

www.**Breaking News English**.com

Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

The Breaking News English.com Resource Book

“1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers”

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0603/060304-toysrus.html>

Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading	7
Discussion	8
Homework	9
Answers	10

4 March, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

The retailers Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com parted ways yesterday after a court ruled Toysrus.com could be run as an independent online entity. The two companies had been involved in litigation since May 2004. Toys 'R' Us was contesting an August 2000 online trading agreement that gave Amazon sole distribution rights to sell its toys and baby goods. The court's ruling severs the link and opens the way for Toysrus.com to start its own online store. The senior vice-president of the company said: "We...expect to provide seamless online access for our customers....Tighter integration of our online business with our bricks and mortar locations will enhance customer service by creating a more unified web and retail shopping experience."

Amazon executives are less than happy with the outcome, especially as the company sees it is the one wronged. The court ruling is sure to leave a gaping hole in Amazon's profits. Its stock fell \$0.33 to \$36.79 after the announcement was made. A spokesman said: "We're in the process of reviewing various options...in light of the order...it's still too early to predict what the ultimate outcome would be." Another Amazon insider reported that Toys 'R' Us had failed to live up to its end of the deal by stocking insufficient quantities of top-selling items. It is the second major blow concerning trading partners for Amazon following last year's break with the clothing retailer Gap, which pulled out of a deal citing unfair pressure.

WARM-UPS

1. ONLINE SHOPPING: In pairs / groups, talk about online shopping. When did you first do it? What do you think of it? Write down three things you would never, ever buy online and three things you're perfectly happy to buy online. Share them with other students.

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

Retailers / Toys 'R' Us / Amazon.com / parting ways / litigation / online trading / customers / bricks / holes / predictions / top-selling items / partners / pressure

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

3. PARTNERSHIPS: Tell each what you think of the following partnerships. Think of three reasons why the partnerships might be successful and three reasons why they might flounder or fail.

- Amazon.com / Toys 'R' Us
- British Airways / BMW
- Microsoft / Apple iTunes
- McDonald's / KFC
- Chanel / Nike
- BBC / CNN
- Coca Cola / Heineken
- Citibank / Hilton Hotels
- Marlboro / Cartier
- Other

4. QUICK DEBATE: Students A believe online stores are infinitely better than bricks 'n' mortar stores. Students B think real stores that you can walk around are best. Debate this with your partners. Change partners often.

5. SUCCESSFUL LINKS: With your partner(s), decide which of the following are important in ensuring a successful business agreement:

- Similar markets
- Similar customers
- Both partners have online presence
- Unique product
- Flexible CEOs
- Strong legal teams
- Similar power in respective markets
- Workforce share the same language
- Companies from same continent
- Both companies well-established

6. AGREEMENTS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "agreements". 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. Two famous online companies have re-established trading ties. | T / F |
| b. Amazon.com had sole rights to sell Toys 'R' Us products online. | T / F |
| c. A new entity called Toysrus.com will start. | T / F |
| d. Toys 'R' Us now plans to build many more stores. | T / F |
| e. Amazon.com execs are extremely happy with the present situation. | T / F |
| f. Amazon.com is in the process of reviewing various options. | T / F |
| g. Amazon was angry at Toys 'R' Us stocking too many top-selling items. | T / F |
| h. The clothing retailer Gap cut its links with Amazon in 2005. | T / F |

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

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. retailers | alluding to |
| b. parted ways | improve |
| c. contesting | harmed |
| d. seamless | keep |
| e. enhance | misfortune |
| f. outcome | merchandisers |
| g. wronged | result |
| h. live up to | disputing |
| i. blow | smooth |
| j. citing | split up |

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

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a. Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com parted | the ultimate outcome would be |
| b. two companies had been involved | happy with the outcome |
| c. The court's ruling severs | retail shopping experience |
| d. integration of our online business with | one wronged |
| e. creating a more unified web and | citing unfair pressure |
| f. Amazon executives are less than | the link |
| g. the company sees it is the | trading partners for Amazon |
| h. it's still too early to predict what | our bricks and mortar locations |
| i. the second major blow concerning | ways yesterday |
| j. ...which pulled out of a deal | in litigation |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

The retailers Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com _____ ways yesterday after a court ruled Toysrus.com could be _____ as an independent online entity. The two companies had been involved in _____ since May 2004. Toys 'R' Us was contesting an August 2000 online trading agreement that gave Amazon _____ distribution rights to sell its toys and baby goods. The court's ruling _____ the link and opens the way for Toysrus.com to start its own online store. The senior vice-president of the company said: "We...expect to provide _____ online access for our customers....Tighter _____ of our online business with our bricks and mortar locations will enhance customer service by creating a more _____ web and retail shopping experience."

litigation
unified
parted
seamless
severs
integration
run
sole

Amazon executives are _____ than happy with the outcome, especially as the company sees it is the one _____. The court ruling is sure to leave a _____ hole in Amazon's profits. Its stock fell \$0.33 to \$36.79 after the announcement was made. A spokesman said: "We're in the process of reviewing various options...in _____ of the order...it's still too early to predict what the _____ outcome would be." Another Amazon insider reported that Toys 'R' Us had failed to live up to its _____ of the deal by stocking insufficient quantities of top-selling items, as per their agreement. It is the second major _____ concerning trading partners for Amazon following last year's _____ with the clothing retailer Gap, which pulled out of a deal citing unfair pressure.

ultimate
wronged
break
gaping
end
less
blow
light

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

The retailers Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com _____ yesterday after a court ruled Toysrus.com could be run as an independent online _____. The two companies had been involved in _____ since May 2004. Toys 'R' Us was contesting an August 2000 online trading agreement that gave Amazon sole distribution rights to sell its toys and baby goods. The court's ruling _____ the link and opens the way for Toysrus.com to start its own online store. The senior vice-president of the company said: "We...expect to provide _____ online access for our customers....Tighter integration of our online business with our bricks and _____ locations will enhance customer service by creating a more _____ web and retail shopping experience."

Amazon executives are less than happy with the _____, especially as the company sees it is the one _____. The court ruling is sure to leave a _____ hole in Amazon's profits. Its stock fell \$0.33 to \$36.79 after the announcement was made. A spokesman said: "We're in the process of reviewing various options... _____ the order...it's still too early to predict what the ultimate outcome would be." Another Amazon insider reported that Toys 'R' Us had failed to live up _____ of the deal by stocking insufficient quantities of top-selling items. It is the second major blow concerning trading partners for Amazon following last year's break with the clothing retailer Gap, which pulled out of a deal _____ unfair pressure.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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 "TOYS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about toys and online shopping.

- 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:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| • ways | • less |
| • run | • hole |
| • sole | • light |
| • severs | • end |
| • seamless | • blow |
| • unified | • pressure |

DISCUSSION

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

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com?
- c. Are you surprised Toys 'R' Us gave Amazon sole online distribution rights?
- d. Is Amazon the world's greatest bookstore?
- e. Are there better toy stores than Toys 'R' Us around?
- f. What do you think of the names and logos of the two retailers?
- g. How much damage do you think the court ruling will do to Amazon.com?
- h. What difficulties do "bricks 'n' clicks" stores face that "bricks 'n' mortar" stores do not?
- i. What do you think the "seamless online access" is that the Toys 'R' Us senior vice president spoke of?
- j. Do you think Amazon has been treated roughly with the court's ruling?

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

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. Do you get the impression Amazon.com is a good or bad company to be in business with?
- d. Why do you think Amazon.com has stayed ahead of the field for so long?
- e. What do you think the outcome of Amazon's reviewing will be?
- f. Besides falls in stock prices, how else do you think Amazon.com might suffer from losing high profile trading partners?
- g. Do you prefer bricks 'n' mortar stores or online stores?
- h. Do you think Amazon has been treated roughly with the court's ruling?
- i. When was the last time you were less than happy with a situation?
- 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?

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 information about the history of Amazon.com and Toys 'R' Us. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. BRICKS OR CLICKS? Make a poster about the advantages and disadvantages of bricks 'n' mortar stores and online stores. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. What were the most interesting points you read about on other students' posters?

4. LETTER: You are the CEO of Amazon.com. Write a letter to the court judge who allowed Toys 'R' Us to leave your agreement. State your feelings on the decision and what you think should be done about it. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar feelings?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. retailers | merchandisers |
| b. parted ways | split up |
| c. contesting | disputing |
| d. seamless | smooth |
| e. enhance | improve |
| f. outcome | result |
| g. wronged | harmed |
| h. live up to | keep |
| i. blow | misfortune |
| j. citing | alluding to |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a. Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com parted | ways yesterday |
| b. two companies had been involved | in litigation |
| c. The court's ruling severs | the link |
| d. integration of our online business with | our bricks and mortar locations |
| e. creating a more unified web and | retail shopping experience |
| f. Amazon executives are less than | happy with the outcome |
| g. the company sees it is the | one wronged |
| h. it's still too early to predict what | the ultimate outcome would be |
| i. the second major blow concerning | trading partners for Amazon |
| j. ...which pulled out of a deal | citing unfair pressure |

GAP FILL:

Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com part

The retailers Toys 'R' Us and Amazon.com **parted** ways yesterday after a court ruled Toysrus.com could be **run** as an independent online entity. The two companies had been involved in **litigation** since May 2004. Toys 'R' Us was contesting an August 2000 online trading agreement that gave Amazon **sole** distribution rights to sell its toys and baby goods. The court's ruling **severs** the link and opens the way for Toysrus.com to start its own online store. The senior vice-president of the company said: "We...expect to provide **seamless** online access for our customers....Tighter **integration** of our online business with our bricks and mortar locations will enhance customer service by creating a more **unified** web and retail shopping experience."

Amazon executives are **less** than happy with the outcome, especially as the company sees it is the one **wronged**. The court ruling is sure to leave a **gaping** hole in Amazon's profits. Its stock fell \$0.33 to \$36.79 after the announcement was made. A spokesman said: "We're in the process of reviewing various options...in **light** of the order...it's still too early to predict what the **ultimate** outcome would be." Another Amazon insider reported that Toys 'R' Us had failed to live up to its **end** of the deal by stocking insufficient quantities of top-selling items, as per their agreement. It is the second major **blow** concerning trading partners for Amazon following last year's **break** with the clothing retailer Gap, which pulled out of a deal citing unfair pressure.