

1. Computers

The subject of this week's lesson is computers. The nineteenth-century British mathematician and philosopher Charles Babbage is credited with having drawn up the first ever designs for a machine capable of operating as a rudimentary form of computer. He was born on 26th December 1791.

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2-B1 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. Brainstorm on the subject of computers. What do your students use them for? In what ways do they think computers are beneficial to society? Do they think there are any ways in which computers have had a negative impact?
2. Divide the students into pairs and give them five to ten minutes to read through the text on Worksheet A, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. Tell them that in exercise A they are going to fill the gaps with appropriate words. You could suggest that they guess what those words might be before starting the exercise.
3. When the time is up, hand out Worksheet B and give the students another ten minutes to fill the gaps using the correct words from the box. Make it clear that (a) there is only one possible word to fill each gap, and (b) there are sixteen words in the box but only twelve gaps in the text, meaning that four of the words should not be used.
4. When the time is up, check answers in open class. You could also ask the students what they thought of the opinions expressed by Caroline and Bob, and whether they identified with either of the two characters.
5. Next, keeping the students in their pairs, give them at least five minutes to try the second exercise on Worksheet B, in which they have to put the mixed-up transcript of a conversation back in the correct order.
6. Check answers in open class.

Answers

A (gap-fill)

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. lost | 7. technology |
| 2. documents | 8. electronic |
| 3. past | 9. office |
| 4. essential | 10. useful |
| 5. organisations | 11. replying |
| 6. buying | 12. screen |

(Words that should not be used: top, price, happy, people)

B (mixed-up transcript of conversation)

G	Bob, I can't believe you've still got that old computer!
J	Can't you? It's good enough for me.
C	What do you mean, 'good enough'? I bet the internet connection is really slow.
E	And why would I want to use the internet?
K	What? You mean you don't use the internet?
A	No. Why should I?
H	Bob, tell me you're joking, please.
D	No, I'm not, honestly. I know there are all those websites, but most of them are probably rubbish.
L	No, that's not true. There's something for everyone on the internet.
B	Well, there's probably nothing for me. I'd rather read a book.
F	Yeah, but you can read books <i>as well</i> as use the internet – you don't have to choose between the two. Anyway, what <i>do</i> you use your computer for?
I	I use it to write letters occasionally. That's all, really.

2. Related Websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4780000/newsid_4786500/4786565.stm

A BBC *Newsround* forum (2006) asking 'How important is your computer to you?' Aimed primarily at children and younger teenagers. Appropriate for pre-intermediate level.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/youandyours/technology_launch.shtml

From the BBC Radio 4 website, this shows the results of a survey that asked people what they regarded as the most important technological innovation since 1800. The computer came in fourth place, with the bicycle far ahead in first. Intermediate level and above.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/sci_tech/2000/dot_life/1488567.stm

Another BBC article (2001), published on the twentieth anniversary of the launch by IBM of the one of the first ever 'personal computers'. The piece is followed by comments from various people on the impact personal computers (and the internet) have had on their lives. Some of the comments would be accessible to pre-intermediate level.