From Telephone Booth to Digital World

Tereza Leite

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What is a ***landline*** telephone? Why is it called a landline?

2. ***Etc.*** is an abbreviation of the Latin term ***et cetera***, which means "and the rest; and so on." Try using it in several sentences.

3. Describe what you see in the two street scenes in the photos on p. 22 and p. 23.

Change Has Been Very Fast

I was born and raised in Brazil, in a small city between the mountains. At that time, the TV was black and white, and the phones were all ***landline***. If you were on the street, you could use telephone booths that were installed at strategic points around the city. To use these public phones, you needed a special token—something that young people today would not even recognize. We also wrote letters by hand, and our most important source for research was the encyclopedia.

Later, when I was working as a journalist, my main tools were a tape recorder, notebook, pen, and manual typewriter. We rented cassette tapes for movies and games. However, with the digital revolution, the changes started to be very fast in our daily lives and in our workplace.

Today, the TV is not just in color, but it is smart (smarter than me). The personal computer is everywhere. The cell phone replaced the ***landlines*** and the traditional camera. Today, there are apps for everything, such as food or medicine delivery, relaxation for sleep, flight tracking, translation, ***etc***. And the "snail mail" letters now are like museum pieces. In my particular situation, I can't always keep up with so much progress. Often I see myself as digitally illiterate.

Telephone booth in São Paulo. Photo by Morio from Wikimedia.

The Pressure of the Digital Revolution

In my job as a journalist, for example, I use the computer a lot—A LOT—to research, write, and send and receive emails. However, there are always new tools available, and I feel like I can't keep up. That is, when I start to master something, people are already migrating to other innovations. I am always struggling to learn again and not be completely outdated.

For me and for other ***Baby Boomers***, this means that every day is a day for learning. Technology can be a daily challenge for many of us, but it brings us countless advantages and makes our work easier.

There is no escape for me. Technology has a strong presence in my work; away from work, it is not that different. I use my computer and

cell phone to be informed, talk to my family and friends, shop, take pictures, archive data, access bank accounts, use GPS, and many other things. However, I just use the most basic functions of most apps. I cannot keep up with all the new developments.

Embracing the Future

One of the new developments is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Sometimes, we use it without even knowing it. Spell check and grammar check are examples of artificial intelligence. Also, now our emails offer ***auto-completion*** of text as we write. AI makes a good guess about what we are about to write and it offers to finish our sentence for us. As always, I am trying to understand how to benefit from these features without becoming dependent on them.

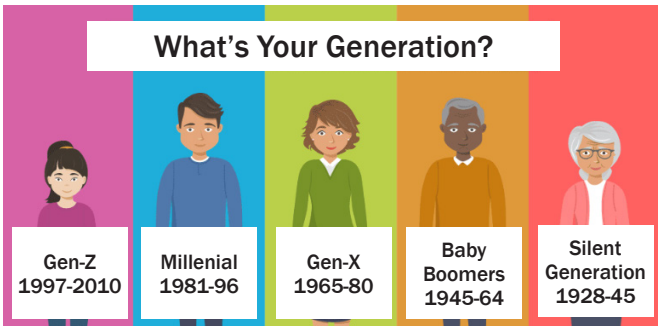
For me, the important thing to remember is that the word "difficult" doesn't mean "impossible." Continuing to learn and being willing to adapt are essential to remaining relevant and productive. So, I run in the back of the pack. I learn slowly, but I learn. When something changes, I learn again. What we can't do is be ashamed to ask for help and remain stuck in the past.

Tereza Leite is a student at Dover Adult Learning Center in Dover, NH. She was born in Brazil, received an MBA in Marketing, and worked as a journalist for newspapers and in the communication department for a major corporation. She has lived in New Hampshire since 2015, and she has studied English as Second Language since 2017, at DALC.

People on their phones in New York City. Photo by Ed Yourdon from Wikimedia.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. The author divides her article into three sections. Summarize the sections. Is it helpful to you as a reader to have the writing divided this way? Why or why not?

2. Based on the context, explain what ***auto-completion*** means. Think of other words with ***auto,*** e.g., automatic, automobile, autobiography. Note that ***auto*** is a prefix that comes from the Greek word meaning "self" or "same."

3. Look at the chart below. What is a ***Baby Boomer***? What generation are you in?