



Learn English Through Stories

G Series

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Contents

- 1. Hobbies**
- 2. Comprehension**
- 3. Grammar Page**

1. Hobbies: Are They Gone Forever?

Kulwant Sandhu

The next time someone asks me, “What are your hobbies?” I might just refuse to answer. Or better yet, I’ll turn the question around and say, “What are your hobbies?” They’ll probably claim they collect rare coins or build model airplanes, but I’m not sure I’ll believe them. I’m starting to think hobbies, as we once knew them, are disappearing. In fact, I believe we should stop using the word “hobby” altogether. You might think I’m being unrealistic, but I’m convinced the evidence supports my view. Let me explain why I think hobbies are a thing of the past—and I’ll share a story about my uncle, Mr. Sandhu, who might just prove me wrong.

What Is a Hobby, Anyway?

A hobby is an activity you do regularly in your free time for enjoyment, not for money or necessity. In the past, people were proud of their hobbies: collecting stamps, knitting, painting, or building model ships. These activities took time, effort, and often a bit of obsession. People would spend hours perfecting their skills or growing their collections. But today, when you ask someone—whether a teenager or an adult—how they spend their spare time, the answers are different. They might say they go to the gym, play video games, watch TV, listen to music, hang out with friends, browse the internet, or play sports. Are these really hobbies? I’m not convinced.

My Uncle’s Unusual Hobby

Let me tell you about my uncle, Mr. Sandhu, a retired mathematics lecturer. You could call it a hobby—or something like that—but he loves creating new terms and expressions. He’s always been fascinated by words and ideas, and he spends hours coming up with clever phrases to describe life. Yesterday, we were discussing the difference between knowledge and wisdom when he came up with these gems: “Wisdom is like a plane; it flies high but glides deeply.” “Wealth opens doors but also closes the heart.” “Knowledge opens minds but also burdens brains.” I love how his expressions make you think! He even told me he often chats with Grok, the AI, to test his ideas and get feedback. For him, crafting these phrases is more than just a pastime—it’s a way to explore the world and share his thoughts.

Why Hobbies Are Fading

Despite my uncle's unique passion, I still think traditional hobbies are fading. One reason is that our lives have changed. In the past, people had more free time to focus on specific activities. For example, someone might spend weekends building a model train set, carefully painting every detail. But today, life is busier. Work, school, and responsibilities leave less time for such focused activities. Instead, people choose quick ways to relax, like watching a movie or scrolling through social media. These activities are enjoyable, but they don't require the same commitment or creativity as traditional hobbies.

Technology plays a big role, too. Smartphones and the internet have changed how we spend our time. Many people now spend hours on their phones, checking social media, watching videos, or playing online games. These activities are fun, but they're often passive. Unlike hobbies, which involve creating or collecting something, these don't leave you with a tangible result. You might spend an hour online, but at the end, you haven't made anything or learned a new skill.

What People Do Instead

So, what do people do in their free time? If you ask a teenager, they might say they love gaming. Video games are popular, and some players are incredibly skilled, but is gaming a hobby? It depends. For some, gaming involves strategy and dedication, which sounds like a hobby. But for others, it's just a way to pass the time. Going to the gym is another common activity. People exercise to stay healthy or look good, but it's not always about enjoyment. It often feels like a necessity, not a hobby.

Hanging out with friends is also popular. Whether it's chatting over coffee or going to a party, socializing is a big part of life. But can we call it a hobby? It's something we do naturally, not something we plan or practice, like my uncle's word-crafting or stamp collecting. Watching TV or streaming movies is similar. These activities are relaxing, but they don't involve the active participation that hobbies require.

Sports, like football or basketball, might seem closer to a hobby. Playing a sport regularly takes effort and skill, and many people love it. But often, sports are about exercise or competition, not just personal enjoyment. Plus, not everyone who plays sports does it in their free time—some do it as part of a team or school activity.

The Problem with the Word “Hobby”

So, why do I want to get rid of the word “hobby”? Because it doesn’t fit how we live today. The word comes from a time when people had clear, structured activities they did for fun. But now, our free time is filled with a mix of things—some active, some passive, some social, some solitary. Calling these activities “hobbies” feels outdated, like trying to fit modern life into an old-fashioned box.

For example, when someone says they “collect” music by downloading songs, it’s not the same as collecting stamps or coins. Music is easy to access online, and it doesn’t require the same effort as searching for a rare stamp. Browsing the internet isn’t a hobby either—it’s just something we do. The word “hobby” suggests something special and intentional, but many of our activities today are casual and spontaneous.

Are There Any Hobbies Left?

You might argue that some people, like my uncle, still have traditional hobbies. His love for creating expressions is unique, and it takes time and creativity, just like knitting or gardening. But people like him are rare. Even when people do have hobbies, they don’t always talk about them. In the past, people were proud to share their collections or creations. Now, if someone spends hours painting or building something, they might not call it a hobby—they might just say it’s “what they do.”

There’s also a cultural shift. Today, we value experiences over objects. People prefer to travel, go to concerts, or try new foods rather than collect things or perfect a craft. These experiences are exciting, but they’re not hobbies in the traditional sense. They’re moments, not ongoing projects.

A New Way to Think About Free Time

So, what’s the solution? I suggest we stop asking, “What are your hobbies?” and start asking, “What do you love to do?” This question is more open and fits our modern lives better. It lets people share whatever makes them happy, whether it’s watching Netflix, playing soccer, or, like my uncle, crafting clever expressions. It doesn’t force us to use an outdated word.

I'm not saying we should stop enjoying our free time. Far from it! I just think we need to be honest about what we do and why. If someone loves scrolling through social media, that's fine—it's their choice. But let's not pretend it's a hobby. Let's call it what it is: a way to relax, connect, or pass the time.

Conclusion

In the end, I believe the idea of a hobby is fading because our world has changed. Technology, busy schedules, and new priorities mean we spend our free time differently. But people like my uncle, Mr. Sandhu, remind me that some still find joy in unique, creative pursuits. His love for words shows that hobbies can still exist—just in new forms. So, the next time someone asks about my hobbies, I'll smile and say, "Tell me what you love to do." Maybe then we'll have a real conversation about what makes us happy.

2. Comprehension Questions and Answers

Question 1: What does the author suggest doing when someone asks about their hobbies?

Question 2: According to the author, why are hobbies disappearing?

Question 3: Who is Mr. Sandhu, and what is his unusual hobby?

Question 4: What is one of the expressions Mr. Sandhu came up with during his discussion with the author?

Question 5: What does the author mean by saying the word "hobby" is outdated?

Question 6: How does the author describe the difference between traditional hobbies and modern activities like watching TV?

Question 7: What role does technology play in the decline of hobbies, according to the text?

Question 8: Why does the author suggest asking "What do you love to do?" instead of "What are your hobbies?"

Question 9: What is one example of a modern activity that the author says is not a hobby?

Question 10: How does Mr. Sandhu use Grok in relation to his hobby?

Answers

Answer 1: The author suggests refusing to answer or turning the question around by asking, "What are your hobbies?"

Answer 2: Hobbies are disappearing because life is busier, technology has changed how we spend time, and people prefer quick, passive activities like scrolling social media.

Answer 3: Mr. Sandhu is the author's uncle, a retired mathematics lecturer, who loves creating new terms and expressions.

Answer 4: One expression is: "Wisdom is like a plane; it flies high but glides deeply."

Answer 5: The word "hobby" is outdated because it doesn't fit modern activities, which are often casual and spontaneous, unlike the structured hobbies of the past.

Answer 6: Traditional hobbies involve active participation, creativity, and tangible results, while modern activities like watching TV are passive and don't require effort or skill.

Answer 7: Technology, like smartphones and the internet, encourages passive activities such as browsing social media, which take time away from creative hobbies.

Answer 8: This question is more open and better fits modern lifestyles, allowing people to share any activity they enjoy without using the outdated word "hobby."

Answer 9: Browsing the internet is an example of a modern activity that the author says is not a hobby.

Answer 10: Mr. Sandhu chats with Grok, the AI, to test his ideas and get feedback on his expressions.

3. Grammar Page

Unit
80

Noun + noun (a **bus driver** / a **headache**)

A You can use two nouns together (*noun + noun*) to mean *one* thing/person/idea etc. :
a **bus driver** **income tax** the **city centre** an **apple tree**

The first noun is like an adjective. It tells us what kind of thing/person/idea etc. :

a **bus driver** = the driver of a bus
income tax = tax that you pay on your income
the **city centre** = the centre of the city
an **apple tree** = a tree that has apples
a **Paris hotel** = a hotel in Paris
my **life story** = the story of my life

So you can say:

a **television** camera a **television** programme a **television** studio a **television** producer
(things or people to do with television)
language **problems** marriage **problems** health **problems** work **problems**
(different kinds of problems)

Sometimes the first word ends in **-ing**:

a **frying** pan (= a pan for frying)
a **washing** machine
a **swimming** pool

B Sometimes there are more than two nouns together:

- I waited at the **hotel reception desk**.
- We watched the **World Swimming Championships** on TV.
- If you want to play table tennis (= a game), you need a **table tennis table** (= a table).

C When two nouns are together like this, sometimes we write them as one word and sometimes as two separate words. For example:

a **headache** **toothpaste** a **weekend** a **car park** a **road sign**

There are no clear rules for this. If you are not sure, write two words.

D Note the difference between:

a **coffee cup** (maybe empty) and a **cup of coffee** (= a cup with coffee in it)
a **shopping bag** (maybe empty) and a **bag of shopping** (= a bag full of shopping)

E When we use *noun + noun*, the first noun is like an *adjective*. It is normally singular, but the meaning is often plural.

For example: a **car park** is a place to park **cars**, an **apple tree** is a tree that has **apples**.

In the same way we say:

a **three-hour** journey (= a journey that takes three **hours**)
a **ten-pound** note (= a note with the value of ten **pounds**)
a **four-week** course
a **six-mile** walk
two **14-year-old** girls

Compare:

- It was a **four-week** course. (*not* a four weeks course)
- but* The course lasted four **weeks**.