

**EPISODE 86**  
**LEVEL B2**

**READING COMPREHENSION**



**STRANGE HOBBIES**

People have the strangest hobbies you can imagine, don't they? Take my brother for example, when he was nine or ten years old, he used to be a **train-spotter** (= a person who observes trains). At weekends and during school holidays, he often used to spend whole days on the platform of our railway station, watching and taking photographs of trains. Basically, train-spotting involves collecting train numbers. Train-spotters simply write down the numbers of all trains they see in a little notebook. It is even possible to buy books with lists of numbers which train-spotters can underline.

If you walk along the platform of any station in Britain on Saturday in the afternoon, you will see them, in groups or alone. Dressed in practical but unfashionable clothing, they wait for the next train. But, most of these train spotters are only nine-year-old boys, but teenagers and even men in their 20s or 30s.

In Britain train-spotting is **regarded** (= considered to be) as the most obsessive hobby there is. In fact, the word train-spotter and their favourite item of clothing, the **anorak** (= a short coat with a hood), have become associated with obsessive and ridiculous people. And train spotters themselves are **looked down on** (= not respected/ admired) by the rest of the population as boring individuals who can't think of anything better to do with their free time than stand in the rain writing down numbers.




**EXERCISE 1**

Decide if the sentences are true or false:

1. Train-spotters are only children.
2. Train-spotting is a hobby of collecting trains.
3. Train-spotting is regarded to be addictive.

**USE OF ENGLISH**




**EXERCISE 2**

Read the text and decide which lines are correct and which have a word which should be not there and cross it out:

1	In your last letter you asked me to tell you why I like playing
2	chess so much. Well, I nevertheless think it is because chess gives
3	me a feeling of the excitement. I am quite competitive and like
4	the challenge of playing one-to-one. It gets intense sometimes,
5	in a game you can get extremely nervous and excited and have all
6	sorts of emotions. If I have played such a good player, put up
7	a good fight and lost, then that is too satisfying, but it is always
8	better than to win. There is also a good social side to chess. I
9	have made lots of friends at playing in competitions across
10	Europe . it is really interesting seeing cultures more different from
11	mine and trying to practise other languages. Now I play most of
12	weekends and holidays, but I do not know for certain if I will continue
13	to take part in competitions. During the last couple of years while I
14	have had more schoolwork, in which makes life more difficult. You
15	have got to be an extremely good player for chess to be so financially
16	worthwhile . however, I would like to recommend it as a hobby to
17	anyone. If you are interested, you should to join a chess club at one.

IDIOM CLOSE-UP



LIVE AND BREATHE = spend much time doing sth you love

THROW YOURSELF INTO STH = begin to do sth with energy and enthusiasm

TAKE TO STH LIKE LIKE A DUCK TO WATER = learn a new skill quickly and easily

My brother has always liked surfing. He **lives and breathes** it.

I took up skiing a couple of years ago and I absolutely **threw myself into** it and **took to it like a duck to water**.

PHRASAL VERBS CLOSE-UP



LAZE ABOUT = relax and enjoy yourself by doing very little

BLISS OUT ON = become totally happy or relaxed

GO OFF sth = stop liking lose interest in



**EXERCISE 3**

Fill in the missing phrasal verbs:

1. For the first week of holiday we usually .....on the beach
2. I ..... football and I started playing golf instead.
3. They .....music all day.

NEWS



## The strangest hobbies :

### TATOOING THE CARS

"A Taiwanese pensioner covers every inch of his four vehicles with **virtuous** words from Buddhist texts. Li Zongxiong, 71, a workshop owner, started to 'tattoo' his car, two trucks and a motorbike in 1999. His words virtually cover the vehicles, including the mirrors, windscreens, bodywork, doors, wheels - and even the number plates. Li **admitted** his hobby had caused him trouble: "Passers-by thought I was **doodling on** the cars of others, and police found it hard to believe that someone would cover his own vehicle in writing," he explained. Li, who has only an elementary school education, said most of the words were taken from Buddhist texts. Li's son, Li Jiasheng, said the family now forbids his father to buy new vehicles, since they know he will write all over them - no matter how much they cost. But his grandson has promised that when he grows up and makes some money he will buy him a big bus to write on an.

### GIVING AWAY 10 DOLLARS TO STRANGERS

Reed Sandridge lost his job last year and **took up** a new hobby. He gives away \$10 every day to someone who looks as if they could use it, a different person every day. And Sandridge expects nothing in return but a good feeling. His mom, the daughter of a coal miner whom he remembers most for her kindness, always told him that when you're going through tough times, that's when you most need to give back. So not long after he was **laid off**, on the third **anniversary** of his mom's death, he started his "year of giving," documenting each \$10 gift in a small black notebook and then blogging about the people he meets. By Day 94, he had given away almost \$1,000, **handing out** money in **blizzards**, in rainstorms, on the sunniest of days. Sandridge is using his savings and his unemployment benefits for the giveaways. Some of the **folks** he gives money to use it to help others. He tells stories of the people he meets in his blog, which has led others to help them out as well.

**Virtuous** = behaving or done in a way that is morally good and right

**Admitted** = said it was true

**Doodling on** = writing on

**Took up** = decided to start

**Laid off** = fired / dismissed from work

**Anniversary** = a date when you celebrate something important that happened before

**Handing out** = giving

**Blizzards** = snowstorms

## KEY TO EXERCISES

### Ex. 1

1. F
2. F
3. T

**Ex. 2**

1. ok
2. nevertheless
3. the
4. ok
5. ok
6. such
7. too
8. than
9. at
10. more
11. of
12. ok
13. while
14. in
15. so
16. like
17. to

**Ex. 3**

1. laze about
2. went off
3. bliss out on