BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Should we cycle more?

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil
Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Becca
And I'm Becca.

Neil
Cycling is a popular activity in Britain.

Becca
Yes. This year, sales of bicycles, or bikes as they're usually called, are up in Britain. Many people choose cycling because it's good for their health and the environment. And electric bikes are making cycling accessible to more people, including older people.

Neil
In this episode, we'll visit two countries: one with a long history of cycling and another where it's just getting started. And as usual, we'll be learning some useful new words and phrases. And remember, you'll find all the vocabulary from this episode on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Becca
But first, Neil, I have a question about a country that's world famous for its bikes: the Netherlands, also often referred to as Holland. The Netherlands' cycle network spreads over 95,000 miles, and there are more bikes in the country than its 18 million citizens. So, roughly speaking, how many bikes are there in the Netherlands? Is it:

a) 20 million,
b) 24 million, or
c) 34 million?

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Neil
Well, I'm going to say c) 34 million.

Becca
Well, we'll reveal the correct answer later in the programme. Staying in the Netherlands, let's hear from Meredith Glaser, CEO of Amsterdam's Urban Cycling Institute. Here, Meredith tells BBC World Service programme The Inquiry more about Dutch people's love of cycling.

Meredith Glaser
The bicycle is **deeply ingrained** into Dutch culture. But the rise of cycling started in the industrial era, when bicycle manufacturing **took off**. And it went from a toy for rich people to an everyday tool for transportation, and this was a really important **milestone** for cycling in the Netherlands.

Neil
Cycling is **deeply ingrained** into Dutch culture. **Deeply ingrained** are two words that go together commonly, and it means something that's firmly established within a person or culture, and unlikely to change.

Becca
During the 1890s, bike manufacturing **took off** in the Netherlands. **Take off** is a phrasal verb meaning to suddenly become popular or successful. Certain brands became symbols of a new, comfortable style of bike. New factories made bikes cheaper to buy. This was a **milestone** for cycling in the Netherlands. A **milestone** is an important event in someone's life or in the development of something.

Neil
Our second destination is better known for cars than bicycles: the United Arab Emirates or UAE. UAE is hoping cycling could be a greener way for visitors to explore tourist attractions in cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Transport consultant Martin Tillman, who lives in the Gulf region, explained more to BBC World Service programme The Inquiry.

Martin Tillman
We also have **quality of life** and **liveability**. All the cities in the Gulf are very competitive, and they would love to be ranked very high in those global rankings, and cycling is seen as part of that **quality-of-life** solution.

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Becca
Gulf cities like Dubai want a reputation as places with a good **quality of life**. The phrase **quality of life** refers to someone's level of enjoyment, comfort and health when living in a particular place. It's a measure of a person's overall wellbeing.

Neil
Gulf cities are also interested in **liveability** – the degree to which somewhere is a pleasant place to live. Cycling is good for mental as well as physical health, and Dubai's town planners are hoping the 600km of cycle tracks already built will make the city more attractive to live in.

Becca
Of course, there are big differences between the Netherlands and UAE – the temperature for one, which in Dubai regularly hits 45ºC. Martin told BBC World Service's The Inquiry that Dubai is studying countries like the Netherlands not to copy them, but to discover what works.

Martin Tillman
It's certainly not **a copy and paste** of what is good in Holland or Denmark, but the key is that we're looking for the principles.

Neil
Cycling in UAE isn't **a copy and paste** of cycling in Holland. Martin uses the phrase **a copy and paste** to mean an exact copy of something, which is moved and put somewhere else. Dubai can't simply copy the Netherlands, and a range of measures, including water stations and shaded rest areas, have been created for cycling in the heat.

Becca
Cycling isn't the perfect solution for everyone, everywhere. But in some places, it can be a popular and green alternative.

Neil
Yes, just look at the Netherlands. And that reminds me of your question, Becca.

Becca
Ah yes. I asked you roughly how many bikes are there in the Netherlands?

Neil
I said 34 million. Was I right?

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Becca
There are certainly a lot of bikes in the Netherlands. However, there are only roughly 24 million bikes.

Neil
Only?! That's still quite a lot!

Becca
Right, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **deeply ingrained** – a combination of words meaning well established and unlikely to change.

Neil
If something **takes off**, it suddenly becomes popular or successful.

Becca
A **milestone** is an important event in the development of something or someone.

Neil
Quality of life describes a person's wellbeing in terms of their level of enjoyment, comfort, and health.

Becca
The noun **liveability** means the degree to which a place is pleasant to live in.

Neil
And finally, **a copy and paste** is an exact copy of something, which is then moved and put somewhere else. Once again, our six minutes are up, but remember you can find a transcript, and a worksheet and a quiz, all over on our website at bbclearningenglish.com. Goodbye for now.

Becca
Bye!

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VOCABULARY

deeply ingrained
firmly established within a person or a culture and unlikely to change

take off
(phrasal verb) suddenly become popular or successful

milestone
important event in someone's life or in the development of something

quality of life
level of enjoyment, comfort and health a person experiences; measure of a person’s overall wellbeing

liveability
degree to which a place is suitable or pleasant for living in

a copy and paste
an exact copy of something, which is then moved and put somewhere else

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