

NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Neil...

Alice

... and I'm Alice. Now Neil, how do you get to work?

Neil

I cycle.

Alice

I didn't know that! Somehow I hadn't imagined you as a cyclist. And where's all your bike gear?

Neil

Well, I sneak in in the mornings, have a shower, and get changed. That's my bike in the corner over there.

Alice

Oh, you've got a **foldaway** bike – which means it folds up so it's easy to carry or put away. Do you wear lycra, Neil?

Neil

Yes, I do... it's very comfortable. I wear lycra as often as I can. **Lycra** by the way is a stretchy fabric used in tight-fitting sports clothes.

Alice

Well, I'll have to see if I can catch you on your way into the building – I'm **intrigued** about this sporty Neil I didn't know about!

Neil

'Intrigued' means to be very interested in something. Well, Alice, I'm flattered. And today's show is about **commuting** – or travelling between your home and your work. So how did you commute this morning, Alice?

Alice

I got the **Tube** – that's the subway system here in London, also known as the underground – and it was a nightmare. We stopped in a tunnel for so long that people started talking to each other.

Neil

And for those of you who aren't Londoners, that's unusual! Do you ever talk to people on the train?

Alice

No. People think you're crazy if you talk to strangers.

Neil

Well, maybe now's a good time to talk about today's quiz question, Alice. What question do you have for me?

Alice

Alright then. I know you like my questions, Neil. So here we go: What did the word 'commuter' originally describe? Was it someone who...

- a) travelled with other people?
- b) paid a reduced fare to travel?
- Or c) travelled by train to work?

Neil

Oh, that's easy. I'm going to go for c) travelled by train to work.

Alice

Well, we'll find out later whether you're right or not. Now let's listen to a commuter in Nairobi who takes a matatu to get to work. These are minibuses used as shared taxis in East Africa. Can you spot a word that means being quick to notice things going on around you?

INSERT

Commuter, Nairobi, Kenya

When I'm stuck in the matatu there is a lot of strange things happen around you, so you have to be alert in Nairobi. When you open... when you leave your window open somebody can run away with your belongings. You may be speaking... using the phone... somebody just snatch your phone... you may expect the unexpected!

Neil

The word used by this commuter in Kenya is **alert**. And in these noisy, crowded buses you need to be alert in case someone runs away with your belongings – **belongings** are the things that you own.

Alice

Right. Somebody might snatch your phone – **snatch** means to take something quickly.

Neil

Public transport in Nairobi sounds stressful! If I was taking the bus I'd want to have a **nap** – or short sleep.

Alice

Yes. Well, people have done research on commuting and stress levels – and interestingly women are more likely to experience stress during their journey than men.

Neil

Why's that?

Alice

Well, they're more likely to do something which is being called 'trip chaining' – where they make one or more stops on the way to work or going home – for example to drop off or pick up the kids from school – and this makes it more likely that something will go wrong with their journey.

Neil

Even if you aren't trip chaining it's no fun being stuck in a **traffic jam** – that's a large number of vehicles close together moving slowly – or being packed into a crowded train like sardines. Let's face it – travelling by car or by public transport can be really miserable!

Alice

Yes. **Packed in like sardines** describes people standing so close together that they can't move – like fish in a can! So let's hear how longer commutes can affect your health from US researcher Christine Hoehner.

INSERT

Christine Hoehner, researcher at Washington University School of Medicine

My study found that adults who commuted longer distances from home to work were less physically active, less physically fit, weighed more and had higher blood pressure than those people who had shorter commutes.

Neil

The American researcher must be talking about commuters who aren't engaged in active travel, mustn't she? Because if you cycle a longer distance then you're being more physically active.

Alice

I think you're right, for once, Neil!

Neil

Yeah.

Alice

And I'd better start going to the gym more. I don't like the sound of high blood pressure.

Neil

Why don't you hop on your bike, Alice? Then we can both wear lycra to work.

Alice

That's a fantastic idea, Neil! Moving on! Here's the answer to today's quiz question. I asked: What did the word 'commuter' originally describe? Was it someone who... a) travelled with other people? b) paid a reduced fare to travel? Or c) travelled by train to work?

Neil

And I said c) travelled by train to work. It must be right.

Alice

And you were wrong I'm afraid, Neil! It's b) someone who paid a reduced fare to travel. The Oxford Dictionary says the word 'commute' comes from from Latin *commutare*, from *com-* 'altogether' + *mutare* 'to change'. The word was used in the US in the 1840s, when people paid a reduced or **commuted** fare to travel by rail from the suburbs into the city.

Neil

OK. Can you tell us the words we heard today again, Alice?

Alice

Of course I can. Here they are:

foldaway bike

lycra

intrigued

commuting

the Tube

alert

belongings

snatch

nap

traffic jam

packed in like sardines

commuted

Neil

Well, that's the end of today's journey with 6 Minute English. Please do join us again soon.

Both
Bye.

Vocabulary

foldaway bike

a bike that folds up so it's easy to carry or put away

lycra

a stretchy fabric used in tight-fitting sports clothes

intrigued

very interested in something

commuting

travelling between your home and your work

the Tube

the subway (or underground) system in London

alert

being quick to notice things going on around you

belongings

things that you own

snatch

take quickly

nap

short sleep, especially during the day

traffic jam

a large number of vehicles close together moving slowly

packed in like sardines

people standing so close together that they can't move

commuted

(here) reduced