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2005 was a second longer than usual

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1 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

2005 was a second longer than usual

The year 2005 was officially one second longer than usual years. On December 31st, the world's timekeepers added a leap second to our official record of time. This record is kept by 80 laboratories all around the world. Special atomic clocks make sure the world doesn't lose track of time. They are the world's most accurate clocks and are monitored by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures in Paris. Because of these clocks, our lives can run like clockwork and we won't lose even a split second. This all happens because the earth is spinning at a slightly slower rate as time passes.

So what did the world do with its extra second? Did anyone notice? Members of the Leap Second Association did. They met in London on New Year's Eve to observe and experience the moment. They did this with their cellphones and a stopwatch. At precisely 11.59 pm on their mobile phones, they started their stopwatches. When the cellphones showed the time of midnight, their stopwatches showed that 61 seconds had passed in the final minute of the year. However, not everyone was happy - Communication engineers complained about having to update the world's communication and navigation systems.

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WARM-UPS

1. NEW YEAR'S EVE: Talk with your partners about what you did on New Year's Eve. Do you do similar things every year? Do you like New Year's Eve?

2. RESOLUTIONS: Do you have any New Year resolutions? Are they the same every year? Do you always keep them or do you quickly break them? Talk about these resolutions with your partner(s):

- a. I'm going to save a lot of money this year.
- b. I'm going to lose weight and get in better shape.
- c. For me, it's to study English every day to improve my speaking ability.
- d. I must stop my worst bad habit this year.
- e. I'm going to eat healthily.
- f. This year, I'm going to be extra nice to everyone I know and meet.

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

2005 / seconds / clocks / laboratories / losing track of time / clockwork / earth / New Year's Eve / London / cellphones / stopwatches / complaining / navigation

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. TIME: In pairs/groups, talk about whether you agree with these statements:

- I'm never late.
- Time is precious.
- I don't need a watch.
- Analogue watches are best.
- I wish there were 48 hours in a day.
- I have more than enough time.
- Time flies.
- Time is money.
- Time is on my side.
- I'd love a Rolex watch.

5. MY LEAP SECOND: In pairs / groups, write down all of the different things you could do with an extra second of time. Change partners and share your ideas. Talk about how useful the things you thought of are.

6. WHAT A YEAR: In pairs / groups, talk about the year 2005. What were the best, worst and most memorable moments in your life, your town, your country, the world, and your English classes? Did everyone agree on the most important world events of 2005?

7. 2005: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the year 2005. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| a. The World Clock made a mistake and 2006 arrived a second late. | T / F |
| b. Eighty special clocks around the world help keep the world's time. | T / F |
| c. A bureau in Paris makes sure our lives run like clockwork. | T / F |
| d. The earth is spinning at a slightly faster rate every year. | T / F |
| e. Members of the Leap Second Association met in New Zealand. | T / F |
| f. People used cellphones and stopwatches to observe the leap second. | T / F |
| g. There were just 59 seconds in the final minute of the year 2005. | T / F |
| h. Communication engineers were unhappy about the leap second. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------|
| a. kept | exactly |
| b. accurate | smoothly |
| c. like clockwork | moaned |
| d. happens | additional |
| e. spinning | maintained |
| f. extra | elapsed |
| g. precisely | occurs |
| h. passed | indicated |
| i. showed | turning |
| j. complained | precise |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. 2005 was officially one second | to our official record of time |
| b. timekeepers added a leap second | do with its extra second? |
| c. atomic clocks make sure the | and navigation systems |
| d. Because of these clocks, our lives | in the final minute of the year |
| e. the earth is spinning at a slightly | the moment |
| f. So what did the world | longer than usual years |
| g. observe and experience | slower rate as time passes |
| h. At precisely 11.59 pm | world doesn't lose track of time |
| i. 61 seconds had passed | can run like clockwork |
| j. update the world's communication | on their mobile phones |

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WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

2005 was a second longer than usual

The year 2005 was _____ one second longer than usual years. On December 31st, the world's timekeepers added a _____ second to our official record of time. This record is _____ by 80 laboratories all around the world. Special atomic clocks make sure the world doesn't lose _____ of time. They are the world's most accurate clocks and are _____ by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures in Paris. Because of these clocks, our lives can _____ like clockwork and we won't lose even a _____ second. This all happens because the earth is _____ at a slightly slower rate as time passes.

So what did the world do with its _____ second? Did anyone _____? Members of the Leap Second Association did. They met in London on New Year's Eve to _____ and experience the moment. They did this with their cellphones and a _____. At _____ 11.59 pm on their mobile phones, they started their stopwatches. When the cellphones showed the time of midnight, their stopwatches showed that 61 seconds had _____ in the final _____ of the year. However, not everyone was happy - Communication engineers complained about having to _____ the world's communication and navigation systems.

kept
spinning
officially
run
monitored
split
leap
track

minute
observe
precisely
extra
update
stopwatch
passed
notice

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LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

2005 was a second longer than usual

The year 2005 was officially one second longer than _____ years. On December 31st, the world's timekeepers added a leap second to our _____ record of time. This record is _____ by 80 laboratories all around the world. Special atomic clocks make sure the world doesn't _____ track of time. They are the world's most accurate clocks and are monitored by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures in Paris. Because of these clocks, our lives can _____ like clockwork and we won't lose even a _____ second. This all happens because the earth is spinning at a slightly slower rate as time _____.

So what did the world do with its extra second? Did anyone _____? Members of the Leap Second Association did. They met in London on New Year's Eve to _____ and experience the moment. They did this with their cellphones and a _____. At precisely 11.59 pm on their _____ phones, they started their stopwatches. When the cellphones showed the time of midnight, their stopwatches _____ that 61 seconds had passed in the final minute of the year. However, not everyone was happy - Communication engineers complained about having to _____ the world's communication and navigation systems.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'split'** and **'second'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "2005" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about the year 2005.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| • officially | • notice |
| • kept | • London |
| • track | • 11.59 pm |
| • monitored | • passed |
| • split | • happy |
| • slightly | • update |

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DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Did you celebrate the New Year?
- c. Did you notice the day was a second longer?
- d. Would you like to have used a cellphone and stopwatch to observe the leap second?
- e. What do you think of the fact that 80 different clocks worldwide make sure our lives run like clockwork?
- f. Does one second ever make a difference in your daily life?
- g. Do you ever lose track of time?
- h. What do you think will happen in the future when the earth slows down a lot more and we have 48 hours in one day?
- i. Does your life run like clockwork?
- j. Would you like to join the Leap Second Association?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. How was your 2005?
- d. What are you looking forward to in 2006?
- e. What's the most important thing you can do in one second?
- f. Is your watch accurate?
- g. What do you think the Leap Second Association talk about at their meetings?
- h. Do you think the leap second will cause problems for the world's computer networks?
- i. What do you complain about in your life?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

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SPEAKING

2005: In pairs / groups, discuss the best and worst things to happen in 2005:

CATEGORY	BEST	WORST
My English		
Me		
My country		
The world		
Entertainment		
Technology		
Sport		

Change partners and tell your new partner(s) what you discussed with your old partner(s).

Agree on the best and worst things for the last four of five categories.

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HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the leap second. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. MY 2005: Write an essay about your life in the year 2005. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Who had the most interesting year?

4. 2006: Make six predictions concerning the world in 2006. Show your predictions to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone think of similar things?

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ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. kept	maintained
b. accurate	precise
c. like clockwork	smoothly
d. happens	occurs
e. spinning	turning
f. extra	additional
g. precisely	exactly
h. passed	elapsed
i. showed	indicated
j. complained	moaned

PHRASE MATCH:

a. 2005 was officially one second	longer than usual years
b. timekeepers added a leap second	to our official record of time
c. atomic clocks make sure the	world doesn't lose track of time
d. Because of these clocks, our lives	can run like clockwork
e. the earth is spinning at a slightly	slower rate as time passes
f. So what did the world	do with its extra second?
g. observe and experience	the moment
h. At precisely 11.59 pm	on their mobile phones
i. 61 seconds had passed	in the final minute of the year
j. update the world's communication	and navigation systems

GAP FILL:

2005 was a second longer than usual

The year 2005 was **officially** one second longer than usual years. On December 31st, the world's timekeepers added a **leap** second to our official record of time. This record is **kept** by 80 laboratories all around the world. Special atomic clocks make sure the world doesn't lose **track** of time. They are the world's most accurate clocks and are **monitored** by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures in Paris. Because of these clocks, our lives can **run** like clockwork and we won't lose even a **split** second. This all happens because the earth is **spinning** at a slightly slower rate as time passes.

So what did the world do with its **extra** second? Did anyone **notice**? Members of the Leap Second Association did. They met in London on New Year's Eve to **observe** and experience the moment. They did this with their cellphones and a **stopwatch**. At **precisely** 11.59 pm on their mobile phones, they started their stopwatches. When the cellphones showed the time of midnight, their stopwatches showed that 61 seconds had **passed** in the final **minute** of the year. However, not everyone was happy - Communication engineers complained about having to **update** the world's communication and navigation systems.