

**In the news...****9th March 2015****1. Has spring arrived?**

Has spring sprung? With temperatures in the mid-teens, it feels like the end of winter.

In the gardens the snowdrops and even crocuses are out, the birds are singing and building their nests... Are you ready for the end of winter?

*Weather-related topics are good for practising different tenses:*

- what always happens at this time of year?
- what did you notice last weekend?
- what has changed recently?
- what is happening now?
- what will be the next sign of spring? (if....?)

*Can you make the sentences passive?*

**2. Do you like parking tickets?**

In England, all drivers will be allowed an extra ten minutes to return to their cars, after their parking tickets have run out. This is because some traffic wardens are too strict and charge a fine the minute the time is up. In 2013-14, motorists paid £350 million in parking fines! In central London, a standard parking fine is £80.00 (about €111,--)

Have you ever had to pay a parking (or a speeding) fine?

*Vocabulary: fine, ticket, to issue, to pay, to charge, to run out, to expire, to extend, warden*

**3. Speeding limit reform**

I heard on the radio on Monday that the police are considering imposing a 'zero tolerance' policy on speed limits nationwide. It already exists in Salzburg – 50kmph means 50kmph – but in the Tyrol, for example, many people believe in the '10%' rule.

*Vocabulary: speed limit, speed cameras, speeding ticket/fine, safety, danger.*

**4. Continuing the car theme...**

Does your car have a spare wheel? Most new cars don't have them because of the weight and increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. So if you have a puncture (or a flat tyre) then you might have a problem. An alternative is a 'space saver' tyre, good enough to get to a garage, or a repair kit. Would you know how to repair your car tyre? Have you ever had a puncture?

Do you have any good break-down stories?

*Try using the 'if' sentences here: if I get a puncture then I will... (likely, realistic, a plan).*

*if I got a puncture then I would... (unlikely, unrealistic, an idea)*

**Free-range parenting**

Have you heard of 'free-range' chickens? Well, what about 'free-range parenting'?

This is a movement that encourages parents to let their children do things like walk around the village without them. In 1971, 80% of 7- and 8-year-olds went to school on their own.

Now it is less than 9%. The rate of kidnapping has stayed the same (very low), and most abductions are by family members anyway.

In the USA, a couple are being charged with child neglect after the police found their children (aged 10 and 6) walking home from the local park on their own.

What is your opinion about 'free-range parenting'? How far (literally!) should it go?

And you do know what the opposite is called? 'Helicopter parenting'!

*More difficult vocabulary: to charge (anklagen), abduction/kidnap (Entführung), neglect (vernachlässigen), to encourage (ermutigen/bestärken), local (örtlich)*