

Why I quit complaining about cyclists, scrapped my car and chose public transport

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Do you cycle to work or school? How often do you ride your bike?
2. What's the best means of transport to move around your city? Why? And what is the worst?

2 Key words

a. Complete the sentences using these key words from the text.

anger

controversial

furious

seriously

slightly

1. If a topic is _____, it causes different, opposing points of view.
2. When you are very angry, you are _____.
3. _____ is a feeling of being upset or annoyed by something or someone.
4. _____ means *in a big or an important manner*.
5. _____ means *in a small amount*.

careless

lifestyle

pedestrian

risk

socialise

6. A _____ is something that has a chance of failing.
7. The way a person or a community lives is their _____.
8. To _____ to spend time with other people.
9. When you do something without paying attention to it, you are _____.
10. People who walk instead of using a vehicle are called _____.

b. Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. What makes you **furious**?
2. What is a **controversial** topic from the last year?
3. Do you sometimes take **risks** at work or school?
4. Do you think you have an active or relaxed **lifestyle**?
5. How often do you **socialise** with friends, co-workers, or classmates?

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27 November, 2023

- 1 “Cyclists are dangerous and should not be allowed on the roads.” That was the headline of an article I wrote in 2015. It was the most controversial article I have ever written, attacking anyone stupid enough to ride a bike.
- 2 Readers were furious. Cyclists who were injured got in touch. I was shocked, but I also thought most drivers were careful and accidents were just sad, rare events.
- 3 Looking back now, I understand their anger better. According to the Department for Transport, about 100 cyclists die on British roads every year. In 2022, 4,056 were seriously injured and 11,546 slightly injured. Before I wrote the article, I only lived in cities that were really dangerous for cyclists, so I could not understand why anyone would take the risk.
- 4 My attitude changed during lockdown. Suddenly, the noise of the roads was gone. Cars were no longer important. Instead of traffic, I heard birds singing.
- 5 I have always cared about the environment but didn't know how to make a difference. During the pandemic, I started to spend more time in nature. I wondered how I could change my lifestyle to suit the natural world. I had to change my routines. I worked from home and socialised by Zoom. I realised I could walk, catch a train to the shops, or visit my friends. When my car broke down one day, I sold it and didn't get a new one.
- 6 That was the encouragement I needed to start using public transport. I learned to appreciate the journey and realised I could do more for the environment. It hasn't always been easy to reduce my carbon footprint. I've flown less but still took a few flights this year. In other words, I'm still trying.
- 7 I stopped hating cyclists. I was younger and careless when I wrote the article. I now appreciate those who make efforts to protect the environment. I wish my town, and Britain, could help cyclists and pedestrians move around safely.
- 8 Some of my friends still think cyclists are annoying. Others think it's strange that I don't have a car anymore. But I enjoy talking to people at the station. I'm even planning to try cycling!

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3 Comprehension check

- a. The following ideas are mentioned in the article. Put them in the order they appear in the text.
- The author received negative comments from readers.
 - She started doing more to help the environment.
 - The author explains her opinion about cyclists is no longer negative.
 - She started changing her habits.
 - She mentions her future plans.
 - The author wrote an article about cyclists.
 - Her opinion changed when she could not use her car.
 - The writer explains she didn't understand cyclists.

4 Key language

- a. Complete the table with the past form of the verbs from the article.

Infinitive form	Past form
think	1. _____
write	2. _____
change	3. _____
hear	4. _____
start	5. _____
have	6. _____
work	7. _____
learn	8. _____
take	9. _____
stop	10. _____

- b. Write three verbs from the previous activity on a piece of paper. Exchange lists with a partner. Write three sentences using the verbs you got.

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “Cyclists are dangerous and should not be allowed on the roads.”
- “Public transport is the best option.”
- “There are too many cars on the road.”

6 In your own words

a. Work in pairs or small groups. Prepare a short presentation about cycling, driving, or using public transport. Include the following information:

- How do you usually move around in your town or city?
- How often do you use alternative or different means of transport (cycle, drive, or public transport)?
- What are some problems with this form of transport?
- How can your government make transport more accessible?