

## Why I quit complaining about cyclists, scrapped my car and chose public transport

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

- a. Read the title of the article. Complete the chart with your own ideas. Then, discuss with a partner.

Form of transport	Advantages	Disadvantages	Is it possible in my city/town?
Cycling			
Driving			
Public transport			
Walking			

#### 2 Key words

- a. Complete the sentences with words from the box. All the words appear in bold in the article.

adjustment      banned      come out of      harsh      indirectly  
isolated      occasional      replacement      suited

- If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it is forbidden or not allowed.
- If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it is rude or too severe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ means that it affects someone or something in a way that is not obvious or evident.
- If an event is \_\_\_\_\_, it happens only once.
- If something is \_\_\_\_\_ to something or someone, it is right for them.
- If you \_\_\_\_\_ a situation or event, you arrive at its end or conclusion.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is someone or something taking another's place.
- If you make an \_\_\_\_\_ to something, you make a small change or fix.
- If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it doesn't happen a lot.

- b. Work in pairs. See how the words are used in the article. Choose three of the words and write sentences of your own. Then, exchange sentences with another pair and check they have used the words correctly.

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- 1 “Cyclists are a menace and should be banned from the roads,” read the headline. It was 2015, and the most controversial article I had ever written had just been published on a national newspaper’s website, attacking anyone, as I then saw it, stupid enough to ride a bike.
- 2 The reactions I got were really harsh. Furious readers accused me of encouraging careless motorists and of indirectly putting cyclists in danger. Cyclists who had been injured got in touch. I was shocked but also convinced that most motorists were careful and well-meaning, so the accidents must have been tragic, isolated incidents.
- 3 Looking back now, I understand their rage better. According to the Department for Transport, about 100 cyclists die on British roads every year. In 2022, 4,056 were seriously injured and 11,546 slightly injured. When I wrote the piece, nowhere I had ever lived seemed suited to cycling, so I could not understand why anyone would take the risk.
- 4 But my attitude changed during lockdown. Suddenly, the noise of the roads was gone. Cars were no longer important because we weren’t allowed to travel. Instead of traffic outside my window, I heard birds singing. Nature grew louder.
- 5 I had cared about the climate crisis before, but I didn’t see what I could do to make a difference. During the pandemic, I started to spend more time in nature and wondered how I could change my lifestyle to suit the natural world. It helped that I was forced to change my routines. I worked from home. I socialised by Zoom. And as I came out of lockdown, I left old habits behind. That drive to the shops? I realised I could walk it. That drive to a friend’s? I could catch a train. When my car broke down one day, instead of getting it fixed, I sold it and didn’t get a replacement.
- 6 That was the last push I needed to start using public transport. I learned to appreciate the journey, not just the destination. These small adjustments made me see I could do more to reduce my carbon footprint. Of course, this meant letting go of some independence and forgetting about late-night socialising. But it also meant developing more patience, more flexibility and more gratitude towards those who work in public transport and also friends who were kind enough to give me occasional lifts.
- 7 My attempts at reducing my carbon footprint haven’t always succeeded. I have turned vegan, then back. As a travel writer, I’ve cut back on flying but have still taken several flights this year. In short, I’m still trying.
- 8 I went from disliking cyclists to wishing there were more on the roads. Looking at the article now, I know it was written by a younger, careless version of myself. I now appreciate those making efforts to save us from pollution. I wish my town, and Britain, could repay the effort cyclists and pedestrians make with infrastructure that helps them go everywhere safely.
- 9 Some of my friends still think cyclists are annoying. Others see me as odd for not having my own car. Still, I enjoy my chats at the station and watching the smiles when my dog joins me on my travels. I’m even planning to try cycling. Just don’t ask me to wear Lycra.

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Are these sentences True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct the false sentences, underlining the corresponding evidence in the text.

1. The author's first article criticised cyclists.
2. Readers were extremely unhappy with her article.
3. The writer's opinion changed after receiving comments from readers.
4. Cycling was encouraged where she had lived before.
5. Before the lockdown, the author did not know how to help the environment.
6. The author started using public transport when her car broke down.
7. The writer has successfully made several changes to her lifestyle to help the environment.
8. She still agrees with most of the opinions she shared in her initial article.

### 4 Key language

a. Complete the sentences from the article with the correct prepositions.

1. Cyclists are a menace and should be banned \_\_\_\_\_ the roads.
2. My attempts \_\_\_\_\_ reducing my carbon footprint haven't always succeeded.
3. I've cut back \_\_\_\_\_ flying but have still taken several flights this year.
4. I went \_\_\_\_\_ disliking cyclists \_\_\_\_\_ wishing there were more on the roads.
5. I now appreciate those making efforts to save us \_\_\_\_\_ pollution.
6. I'm even planning \_\_\_\_\_ try cycling.

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b. Use the prompts below to write true sentences about yourself.

1. I went from... to
2. My attempts at...
3. .... should be banned from....
4. ... save us from...
5. I've cut back on...
6. I'm planning to...

### 5 Discussion

Discuss these statements.

- “Cyclists are a menace and should be banned from the roads.”
- “Using public transport helps develop patience, flexibility and gratitude.”
- “Towns should repay the efforts cyclists and pedestrians make with infrastructure that helps them go everywhere safely.”

### 6 In your own words

a. Work in pairs or small groups. Look at the chart in the Warmer task (page 1) and select one of the means of transportation given.

Prepare a presentation about its advantages and disadvantages and what could be done to make it more accessible and sustainable. Do some online research and gather information to support your views.