



BBC WORLD SERVICE LEARNING ENGLISH

Modern British Families



The modern family

Father leaves for work in the morning after breakfast. The two children take the bus to school, and mother stays at home cooking and cleaning until father and the kids return home in the evening. This is the traditional picture of a happy family living in Britain. But is it true today? The answer is - no! The past 20 years have seen enormous changes in the lives and structures of families in Britain, and the traditional model is no longer true in many cases.

The biggest change has been caused by **divorce**. As many as 2 out of 3 marriages now end in divorce, leading to a situation where many children live with one parent and only see the other at weekends or holidays.

There has also been a **huge** rise in the number of mothers who work. The large rise in divorces has meant many women need to work to **support** themselves and their children. Even when there is no divorce, many families need both parents to work in order to survive. This has caused an increase in **childcare facilities**, though they are very expensive and can be difficult to find in many areas. In addition, women are no longer happy to stay at home **raising** children, and many have careers earning as much as or even more than men, the traditional **breadwinners**.

There has also been a **sharp** increase in the number of **single mothers**, particularly among teenagers. Many of their children grow up never knowing their fathers, and some people feel the **lack of a male role model** has a damaging effect on their lives.

However, these changes have not had a totally negative effect. For women, it is now much easier to have a career and good salary. Although it is difficult to be a working mother, it has become normal and it's no longer seen as a bad thing for the children. As for children themselves, some argue that modern children grow up to be more independent and mature than in the past. From an early age they have to go to childminders or **nurseries**, and so they are used to **dealing with** strangers and **mixing with** other children.

So while the traditional model of a family may no longer be true in modern Britain, the modern family continues to raise happy, successful children.

Glossary

divorce - when a marriage ends and the former husband and wife separate from one another

to support - here, to provide with a home and the necessities of life

raising - bringing up and educating

sharp - here, big and happening over a short period of time

lack - if there is a lack of something, there is not enough of it

nurseries - places equipped for looking after very young children

mixing with - socialising, living together with, joining

a huge rise - a very big increase/growth (opposite to fall/decrease/decline)

childcare facilities - special institutions whose job is to look after children while parents are working

breadwinners - a breadwinner is the person who earns the most money in their family

single mothers - women who raise their children by themselves because they live separately from the children's fathers

male role model - a man who thinks and acts in the way that is traditionally perceived as being typical of men

dealing with - managing, doing what is necessary to achieve the result you want

1. Reading Quiz

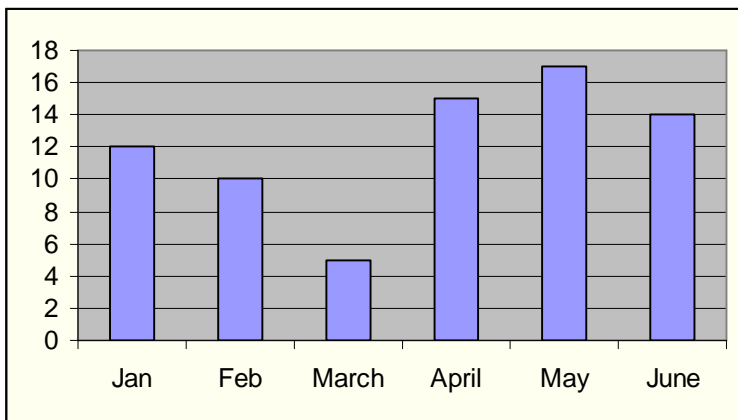
Are these sentences true or false? Circle the correct answer.

1. Divorce is not common in Britain. True / False
2. Childcare is not cheap in Britain. True / False
3. Women can now earn as much as men. True / False
4. Many mothers nowadays are not married. True / False

2. Vocabulary

Do the following verbs mean GO UP or GO DOWN?

1. Increase _____
2. Decrease _____
3. Fall _____
4. Rise _____
5. Grow _____
6. Decline _____



The graph shows sales for the first half of the year. Use the verbs from above to complete the sentences. There may be more than one possible answer. You may need to change the tense of the verbs.

1. Sales _____ in February.
2. Sales _____ again in March.
3. However, sales _____ in April.
4. Sales continued to _____ in May.
5. In June, sales _____.

3. Phrasal Verbs

Look at the phrasal verbs below. Can you match them to their definitions?

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Bring up | a. care for |
| 2. Grow up | b. educate, give food, clothes etc |
| 3. Look after | c. become older and mature |
| 4. Deal with | d. socialise |
| 5. Mix with | e. manage |

Now complete the sentences below by using one of the phrasal verbs in the correct form.

1. Actually, girls usually _____ faster than boys.
2. He's not very friendly. He doesn't _____ other people very well.
3. I was _____ by my grandmother. She taught me everything I know.
4. It's a very stressful job. I have to _____ lots of problems.
5. When my parents went out at night I had to _____ my younger brother.

4. Wordsearch

Try to find the words associated with FAMILY in the puzzle below.

There are ten words to find. Words can be written horizontally (g), vertically (i) or diagonally (m).

Z	X	C	V	M	O	T	H	E	R	N	M
L	K	C	J	H	G	F	D	S	A	Q	W
F	E	R	O	T	S	Y	A	U	I	O	P
A	A	S	D	U	I	F	G	U	H	J	B
T	K	S	L	M	S	N	B	V	N	C	R
H	X	O	Z	A	T	I	S	D	F	T	O
E	G	N	H	J	E	K	N	L	P	O	T
R	I	U	Y	T	R	R	E	W	Q	A	H
S	D	F	G	H	J	K	K	L	M	N	E
B	U	N	C	L	E	C	V	I	A	X	R
D	F	V	R	T	H	M	Y	G	D	Z	C
P	A	R	E	N	T	S	J	Y	B	S	N

FATHER	MOTHER	COUSIN	BROTHER	SISTER
AUNT	UNCLE	PARENTS	SON	KIDS

Answers

1. Reading Quiz

Are these sentences true or false? Circle the correct answer.

- Divorce is not common in Britain. **False**
- Childcare is not cheap in Britain. **True**
- Women can now earn as much as men. **True**
- Many mothers nowadays are not married. **True**

3. Phrasal Verbs

Look at the phrasal verbs below. Can you match them to their definitions?

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Bring up | b. educate, give food, clothes etc |
| 2. Grow up | c. become older and mature |
| 3. Look after | a. care for |
| 4. Deal with | e. manage |
| 5. Mix with | d. socialise |

Now complete the sentences below by using one of the phrasal verbs in the correct form.

- Actually, girls usually **GROW UP** faster than boys.
- He's not very friendly. He doesn't **MIX WITH** other people very well.
- I was **BROUGHT UP** by my grandmother. She taught me everything I know.
- It's a very stressful job. I have to **DEAL WITH** lots of problems.
- When my parents went out at night I had to **LOOK AFTER** my younger brother.

2. Vocabulary

Do the following verbs mean GO UP or GO DOWN?

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Increase | GO UP |
| 2. Decrease | GO DOWN |
| 3. Fall | GO DOWN |
| 4. Rise | GO UP |
| 5. Grow | GO UP |
| 6. Decline | GO DOWN |

The graph shows sales for the first half of the year. Use the verbs from above to complete the sentences. There may be more than one possible answer. You may need to change the tense of the verbs.

- Sales **FELL/DECREASED/DECLINED** in February.
- Sales **FELL/DECREASED/DECLINED** again in March.
- However, sales **INCREASED/ROSE/GREW** in April.
- Sales continued to **INCREASE/RISE/GROW** in May.
- In June, sales **FELL/DECREASED/DECLINED**.

4. Wordsearch

				M	O	T	H	E	R		
		C									
F			O		S		A				
A				U	I			U			B
T		S			S				N		R
H		O			T	I				T	O
E		N			E		N				T
R					R						H
							K				E
		U	N	C	L	E			I		R
										D	
P	A	R	E	N	T	S					S

