

Hobbies and Leisure Time

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THEY FOR YOU? LET'S HAVE A WORD ABOUT THEM!

First things first: HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE LEISURE or FREE TIME?

Basically, to most people it is a period of time spent out of work and essential domestic activity, or the period of time before or after compulsory activities such as eating and sleeping, going to work or running a business, attending school and doing homework, household chores, and day-today stressful operations. WHAT TYPE OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES ARE YOU INVOLVED IN? Are they active leisure activities such as walking, yoga or jogging, which expend little energy, or are they high-impact activities such as, e. g., kickboxing, soccer, ice hockey or other sports that consume much more energy and are competitive? On the other hand, are you into playing chess or painting, which involve almost no physical activity but require a substantial mental effort? Whichever of these activities you are involved in, they are much better and more useful than passive leisure activities in which you do not exert almost any physical or mental activity such as, e.g., going to the cinema, watching TV, or gambling on slot machines. Nevertheless, passive leisure activities are also a good way of relaxing for many people as long as they do not become an obsession.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE WAY YOU SPEND YOUR LEISURE TIME?

If you are the type who works indoors and spends most of your time sitting and doing office work, you will probably prefer doing sports, going camping, hiking, fishing or picking mushrooms. If your job involves a lot of physical activity, you may prefer to spend your free time reading books, magazines or watching television. To some of these people, collecting stamps, postcards, badges, model cars or ships, bottles, napkins or antiques might be a relaxing type of hobby. Socializing with your friends at dinner, having a drink after a hard day at work, having a regular night out at weekends, dining out or dancing the night away at a club or disco might be a normal part of your free time. Maybe you are what is known as a “workaholic” – a person who works

compulsively at the expense of their free time or “slackers” – someone who avoids work and spends as much time as possible in leisure activities. If none of the above categories fit your life, THEN WHAT ARE YOUR MOST FAVOURITE HOBBIES?

What we need now is a clear definition of what a “hobby” is: according to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, it is “an activity that you do for pleasure when you are not working.” So let’s try to categorize them a bit:

One of the most usual types of hobby is COLLECTING a lot of things and even as many experiences as possible: vintage cars, stamps, napkins, etc. and collecting experiences of a particular type: train/bus/ aircraft spotting, bird watching, visiting continents, countries, states, national parks, etc. Also playing games may help develop practical skills and might serve as exercise or have an educational, stimulating or psychological role. Unfortunately, some of them might be counterproductive if played for an uncontrolled period of time, e.g., PC games, especially when young children play them. Another type of hobby is OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY – hiking, trekking, canoeing, kayaking, climbing, cycling, caving, and doing water or snow sports. They are enjoyed by many as a bit of fun, an adrenaline rush or an escape from reality. Extreme sports can be considered a very popular and frequent type of hobby especially for young people.

CREATIVE HOBBIES: they usually result in some end product – woodworking, software and artistic projects, creating models, restoring/tuning cars, building computers from scratch or creating card or paper models of planes or ships. For some “hobbyists,” cooking can be considered a very delightful activity and not a tedious duty; the same goes for gardening or keeping pets of all kinds. If you are more domestically oriented, then HOME-ORIENTED LEISURE ACTIVITIES are certainly your cup of tea: watching TV and DVDs, playing computer games, browsing the Internet, chatting on social networks, reading, listening to music or visiting friends. Of course, many people’s social lives are closely bound up with their interests, so they visit clubs and societies, amateur dramatic groups, film societies, dance clubs and special interest societies focused on, e.g., art,

astronomy, local history, archaeology, etc. Believe it or not, spending weekends in shopping malls has currently become a very common pastime, especially for young people. They just go window shopping, play darts, eat out, go bowling or just meet friends and idle their time away in the anonymous crowds of other people. It is probably not a very healthy alternative to those activities mentioned above, what do you think? All in all, no matter whether you prefer spending your leisure time alone or with other people, the most important thing is that you relax and enjoy doing it, because that's what a pastime is all about!

Answer the questions:

1. What types of leisure activities are people usually involved in?
2. Give examples of low and high impact activities and passive activities.
3. Give some examples of things to collect and the way people usually keep them.
4. What extra-curricular activities are offered by your school?
5. Why may games be rather dangerous for some people?
6. Comment on your favourite outdoor recreation activities.
7. Which creative hobbies are you into?
8. Are home-based leisure activities appealing to you? Why/why not? Explain.
9. How do you personally spend your free time?