

Introduction

Download the LearnEnglish Themes podcast. You'll find more information on this page:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-themes.htm>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- The article that you can listen to in the podcast
- An optional comprehension activity based on the article
- Links to other activities on the LearnEnglish website on this theme (home).

Read the article

Danger! Bird bath!

by Andy Baxter

We all know that chainsaws are very dangerous - in Britain 1,207 people had to visit hospitals after accidents with chainsaws in 1999. However, in the same year, 16,662 people – more than twelve times as many - were injured by their sofa!

In June 2001, the New Scientist reported that “its favourite government report” had been published by Britain's Department of Trade and Industry. This was the annual Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System report for 1999. The report looks at what people said had made them go to accident departments in certain British hospitals. It then uses these figures to estimate causes of accidents over the whole country.

Some of the most harmless things prove to be extremely dangerous:

Clothes: the Times (07 June 2001) reported that there were 5,945 trouser accidents (compared with only 5,137 the previous year). Socks and tights caused 10,773 accidents. Most of these accidents were people falling over because they were getting dressed too fast, and many other people fell over clothes left on the floor (you see, your mother was right when she told you to tidy up your bedroom!)

Meanwhile, the garden also took its revenge. Tree trunks caused 1,810 accidents, and bird baths went on the rampage, attacking 311 people - up from 117 victims in 1998. But the biggest

danger was your wellington boots: 5,615 accidents.

In films, people always hide from danger in the bathroom, but that's a dangerous option in real life. Toilet-roll holders alone accounted for 329 victims, while 787 people had to confront their sponge or loofah, and there were 73 talcum powder victims. But beware the clothes basket, which claimed 3,421 victims nationwide.

But it was in the kitchen that most people got injured. Tea cosies – woollen covers for tea pots to keep the tea hot – caused 37 injuries, compared with 20 the previous year; while placemat accidents were up from 157 to 165. Vegetables caused 13,132 incidents, while 91 accidents were caused by bread bins.

The deadly nature of these common household objects becomes clearer when you compare it with items people normally think are dangerous. Only 329 injuries were caused by meat cleavers, and only 439 caused by rat or mouse poison.

How can we explain all these horrors hiding in our homes? Perhaps the figures are explained by the fact that most of the injured people were children under five. And we all know that young children on wobbly legs will go to places and insert their fingers in places that even Lara Croft would have thought twice about risking...

After reading**Exercise 1**

Below are 11 statements about the text. For each one, decide if it is True or False.

1. Chainsaws caused many times more accidents than sofas.
2. The New Scientists didn't like the Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System report.
3. The figures for causes of accidents are not very accurate.
4. More people were hurt getting dressed than tripping over clothes left on the floor.
5. The author thinks mothers give good advice.
6. Bird baths actually attack people.
7. Wellington boots are more dangerous than trousers.
8. Many people in films get hurt by clothes baskets.
9. More people got hurt in their kitchens than anywhere else.
10. Common household objects caused more injuries than items people normally think are dangerous.
11. Lara Croft thinks twice as much as children about having accidents.

More activities on this topic

You'll find links to all the following activities connected to the theme of home at:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-central-themes-home.htm>

- **UK Culture:** The Housing Issue. We reveal a country that is living in the 21st Century, a nation that is adopting modern, energy-saving materials, technology and ideas.
- **Magazine articles:** There are 2 other articles: **Black sheep and the mysterious Uncle Bob** and **IKEA**.
- **Word games:** There are 10 word games, including **apartment game**; **everyday activities**; **household appliances** and **tools**.
- **Stories:** There are 3 stories: **Names**; **The Untied Nations** and **Where Home Is**.
- **Poems:** There are 2 (sets of) poems: **Family poetry** and **A glass of wine**.
- **Trivia:** The following trivia topic is available for this theme: **family**.
- **Science:** cubed - **Domestic LEDs** and **Intelligent interiors**.
- There are also 3 home-related cartoons, and carefully selected external links.

Answers to comprehension activity: 1. False (F); 2. F; 3. True (T); 4. T; 5. T; 6. F; 7. F; 8. F; 9. T; 10. T; 11. F