



Pre-Reading Activities

A: What's Important?

Work in pairs and answer the questions below.

1. Imagine you are going out to watch a football game at a local stadium on a Saturday afternoon.

Which of these things would you be thinking about as you go out? (You may choose more than one option.)

* *how long it takes to get to the game*

* *which team is going to win*

* *your personal safety*

* *whether you should take a weapon with you*

* *what clothes you should wear*

* *who is going with you*

* *how you are getting there*

2. Imagine you are going out at night with friends to a bar.

Which of these things would you be thinking about as you go out? (You may choose more than one option.)

* *how long it takes to get to the bar*

* *what new people you might meet at the bar*

* *your personal safety*

* *whether you should take a weapon with you*

* *what clothes you should wear*

* *who is going with you*

* *how you are getting there*

B: Vocabulary

The words in bold type below are in today's article. Look at the example sentences. Then talk about what the words could mean. Check your dictionaries when you have finished to see if your deductions about the meanings were correct.

1. Fear **stalks** the streets of New York as police struggle to find the murderer who has now struck eight times.

2. **Exposure** to the sun usually causes your skin to tan but can also cause skin-cancer.

3. We are continually **bombarded** with advertising messages telling us to spend money on ourselves. I get sick of them!

4. There is an **amnesty** on overdue library books at the moment. Just put any overdue books in the box outside the library and you won't have to pay a fine.

Reading Activities

A: Choosing A Headline

Read **Part One** of today's article on the next page very quickly. (Do not read every word!) Then choose a headline for the article from the three headlines below, OR if you do not like any of these headlines, write a headline yourself.

1. Gun culture stalks Britain's streets

2. TV watching causes violence

3. Britons bombarded with stabbing headlines



Part One:

BY KATE KELLAND

LONDON Fri Jun 9, (Reuters) - A teenager lies in a pool of blood in the street after he is stabbed in a dawn attack. A day later, a father of three is knifed to death in front of his daughters in a struggle with a neighbour after a family fun day.

A mother mourns her 19-year-old son, Thomas Grant, who was stabbed through the heart as he tried to stop a fight on a train. Children lay flowers at the school gates where Kiyan Prince, a promising footballer aged 15, died in a knife attack.

Britain is living "in the shadow of the knife", as one tabloid headline writer put it. And experts fear the number of fatal stabbings will spiral out of control if a growing knife culture among young people is not tackled.

"WAR ON OUR STREETS"

"We've got a war on our streets ... and the trend for violence is getting worse," says Lyn Costello of the campaign group Mothers Against Murder And Aggression (MAMAA).

Figures show that 6 percent of all violent crimes in Britain are knife-related. More than a quarter of the 820 homicides in 2004/5 involved sharp instruments, and in London alone, there were more than 12,500 knife-related incidents last year.

The peak age for knife crime is 15 to 18 years. Data shows 41 percent of those accused of robbery using a knife were in this age bracket, as were 17 percent of the victims.

Experts blame the emergence of a youth culture where violence is endemic and where parents find it hard to restrict their children's exposure.

"The underlying issue is inner-city youth culture," says North London Labour MP Diane Abbott. "Young children grow up in a society where the music, the video games and the films are all saturated with violence."

AMNESTY

As Britons are bombarded with headline after headline about lethal stabbings, there are plans for U.S.-style school gate searches to stop children taking knives into class, and the government has announced a five-week national knife amnesty to encourage people to hand in weapons without fear of prosecution.

Posters warn people to "turn in that knife before it's turned on you". Police hope to get thousands of weapons off the streets before the amnesty -- the first in Britain for 10 years -- ends on June 30.

"Too many people think that carrying a knife will make them safer, but the reality is quite the opposite," said Vernon Coaker, junior interior minister, as he launched the campaign. "They run the real risk of having the knife turned back on them."

But experts say trying to get knives off the street will have little effect. "It's a cultural problem. It's not just something the police can deal with. It is a much wider and more complex issue," said Hannah Gardiner, spokeswoman for the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Dr Marian Fitzgerald, a criminologist and professor at the University of Kent agrees the amnesty will achieve little on its own.

"The amnesty is not going to stop knife crime," she told Reuters. "It's intended to be awareness-raising rather than an end in itself."

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B: Matching Information

Here is some information referring to figures mentioned in **Part One** of the article. Read **Part One** more carefully and write the correct figure in the space.

Number of crimes involving knives in Britain's capital in 2005 _____

Number of murders over a 2-year period in Britain _____

Figure for murders caused by sharp instruments over a two-year period in Britain _____

Age of man who died intervening in a fight _____

Age of youth killed by a knife _____

Figure for violent crimes involving knives in Britain _____

Figure for people aged 15-18 years who are attacked with knives _____

Figure for criminals aged 15-18 years who use knives in robberies _____

C: Comprehension

Use **Part One** of the article to answer these questions.

1. What weapon caused the deaths of the people described in the first two paragraphs of the article?
2. With which group is this weapon becoming more popular?
3. What could happen if this problem is not controlled?
4. What are young children continually being exposed to?
5. What do the posters advertising the amnesty ask people to do?
6. What do some experts think of the amnesty campaign?
7. How does Dr. Fitzgerald justify the amnesty campaign?

D: Ordering Paragraphs

Read **Part Two** of the article and put the paragraphs below labeled **a. - j.** in the correct order.

Three of them have been done for you.

	a. As the law stands now, carrying a bladed article in a public place "without good reason or lawful excuse" can lead to up to two years in prison in Britain.
1.	b. "The reality is that most of the victims of young people are other young people," said Fitzgerald, who has worked with the government's Home Office and with the Youth Justice Board.
10.	c. "You can go for these draconian options, but actually the questions that we need to ask are whether they address the real issues and are they going to work ... and I'm not sure that the answer would be yes."
	d. But Fitzgerald describes the idea as "barmy" and warns that a headline-grabbing gut reaction could be counterproductive.
	e. "What we have to do is teach our children that violence is not acceptable in our society. That means a mass education programme. And if they don't listen to that ... they have to face up to a five-year sentence."
6.	f. "This isn't really about knives. This is about violence. Even if we took every knife out of the country, the ones who want to be violent would find something else -- a broken bottle, a baseball bat, a house brick," she says.
	g. But campaigners and the families of victims of knife attacks say this sentence is nowhere near tough enough. They want long mandatory jail sentences for anyone caught carrying a knife.
	h. "We also have to make sure that other young people feel that their fears of crime are being taken seriously and are being addressed," she said.
	i. MAMAA's Costello wants to see more effort being made to educate children about the dangers of carrying weapons, but insists that tougher enforcement of the law and longer jail sentences must be brought in alongside that.
	j. Britain's most senior police officer, Scotland Yard Commissioner Ian Blair, backs tough mandatory sentences, saying it is the only way to get on top of the problem.

Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

A: Discussion

Work in pairs and discuss one or more of these statements. Say whether you **agree**, **disagree** with them or are **unsure**.

Give reasons for your choice of answer.

- 1 Tough mandatory sentences are the only way to stop this rise in stabbing incidents.
- 2 You can go for these draconian options, but actually the questions that we need to ask are whether they address the real issues and are they going to work and I'm not sure that the answer would be yes.
- 3 The underlying issue is inner-city youth culture. Young children grow up in a society where the music, video games and films are all saturated with violence.
- 4 A youth culture has emerged where violence is endemic and parents find it hard to restrict their children's exposure.
- 5 Too many people think that carrying a knife will make them safer, but the reality is quite the opposite.

B: Say It

Work in groups of four. Take one of the roles below and try to talk in that role for one to two minutes. When each of you has finished, swap roles and repeat the activity.

Student 1: you are a young person living in London.

Student 2: you are the mother of a teenager stabbed in a knife attack in London. You are also a member of MAMAA.

Student 3: the government minister launching the amnesty for knives.

Student 4: a spokesperson for the Association of Chief Police Officers.

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TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Pre-Reading Activities

A: What's Important? - Notes

There is no correct answer for either question. Students are encouraged to think about what things they consider when going out in the daytime or nighttime. If your students are a lot older, you might like to change the questions to "Imagine your son or daughter is going out...."

Reading Activities

A: Choosing A Headline - Notes

This is a variation on the common activity of choosing a suitable headline. Here, the catch is that none of the three headlines are suitable. Students will need to write their own, but may only know to do this if they have read the instructions carefully!

A: Choosing A Headline - Suggested Answer

The original headline of the article was **Knife culture stalks Britain's streets**. Students need to write a headline that emphasizes the idea reflected in this headline.

The reasons why the other headlines were not suitable:

Headline 1. The article does not mention guns, but says use of knives is on the rise in Britain.

Headline 2. This idea is mentioned in the article but it is not its main point.

Headline 3. This idea is also mentioned in the article but again it is not its main point.

B: Matching Information - Notes

Number of crimes involving knives in Britain's capital in 2005 (12,500)

Number of murders over a 2-year period in Britain (820)

Figure for murders caused by sharp instruments over a two-year period in Britain (a quarter)

Age of man who died intervening in a fight (19)

Age of youth killed by a knife (15)

Figure for violent crimes involving knives in Britain (6%)

Figure for people aged 15-18 years who are attacked with knives (17%)

Figure for criminals aged 15-18 years who use knives in robberies (41%)

C: Comprehension - Answers

1. a knife, 2. young people, 3. The number of fatal stabbings could grow. 4. violence, 5. They are asked to hand in their knives. 6. They think it will have little impact. 7. She says it is being done to raise awareness of the problem of using knives.

D: Ordering Paragraphs - Notes

If you were to make copies of the paragraphs and separate them so that each student or each pair of students had a set, they will then be able to move them around as they order them which make the exercise easier and enjoyable.

D: Ordering Paragraphs - Answers

1. b, 2. h, 3. a, 4. g, 5. i, 6. f, 7. e, 8. j, 9. d, 10. c.

