

Pre-Intermediate 3
Unit 7 Reading
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A Sense of Direction

sense of direction = the ability to find places or to know which direction to go

- *Taylor led us to the gallery with her unerring sense of direction.*
- *He had a terrible sense of direction and was always getting lost.*

direction /di'rek.fən/ /da'rek.fən/ = the position toward which someone or something moves or faces

You either have it, or you don't — a sense of direction, that is. But why is it that some people could find their way across the Sahara without a map, while others can lose themselves in the next street?

that is = that is to say = I mean

across = from one side to the other side

while = whereas

lose themselves = get lost



the Sahara = the biggest desert of the world in north Africa

Scientists say we're all born with a sense of direction, but they don't exactly know how it works. One theory is that people with a good sense of direction have simply worked harder at developing it. Research backs this idea and suggests that if we don't use it, we lose it.

develop = improve

back = support; approve of

instinct (n.) = natural ability

instinctive (adj.) = related to our instincts

Our sense of direction is to some extent instinctive.

instinctively (adv.) = based on or through instincts

Children as young as seven have the ability to find their way around. However, if we do not allow them to go out alone or take them everywhere by car, they never develop their skills.

children as young as seven = seven-year-old children

however = but

allow sb to do sth = let sb do sth

If we do not allow them to go out alone = If we don't let them go out alone

One very important skill that we need to develop is being able to distinguish left from right. When Andrea Lynch took her driving test recently, the examiner asked her to turn right. She

moved into the left-hand side of the road, signaled, and executed a perfect left turn. "I genuinely didn't realize," said Andrea. Fortunately, the examiner overlooked the slip.

distinct (adj.) = clearly different

distinguish (v.) = differentiate = tell apart

recently = lately

examiner = a person who gives an exam

road = way

signal (v.) = indicate right or left

execute = perform; implement

genuinely = honestly

realize = understand

fortunately = luckily

overlook = ignore, disregard

slip = mistake

Researchers point out that Andrea's mistake is quite understandable. There is nothing in our make-up that tells us which is left or right — most of our body is in pairs, we have two arms, two legs, etc. If we weren't right-or left-handed, we might well have even more trouble.

point out = indicate

etc. = and so on; and so forth; blah blah blah

make-up = character; personality; nature

Few of us get lost somewhere we know well, but it's not a question of familiarity. In an American experiment, people with very poor senses of direction were taken to a strange place. The results showed that people with a good sense of direction either remembered a series of clues to help them get back to where they started, or they remembered the various turns they had gone through.

few of us = almost none of us

People were taken to a strange place. = They took people to a strange place.

familiarity = being familiar with sb/sth

strange = unfamiliar

experiment = a (scientific) test

experience = the lessons that we learn in life

a series of = a set of; a collection of

clue = hint

The good news, then, is that even if you have a poor sense of direction, you can improve it: If you are using a map, turn it so that it relates to the way you are facing. If you leave your car or bike in a strange car park, leave it near something like a big stone or tree. Note landmarks on the routes as you go away from your car or bike.

then = therefore; so

note (v.) = pay attention to

car park (British) = parking lot (American)

landmark = an important or famous building

route = way; path

as = when

When you return, reverse the route. Simplify navigation by using lines such as streets in a town, streams, or walls in the countryside to guide you. Count your steps so that you know how far you have gone and orient yourself by looking out for landmarks such as tower blocks, hills, etc.

reverse = move backwards; make something look the opposite of what it really is

stream = a small river

guide = lead

simplify = make something simple

orient = familiarize

navigation = finding the direction

Main Ideas:

- The sense of direction is instinctive, but we can improve it. If we don't improve it, we will lose it.
- If we want our children to improve their sense of direction, we should let them go out alone and we shouldn't take them everywhere by car.
- If we want to improve our sense of direction, first we need to be able to distinguish between left and right.
- We don't know right from left instinctively and we should learn how to differentiate between right and left.
- Some hints like landmarks, streets, streams or walls can help us find our way back when we reverse the route.

Full Text:

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One very important skill that we need to develop is being able to distinguish left from right. When Andrea Lynch took her driving test recently, the examiner asked her to turn right. She moved into the left-hand side of the road, signaled, and executed a perfect left turn. "I genuinely didn't realize," said Andrea. Fortunately, the examiner overlooked the slip.

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