



Key skills communication Level 3 - Gadgets

Tuesday 13th May 2008

Source Booklet

- This booklet contains source material for the level 3 communication test, **Gadgets**
 - The test questions will be based on this material
 - You must hand in this source booklet at the end of the test, along with your question paper and answer booklet
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The level 3 communication test will assess your ability to:

- select and read material to obtain the required information
- identify accurately, and compare, the lines of reasoning and main points from the text and images
- synthesise the key information in a way that is relevant to the purpose
- select and use a format and style of writing that is appropriate to the purpose and subject matter
- organise relevant information clearly and coherently
- ensure text is legible and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate

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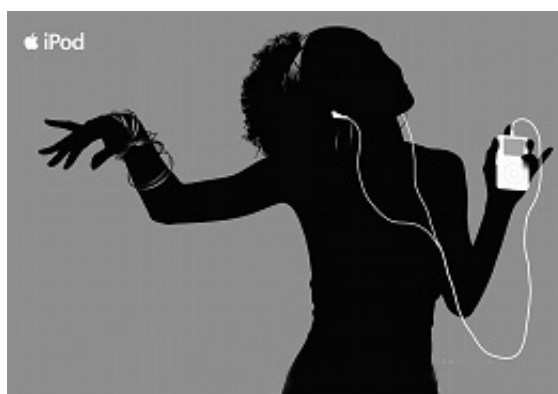
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She's gotta have it

Forget the idea that technology is the preserve of pale men in darkened rooms. Now big business, from top fashion houses to hi-tech manufacturers, is scrambling to get a piece of the new woman consumer.

Sally Foster has several mobile phones, four plasma screen TVs, a car that she can activate by remote control from her flat (so that it's warmed up by the time she gets to it on frostier mornings), an iBook laptop and a super hi-spec Mac G5 computer.



She's got a pair of Bang & Olufsen telephones, a digital camera and a Bose Lifestyle entertainment system that controls the individual output of each of the four amplifiers she has wired into different rooms in her house. She's got a first generation iPod and was the first person she knew to hear about MP3 players, let alone actually possess one. "And then I got a mini iPod too, because, well, it was pink."

Sally Foster loves gadgets. "I just think it's fascinating, the things they can do," she says. "I covet gadgets like I covet handbags, like shoes. Probably more in fact. It has been ages since I spent loads of

money on a handbag. I go to the Selfridges technology department, just for a look, just to pass the time. Whenever I'm in an airport, I'll have a quick look in electrical shops. I always want something new. If I see someone else with something new, I want that, too. I've got a wish list in my head. I'm a little bit obsessed. Do I sound like a freak?"

Perhaps less of a freak, and more of a pioneer. She's hardly your traditional technology consumer. She is a young, glamorous, fashion editor for the glossy magazine *B* – and quite inescapably female. Sally Foster is the technology consumer of the future.

In fact, increasingly, she and women like her are the technology consumers of right now. According to a recent report (commissioned early this summer by the electrical goods retailer, Dixons, who are unsurprisingly keen to tap into this growing market), electronics retailers have experienced a 20% increase in female customers over the course of the past two years.

Two things are widely believed to have fuelled British women's love affair with technology: increasingly good styling and developments in 'sociable' gadgetry – gadgets such as mobile phones and digital cameras that enhance, accommodate and facilitate their user's social life rather than limit it, as televisions are perceived to do.

"Fashion and technology are converging rapidly," says Joanne Illingworth, brand-marketing manager of Dixons. "Look at the number of adverts devoted to

gadgets. They're taking up space and time slots that were previously occupied by fashion or make-up. Technology is a fashion statement. What's the first thing anyone does when they get to a pub or a restaurant? They get their phone out of their bag and put it on the tabletop – partly in case they get a call or a text, but partly because they're showing off. Women need their mobiles, and their gadgets generally, to make a statement.”

Katie Lee, journalist and editor of *Shiny Shiny*, a weblog for gadget-obsessed women, agrees – to an extent. “Women

want good design, absolutely, and there's nothing wrong with that. But also women, more than men even, need to see a use in every gadget. They need to know exactly how it's going to fit into their lives, what it's going to do for them.”

“More than styling, size has had a big impact,” says Lee. “As things have got smaller, women have got more interested because physically these laptops, phones, whatever, are easier to carry around. So there's a straightforward appeal in things being pink or sparkling or cute. But if they don't do what we need them to do, or if they're too big, we don't care.”

Source: Adapted from The Observer, 24 July 2005.

Gadgets create a throwaway nation

The UK may be a nation of gadget lovers but there is a growing throwaway culture, a survey has found.

Young people in particular are keen to update their gadgets every couple of years, suggested the study commissioned by insurance firm Direct Line. More than half of 16 to 34 year-olds expect to change products such as mobile phones and DVD players every three years. Only 2% will hold on to technology for more than five years, the survey found.

Obsolete

Peer pressure plays a large part in what technology is fashionable at a given time with 54% of young people admitting to this influencing their buying. Tom Dunmore, editor of the gadget magazine *Stuff*, said there had been a change in the way people relate to technology.

“Many gadgets nowadays have a built-in obsolescence,” he told *BBC News Online*. “The iPod is a good example,” he said. Although Apple (the maker of the iPod) has since changed its policy, the original music players had a limited battery life and users were advised to buy a new machine when the battery died.

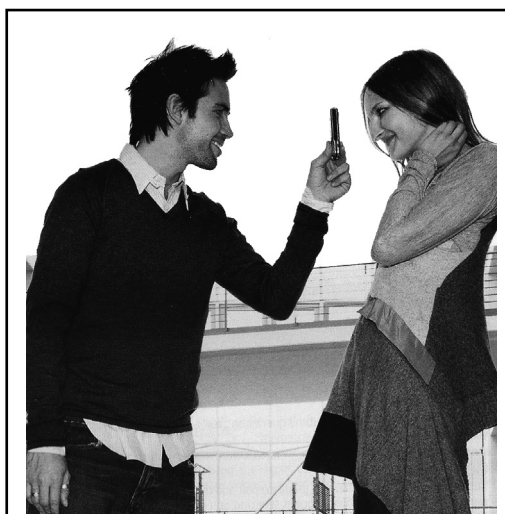
Companies such as Apple are moving from the computer into the consumer electronics industry where there is much more emphasis on regular upgrades, pointed out Mr Dunmore.

Fashion statement

People might expect their TV to have a longer shelf life but even these are not guaranteed to last.

“People don’t realise that the first generation plasma screens, which cost about £5,000, will degrade over a five year period. Buyers will be distraught when they find out,” he said. “Young people are much happier to upgrade on a regular basis. It is much more about fashion than keeping hold of things,” said Mr Dunmore.

People over 30 are a little more careful he believes, with many hoping to cling on to their phones and other gadgets for up to 10 years.



Mobile phones are seen as fashion accessories

Source: Adapted from BBC News Online, 31 May 2006.

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Education: Science and Technology

The 21st century offers society an unprecedented raft of challenges. All at once science is now delivering a diverse range of information technology, nanotechnology and biotechnology, with a speed that we could never have predicted even a decade ago.

For example, one recent survey of 8 to 18 year-olds claimed that children were now spending on average 6.5 hours a day using electronic media. Most recently, the trend to multi-tasking – that is, using one or more devices in parallel – amounted to an effective 8.5 hours a day. Could this ‘screen and multimedia’ culture have an impact on thinking and learning? The journalist Kevin Kelly summed up the issue very well:

“Screen culture is a world of constant change, of endless sound bites, quick cuts and half-baked ideas. It is a flow of gossip tidbits, news headlines and floating first impressions.”

When we read a book, the author takes you by the hand and you travel from the beginning to the middle to the end in a continuous narrative, in a series of interconnected steps. It may not be a journey with which you agree or that you enjoy, but nonetheless as you turn the pages one train of thought succeeds the last in a logical fashion.

We can then of course compare one narrative with another. In so doing, we start to build up a mental framework that enables us to evaluate further journeys, which in turn will influence our framework. You could argue that this is the basis of education – that is, education as we know it. It is the building up of a personalised framework, where we can relate incoming information to what we know already. We can place an isolated fact in a context that gives it significance. Traditional education has enabled us, if you like, to turn information into knowledge.

Now imagine that there is no clear, solid framework. Imagine that you are sitting in front of a multimedia presentation where you are unable, because you have not had the experience of many different intellectual journeys, to evaluate what is flashing up on the screen. The most immediate reaction instead would be the ‘yuk’ or ‘wow’ factor. You would be having an experience rather than learning. Here sounds and sights of a fast-paced, fast-moving, multimedia presentation would displace any time for thinking. You would just be reacting.

Navigation on the internet is wonderful if you have a clear framework in which to embed the responses that flash up. We should not assume that all children nowadays will be so well equipped. The *UK Children Go Online* investigation by Sonia Livingstone at the London School of Economics found that 92 per cent of 9 to 19 year-olds have accessed the internet from a computer at home or at school, but 30 per cent have received no lessons at all on using the internet. Only 33 per

cent of regular users of the internet have been taught how to judge the reliability of online information. We now have access to unlimited and up-to-date information at the touch of a button. The trouble is that we have to know which questions to ask. There is just so much information that it can become meaningless.

Soon the spoken word will be increasingly available. If we all have voice-controlled computers – such computers are in the near future – embedded in our clothing or personal effects, you might simply need to ask your watch for the date of the Battle of Hastings.

Memory, for example, may no longer be as essential as it was for those of us who had to remember such dates. Along with the ability to read and the need to remember, surely we are at risk of losing our imagination, that mysterious and special quality that until now has always made the book so very much better than the film.

Source: Adapted from a speech by Baroness Greenfield to the House of Lords, 20 April 2006.

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