English Conversation Club – Saratoga Library
December 3, 2026
Modern vs Traditional

The world is changing is many ways. Some of the changes have brought us conveniences that make our daily lives easier. But some of these conveniences have downsides that have resulted in challenges.

Do you recall a few weeks ago Outlook users couldn't access their email? Then a few days later, the Federal Aviation Administration was forced to halt airline departures nationwide. Then a software bug slowed JPMorgan Chase bank transactions and a technology issue delayed United Airlines flights.

Modern conveniences also weaken human connections and cause the loss of skills that people are no longer learning. For instance, many young people no longer know how to read analog clocks because they have only seen and used digital clocks and watches.



analog clock



Digital Clock This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

Question: What kind of clock or watch do you prefer – analog or digital?

Modern Convenience vs. Traditional Skills

Today, we will reflect on some daily activities that have changed over time and discuss whether you prefer new ways to carry them out or prefer to use more traditional methods. Take turns reading and answering the following questions and discuss your answers.

Do you:

1. Use a **paper calendar** or a **digital phone calendar** to keep track of your activities? Explain your answer.
2. Usually cook **from scratch** or **order carryout** for dinner?
3. Call your friends **on the phone**, Facetime them, or **text** them?
4. Pay with **cash** or pay by tapping a **credit card** or a **digital wallet**?
5. Learn how to fix things by **asking someone with experience** or by looking at **a YouTube video**?
6. Use a **robotic vacuum** or use a **broom to sweep** your floors?
7. Pay your bills by **writing a check** to the company you owe money to or do you **pay your bills online**?
8. Dry your clothes **on a clothesline** or in a **gas or electric dryer**?
9. Read **physical books** or do you read **eBooks** or **listen to audio books**?
10. Read **paper newspapers** or do you read your **news online** or do you just **watch video news**?

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11. Buy clothes in **brick and mortar stores** or just **online**?
12. Still have a **landline** or do you only use a **mobile phone?**
13. Watch **movies** online, on **DVDs** or do you go to a **movie theater?**
14. Prefer to send a **handwritten thank you card** or do you prefer to **send an email**?
15. Prefer to work **in person** or **remotely?**

Discuss these questions.

1. What have we gained through modern efficiency, and what kind of human connection have we lost?
2. Name some ways we rely too much on our smart devices. Are they really smart?
3. Should elementary school children learn cursive handwriting in schools, or should they just learn how to type on a keyboard?
4. When was the last time you used a paper map?
5. Do you know how to refill a stapler?
6. Is it easier or harder to build deep friendships today than it was 30 years ago?
7. What three dishes do you think every person should learn to cook?
8. Can you sew and adjust a hem for a pair of pants or sew on a button?
9. Can you knit, embroider, or crochet? Could your parents or grandparents sew, embroider, knit or crochet?
10. How do you oil a squeaky door hinge?
11. Do you know how to make change with real bills and coins?
12. If someone asks you whether you live on the north, south, east, or west side of your city or street, could you tell them?
13. If you only had a compass to help you figure out how to get somewhere, could you do it?
14. Can you light a fire without a match? Do you know how to prepare a wood fire so it will burn well?