

Innovation nation

Task 1 British inventions

The British have a long history of invention and inventiveness.

Match these British inventions to their inventor.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| • The steam locomotive | John Logie Baird 1926 |
| • The pocket calculator | John Dunlop 1808 |
| • The first pneumatic tyres | Tim Berners-Lee 1989 |
| • The World Wide Web | Clive Sinclair 1971 |
| • The electric light | George Stephenson 1814 |
| • Television | Thomas Edison 1879 |

Task 2 Which came first

Put these inventions in the order in which you think they were invented. Which came first?

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| • Plastics | • Railways |
| • Photography | • Space probes |
| • The Wheel | |

Which of these inventions do you think was the most important to your society?
Why?

Task 3 Favourite inventions

In 2003 the British Patent Office celebrated its 150 year anniversary. As part of the celebrations the BBC asked listeners to join in a discussion on inventions they like. BBC Radio 4 asked listeners to nominate the best and the worst inventions.

Here are some examples of the survey results

The **best** inventions:

- Penicillin Bicycles
- The Internet
- Television

The **worst** inventions:

- Nuclear weapons
- Car alarms
- Landmines
- Mobile phones
- Plastic bags

- Can you nominate one example for each category? Try to think of reasons why the inventions are useful or not useful.
- Hold a class vote to find the most popular invention and the least popular

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<http://www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistant/>

Task 4 Innovation Nation

In April 2003 BBC Science launched a nationwide competition to find a new invention. Thousands of ordinary people around the UK wrote in with very interesting ideas. A panel of judges chose the ten best inventions. Then they picked three finalists. At the end of December 2003 they chose a winner.

Read a description of the top ten inventions and find :

- an invention which helps make a home safer
- an invention which helps you keep your home cleaner
- an invention which helps travellers

Choose 3 finalists.

Innovation Nation - The Top Ten

- **A padlock** with a unique shape. This lock cannot be picked or forced open so it is safer and tougher than ordinary locks.
- **A sausage cooker**. This is a metal tray with spaces for each sausage to fit into a frying pan. The sausages only need turning once and are more evenly cooked.
- **A hairbrush**. This special brush clamps shut on a section of hair and pulls it straight. This allows you to dry your hair straight.
- **Swimming goggles**. These soft goggles wrap around your head like a mask and are more comfortable than traditional goggles.
- **A pen with no fibre tip**, ballpoint or nib for ink. It is made out of a single piece of plastic. This pen uses surface tension and gives a clean line of ink through a hole drilled into its tip.
- **A carpet cleaner**. This special attachment fits on to the end of a vacuum cleaner and can suck up spilt liquids from carpets and floors.
- **A bath plug**. This plug fits any bath size and it opens automatically if the bath overfills with water.
- **A collapsible kitchen bin**. This bin can be made smaller to remove the bin bags and it is so small that it fits into the sink and the dishwasher so it is easier to clean.
- **A deep vein thrombosis device**. This electronic device is useful for long haul flights. It stimulates the calf muscles in your legs and increases your blood circulation. This prevents the dangers of deep vein thrombosis.
- **A bead bin for kitchens**. A wire spiral sits inside the bin and the beads on the spiral move. This helps you remove the bin bags more easily.

- Which invention do you think will be the winner?
- Check your predictions with your teacher.
- Why was the winner a useful invention?
- Do you agree with the judges?

Task 5 Describe an invention

Can you describe these 20th century inventions?

- microwave oven
- text message
- play station
- digital thermometer

Pick another invention from recent years. Write a description of it.
Can your friends guess the invention from your description?

Task 6 Society and inventions

New ideas and inventions can cause great changes to your lifestyle, your way of working and your health or life expectancy. New advances in medical science mean that Britons are living longer. New advances in domestic technology mean people work less hard to clean their homes or cook. Many Britons eat pre packed food which they cook in microwaves and more and more people shop on the Internet.

Compare your life as a teenager to your parents' lives as teenagers.

- Which inventions have caused the changes?
- Look at your school life and your way of studying. Which modern inventions have an impact on your studies?
- How?
- Are you happy with the changes that are happening in your society?
- Are people's lives easier or harder? Are people more or less fulfilled or happy?

Task 7 Competitions

Many studies show that inventors have similar minds and show common skills. They like problem solving. They like a challenge. They are creative thinkers. They don't give up easily.

- Do you have any of the skills which inventive minds have?
- Name one key feature of your personality: What are you good at?
 - listening to others,
 - working with your hands
- How far does your education develop creativity?
- Have you ever entered a competition? If so, what was it? How did you do?
- Are competitions popular in your school? In your society? On television?