BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English
The Enhanced Games

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

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

Pippa
And I'm Pippa. Sharing your Netflix password, lying about your age or not paying the bus fare are a few examples of cheating in daily life. But there's one place where cheating is usually considered wrong, and that's sport.

Neil
Cheating in sport through the use of performance-enhancing drugs, informally called **doping**, is normally considered wrong. Just ask American cycling legend Lance Armstrong, who was thrown out of the sport for using banned substances. But earlier this year, a sporting event took place which turned the debate about drugs in sport upside down. Here's Asma Khalid from BBC World Service's The Global Story to explain:

Asma Khalid
This weekend, elite athletes from around the world are descending on Las Vegas, Nevada, for the first-of-its-kind sporting competition known as The Enhanced Games. It's kind of like the Olympics, but only for swimming, sprinting and weightlifting. The aim is to break world records. In fact, some of these competitors are former Olympians – medallists battling it out for money and glory. But there's one big difference...

Pippa
The big difference is that The Enhanced Games allow athletes to use performance-enhancing drugs that are banned in professional sports. In these games, nicknamed The **Doping** Olympics, steroids, growth hormones and stimulants are all OK. You're a big sports fan, Neil. Would you enjoy watching a sport where the athletes have taken drugs?

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Neil
No, I wouldn't. I really don't think that's fair. I think we need to know that all the athletes start and compete from the same level.

Pippa
Yeah, I guess that makes sense. I don't really watch that many sports so I guess I wouldn't notice the difference, but if you're really into sport you care about the rules, right?

Neil
Yes, absolutely. And in this episode we'll dive into the controversial world of The Enhanced Games, learning some useful new words and phrases along the way. And remember, you'll find all the vocabulary, plus a quiz and a worksheet, on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Pippa
But now I have a question for you, Neil. You mentioned the famous sporting cheat Lance Armstrong, but how many times did Lance Armstrong win the famous race, the Tour de France, before he was finally caught out? Was it:

a) five,
b) six, or
c) seven?

Neil
Ooh... Well, it was a lot, so I think I'll go for c) seven.

Pippa
Well, we'll find out the answer at the end of the programme. Now, it's no exaggeration to say that The Enhanced Games are controversial. After all, organisations like the World Anti-**Doping** Agency have spent decades fighting performance-enhancing drugs in sport. Here's BBC sports editor Dan Roan on World Service programme The Global Story.

Dan Roan
I think **it's fair to say** it's one of the most **divisive** and controversial events that the world of sport has seen for a long time. It's an event where performance-enhancing drugs, banned elsewhere in mainstream sport of course, are actually allowed to be taken by the competitors under medical supervision.

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Neil
Dan Roan says, "**It's fair to say** The Enhanced Games are controversial." He uses the phrase **it's fair to say** to introduce a statement that he considers to be balanced and reasonable – that the games are controversial.

Pippa
Dan also describes the games as **divisive** – an adjective that means causing a lot of disagreement between people. Much of this disagreement is about the use of performance-enhancing drugs themselves. The Games' organisers point out that all drugs are approved by the US Food and Drug Agency and taken openly under medical supervision, which they say makes them safer than when they are taken secretly at competitions elsewhere. But there are many critics too, as Dan Roan outlined to BBC World Service's The Global Story.

Dan Roan
But the critics, of course, say that this **crosses an** ethical **line**, that it **sets a dreadful example** because it risks **normalising doping**. It could harm the integrity, therefore, of sport, and it could be dangerous to the health of those taking part.

Neil
For the Games' critics, **doping crosses an** ethical **line**. The phrase to **cross the line** means to start behaving in a way that's not socially acceptable. These critics say the Games **set a bad example**, meaning that they encourage others to behave badly as well. Why is that, Pippa?

Pippa
Well, it's because critics argue the games **normalise** the use of performance drugs in sport. If you **normalise** something, you treat it as normal or acceptable when previously it wasn't. But with arguments strongly held on both sides, the debate is far from over. So Neil, have you changed your opinion after hearing both sides of the story?

Neil
No, I haven't. I think it's just not fair, and I think if you're not fair in sport, what's the point?

Pippa
Well, let's hear the answer to my quiz question, Neil. I asked you how many times Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France, and it was c) seven times, consecutively between 1999 and 2005. Of course, we now know that there were performance-enhancing drugs involved.

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Neil
OK. So, now it's time to recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **doping** – using banned drugs to perform better in sporting competitions.

Pippa
You can use the phrase **it's fair to say** to introduce a statement you consider to be balanced, reasonable or true.

Neil
If something is **divisive**, it causes disagreement between people.

Pippa
The idiom **cross the line** means to start behaving in an unacceptable way.

Neil
If you **set a bad example**, you behave in a way that encourages others to behave badly.

Pippa
And finally, to **normalise** something means to treat it as normal or acceptable when previously it wasn't.

Neil
OK. Once again, our six minutes are up, but if you'd like to practise more, you'll find a quiz and worksheet on our website, bbclearningenglish.com. See you again soon. But for now, it's goodbye.

Pippa
Bye!

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VOCABULARY

doping
(informal) using banned substances to perform better in a sports competition

it's fair to say…
used to introduce a statement which the speaker believes is balanced, reasonable or true

divisive
causing disagreement and argument between people

cross the line
start behaving in an unacceptable way

set a good/bad example
behave in a way that encourages others to behave well/badly

normalise
treat something as normal or acceptable when it previously was not

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