutes after midnight.'

The European Commission president, José Manuel Barroso, said that governments from Washington to Moscow to Beijing were watching the events in Brussels. Both he and Mrs Merkel expressed hope that ambitious environmental targets from Europe would encourage similar action from the world's biggest polluters like China, India and the United States.

But the member countries were struggling over German proposals for mandatory targets to generate 20 percent of energy from renewable sources like wind and solar power by 2020. At least a dozen countries, including Poland, the Czech Republic and France, have expressed opposition to such targets, saying they are unrealistic and could prove too costly.

Adding to the difficulty of securing an agreement is an effort by some countries like France to get the union to reclassify renewable energy to include no-carbon alternatives like nuclear energy. The move has met stiff resistance from Austria, Denmark and Ireland, where nuclear energy is regarded with deep suspicion.