
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Smartphone addiction

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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello, welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob.

Catherine

And I'm Catherine.

Rob

So, Catherine, how long do you spend on your smartphone?

Catherine

My smartphone? Not that long really, only about 18 or 19 hours.

Rob

No, sorry, I meant in a day, not in a week.

Catherine

Er, that's what I meant too, Rob – a day.

Rob

Oh wow, so you've even got it right here...

Catherine

*...yep, got it now, Rob. Yes, I should tell you that I suffer from **FOMO**.*

Rob

FOMO?

Catherine

FOMO - Fear of Missing Out. Something cool or interesting might be happening somewhere, Rob, and I want to be sure I catch it, so I have to keep checking my phone, to make sure, you know, I don't miss out on anything.

Rob

*So we could call you a **phubber**... Hello... I said, so you're a **phubber**? Someone who ignores other people because you'd rather look at your phone.*

Catherine

Oh, yeah, that's right.

Rob

It sounds like you have a bit of a problem there, Catherine. But you're not the only one. According to one recent survey, half of teenagers in the USA feel like they are **addicted to** their mobile phones. If you are **addicted to** something, you have a physical or mental need to keep on doing it. You can't stop doing it. You often hear about people being **addicted to** drugs or alcohol, but you can be addicted to other things too, like mobile phones. So, Catherine, do you think you're addicted to your phone? How long could you go without it? Catherine? Catherine!

Catherine

Sorry, Rob, yes, well I think if I went more than a minute, I'd probably get sort of sweaty palms and I think I'd start feeling a bit panicky.

Rob

Oh dear! Well, if I can distract you for a few minutes, can we look at this topic in more detail please? Let's start with a quiz question first though. In what year did the term 'smartphone' first appear in print? Was it:

- a) 1995
- b) 2000
- c) 2005

What do you think?

Catherine

OK, you've got my full attention now, Rob, and I think it's 2000, but actually can I just have a quick look on my phone to check the answer?

Rob

No, no, that would be cheating – for you – maybe not for the listeners.

Catherine

Spoilsport.

Rob

Right, Jean Twenge is a psychologist who has written about the damage she feels smartphones are doing to society. She has written that smartphones have probably led to an increase in mental health problems for teenagers. We're going to hear from her now, speaking to the BBC. What does she say is one of the dangers of using our phones?

Jean Twenge, psychologist and author

I think everybody's had that experience of reading their news feed too much, **compulsively** checking your phone if you're waiting for a text or getting really into social media then kind of, looking up and realising that an hour has passed.

Rob

So what danger does she mention?

Catherine

Well, she said that we can get so involved in our phones that we don't notice the time passing and when we finally look up, we realise that maybe an hour has gone. And I must say, I find that to be true for me, especially when I'm watching videos online. They pull you in with more and more videos and I've spent ages just getting lost in video after video.

Rob

Well that's not a problem if you're looking at our YouTube site, of course - there's lots to see there.

Catherine

Yes, BBC Learning English, no problem. You can watch as many as you like.

Rob

*Well, she talks about checking our phones **compulsively**. If you do something **compulsively** you can't really control it - it's a feature of being **addicted to** something, you feel you have to do it again and again. Some tech companies, though, are now looking at building in timers to apps which will warn us when we have spent too long on them. Does Jean Twenge think this will be a good idea?*

Jean Twenge, psychologist and author

*It might mean that people look at social media less frequently and that they do what it really should be used for, which is to **keep in touch with** people but then **put it away** and go see some of those people **in person** or give them a phone call.*

Rob

So, does she think it's a good idea?

Catherine

Well, she doesn't say so directly, but we can guess from her answer that she does, because she says these timers will make people spend more time in face-to-face interaction, which a lot of people think would be a good thing.

Rob

*Yes, she said we should be using it for **keeping in touch with** people - which means contacting people, communicating with them and also encouraging us to do that communication **in person**. If you do something **in person** then you physically do it – you go somewhere yourself or see someone yourself, you don't do it online or through your smartphone, which nicely brings us back to our quiz question. When was the term smartphone first used in print - 1995, 2000 or 2005? What did you say, Catherine?*

Catherine

I think I said 2005, without looking it up on my phone, Rob!

Rob

That's good to know, but maybe looking at your phone would have helped because the answer was 1995. But well done to anybody who did know that.

Catherine

Or well done to anyone who looked it up on their phone and got the right answer.

Rob

Mmm, right, before logging off let's review today's vocabulary.

Catherine

*OK, we had **FOMO**, an acronym that means 'Fear of Missing Out'. Something that I get quite a lot.*

Rob

*And that makes you also a **phubber** - people who ignore the real people around them because they are concentrating on their phones.*

Catherine

*Yes, I do think I'm probably **addicted to** my phone. I have a psychological and physical need to have it. My smartphone is my drug.*

Rob

*Wow, and you look at it **compulsively**. You can't stop looking at it, you do it again and again, don't you?*

Catherine

*It's sadly true, Rob. To **keep in touch with** someone is to contact them and share your news regularly.*

Rob

*And if you do that yourself by actually meeting them, then you are doing it **in person**. And that brings us to the end of today's programme. Don't forget you can find us on the usual social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube - and on our website at bbclearningenglish.com. Bye for now.*

Catherine

Bye!