

Silly Season

A vocabulary-building exercise based on
a collection of general news stories
CEF A2 (elementary) and above

Warning: Contains political, religious and sexual
themes

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Buckingham[®] English

Brighter ELT



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Introduction

Silly Season is aimed primarily at lower level adult learners of English as a foreign language.

The structure is repeated throughout for ease of use and to establish a degree of familiarity for the learner and teacher. Each of the 60 units is set up with the same great format:

- Reading (around 40 words)
- Vocabulary and translation box
- Comprehension questions
- Open debate on the topic
- A vocabulary task

Look at unit 1 on the opposite page as an example.

You can see at the top it begins with the news story. Once learners have read the article they are encouraged to note any new or unfamiliar vocabulary (1.1 Vocabulary box) which learners will be asked to use later. They are also asked to translate the vocabulary into their mother tongue. Far from being detrimental to learners, language one can be a very positive contributing force to obtaining a second language with adults who may lack confidence.

Next there are five comprehension questions (1.2). Some of these are designed to trick the learner and ensure they have really understood the question and article.

Two simple debate questions (1.3) follow which allow the learner to probe a little deeper into the subject area.

Finally learners are prompted to use the vocabulary they have learnt in the article and construct sentences with this new vocabulary (1.4). Teachers can set the tense as they wish (i.e. make sentences using the new vocabulary in the present or past etc).

These short stories have been adapted from real news articles.

Their original format was in two columns and appeared weekly. They were designed as a little fun against a backdrop of the more serious news coverage.

Teachers may have to explain the significance of some of the titles, especially when a double meaning is inferred. Remember there may not be a direct translation of the significance of this meaning into the learner's mother tongue.

This is one of the great strengths of Silly Season – it will broaden learners' vocabulary and comprehension.

1 Foul Dentist

ALAN HUTCHINSON, 51, a London dentist, may be prevented from practising after it was revealed to a medical tribunal how he urinated in a sink, neglected to wear gloves during surgery, and rarely washed his hands.

The tribunal heard evidence from a nurse who worked alongside Hutchinson for 16 years.

1.1 Vocabulary box

Vocabulary	Translation

1.2 Comprehension questions

- a) How old is Alan Hutchinson?
- b) What does he do?
- c) How long had the nurse worked with Mr Hutchinson?
- d) Where does Mr Hutchinson live?
- e) How often did Mr Hutchinson wear gloves?

1.3 Debate

Debate these issues.

- i) How often should people go to the dentist?
- ii) Should people visit the dentist less as they get older?

1.4 Vocabulary task

Use the new words from your Vocabulary box to make sentences.

30 US Housing Collapse

A COUPLE'S first home, which had made the news earlier this year as the cheapest house on the market in San Francisco, has collapsed. Luckily no-one was hurt in the collapse but a neighbour's house was damaged as the building slid into next door. The wooden construction had already been noted for being in an incredibly bad state and hence the low asking price, originally \$399,000 (€295,000 [correct at time of going to press]).

30.1 Vocabulary box

Vocabulary	Translation

30.2 Comprehension questions

- Why was the house in the news at the beginning of the year?
- How many people were hurt when the house collapsed?
- What was the house made of?
- What did the building slide into?
- Why was the price so low?

30.3 Debate

Debate these issues.

- Do you think house prices are too high in your country? Why or why not?
- Do you consider property a good investment or not? Explain.

30.4 Vocabulary task

Use the new words from your Vocabulary box to make sentences.

60 Run, Rabbit, Run!

5,000 RABBITS escaped onto the main M1 highway connecting Budapest with the Austrian capital Vienna on Monday after the truck they were being carried in crashed. The highway remained closed for several hours as the rabbits were collected. Many of them were reported by Viktoria Galik, a police spokesperson as 'just sitting there taking in the sun'.

60.1 Vocabulary box

Vocabulary	Translation

60.2 Comprehension questions

- a) Where is Vienna?
- b) How long was the highway closed for?
- c) Where were the rabbits from?
- d) What were most of the rabbits doing?
- e) How many rabbits were called Viktoria?

60.3 Debate

Debate these issues.

- i) Would you stop and help catch some rabbits? Why or why not?
- ii) Are rabbits a pest or pet in your country? Explain.

60.4 Vocabulary task

Use the new words from your Vocabulary box to make sentences.

Answers

1 Foul Dentist

- a) How old is Alan Hutchinson? *51*
- b) What does he do? *Dentist*
- c) How long had the nurse worked with Mr Hutchinson? *16 years*
- d) Where does Mr Hutchinson live? *We don't know!*
- e) How often did Mr Hutchinson wear gloves? *Rarely*

30 US Housing Collapse

- a) Why was the house in the news at the beginning of the year? *Low price*
- b) How many people were hurt when the house collapsed? *None*
- c) What was the house made of? *Wood*
- d) What did the building slide into? *Next door*
- e) Why was the price so low? *Because it was in bad condition*

60 Run, Rabbit, Run!

- a) Where is Vienna? *Austria*
- b) How long was the highway closed for? *Several hours*
- c) Where were the rabbits from? *Article doesn't say*
- d) What were most of the rabbits doing? *Just sitting taking in the sun*
- e) How many rabbits were called Viktoria? *Article doesn't say*

***Remember this is just a sample
there are lots more exercises in the full publication.***

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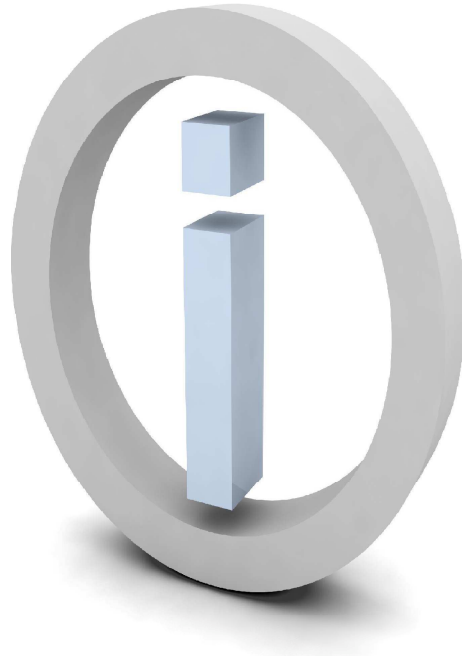
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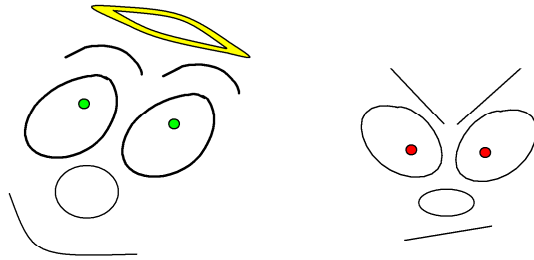
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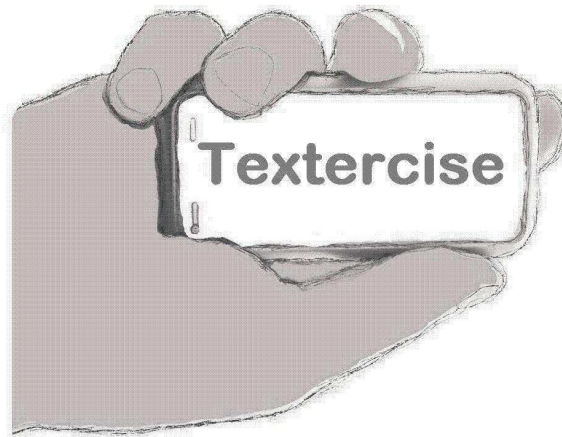


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