

A Good Buy.

I have been trying to think of ways to save time recently. I even read a book once on how to save time, but that took too long. I really admire people who are efficient, can plan well, and can get lots of things done. It takes a lot of thought. My children and my husband have been telling me to get a smart phone for a long time. I don't know why, but for some reason I thought that more technology in my life would take up(1) more time. It wasn't until last Saturday that I realized that my family was right(2). It was the day that we had four baseball games. If you're not familiar with baseball, you might not understand how time consuming(3)it is. The games are two hours long, and the players have to warm up before the game for about forty five minutes. So, if you're any good at mathematics, you can calculate that we were in the park all day. I should have been prepared with books, and perhaps my iPod, but I wasn't. And in between games(4), I had to drive home to check on everyone else to make sure that my other kids were okay with their babysitter. So, I was flying around all day, but standing around (5)at the park. What could I do with my time there? If I had had a smart phone, I could have answered emails(6), sent emails, written a bit of a podcast, or even skyped with my sister. It was half way through the third game that I made the decision. I had to stop being a dinosaur. I needed to update my phone, and update myself. Wow! What a revelation! What a great step forward for mankind. Well, a couple of days later, I found myself in a very busy Verizon store. It was full of customers who were being served by very smart looking Verizon employees. They each had an iPad, and would quickly take the customers details, and just as quickly, take their credit cards. It was so efficient that it was almost scary. And before I knew it(7), I was getting in my car with my brand new iPhone. So, yesterday, while I was waiting at my daughter's tennis lesson, I read my emails. Great! Then I tried to write a podcast. That is still a bit difficult. My fingers are not used to the small keypad(8). They seem to touch the screen like heavy elephants, and I misspell words, or accidentally change programs from one second to the next. I'm sure I'll get used to it. I look forward to the day when I upload a podcast, and at the bottom it says 'sent from my iPhone'.

1. 'To take up' is used when referring to time or space.

a. That sofa takes up too much space; there's no room for anything else!

b. My dog takes up so much of my time! He demands that I play with him every five minutes!

c. Our Friday office meetings take up too much time.

2. This sentence format is worth practicing.

a. It wasn't until I arrived at work, that I remembered (that) I had left my front door open.

b. It wasn't until sixth grade that we started to learn Spanish.

c. It wasn't until two months later that he apologized.

3. 'Time consuming' literally means 'eating time'. It is used as an adjective.

a. Gardening can be very time consuming, though it is also very beneficial.

- b. Setting up parental controls on computers is very time consuming.
4. 'In between' is an efficient use of words. Instead of saying, for example, 'After the first practice, and before the second practice....' we just use 'In between practices'.
- a. In between lectures, the students have a coffee.
- b. In between meetings, I took a nap.
5. 'Around' is one of those multi-purpose words in English that you just have to get used to. 'To stand' is just the physical act of standing; it could be brief, or go on for a long time. It also seems deliberate. BUT, if you say 'to stand around', it means that you don't have anything else to do, or that you don't know what else to do.
- a. We were standing around waiting for the game to begin; it was so boring.
- b. She just sits around all day. I wish she would find something to do.
- c. He's always racing around. Is he really that busy, or is he hyper?
6. This type of sentence with the past subjunctive is not that difficult; we basically use the pluperfect tense. Let's practice:
- a. If they had needed money, I would have given it to them.
- b. If he had studied every night, he would have got a better grade.
- c. If we had known you were in town, we would have visited you.
7. 'Before ... knew it' is a very native sounding phrase, also used in the present (for a future sense).
- a. Before you know it, you will arrive.
- b. Before they know it, they'll be married.
- c. Before he knew it, he had graduated.
- d. Before we knew it, a storm had come, and we were lost at sea.
8. 'A keypad' is the part of a computer or device where you type. It is also numerical.
- a. One of the letters is missing from my keypad.
- b. The door lock has a keypad. You have to put in the correct code to open the door.

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