

## 34 Bad habits

### Discussion

- 1 It stank and housed rats.
- 2 There was 154 tons of rubbish.
- 3 No – some were still alive.
- 4 They had 'a soft spot' for them.
- 5 Possibly – it's not clear from the article.
- 6 Up to 6 feet long (about 1.82m)

### Language

- 1 bite your nails
- 2 crack your knuckles
- 3 grind your teeth
- 4 pick your nose
- 5 snap your fingers
- 6 play with your hair

### Discussion

(possible answers)

- 1 smoking
- 2 drinking
- 3 nail biting
- 4 nose picking
- 5 TV addict
- 6 surfing
- 7 hoarding
- 8 shopping
- 9 eating sweets/chocolate

# Bad habits

## Discussion

Discuss these questions with a partner:

1. Do you have any habits which you consider bad habits?
2. Do you have any old habits that you can't give up?
3. Did you use to have a bad habit that you've given up? How did you do it?
4. Are there any bad habits in other people that really annoy you?

Share your ideas with the rest of the class.

## Reading

Read about these people with unusually anti-social habits and answer the questions below. Which one is the strangest? What do they all have in common?

### 154 TONS OF RUBBISH FOUND IN SPANIARD'S HOME

SAN SEBASTIAN DE LOS REYES, Spain (AP) – Workers with heavy equipment have removed 154 tons of rubbish from a man's home outside Madrid. The job took two weeks to complete. 58-year-old Antonio Villalba refused repeated requests from neighbours and city officials to clean up his yard and house. It stank and there were rats in and around the house, the newspaper *El País* said. The house was so packed with everything from tin cans to car parts that Villalba was forced to live in a tiny compartment in the back and reached it through a tunnel he made in the rubbish.

Villalba, a widower who lived alone, was taken to a nursing home until the job was completed.

### DOZENS OF DEAD CATS DISCOVERED IN HOME OF EX-COP

COOPER CITY, Fla. (AP) – A former police officer was arrested after authorities found 67 dead cats and dozens of other neglected felines at a house authorities said was used as an 'animal retreat'. Police said the dead cats were

in the woman's refrigerator and freezer, some in plastic bags. Another 24 cats, many of them underfed, were also found. "It was foul, believe me," said police Capt. Marvin E. Stoner Jr. Audrey Weed, 50, was charged with animal abandonment and was awaiting trial. Neighbours said Weed had a soft spot for abandoned animals and habitually brought them home, but became overwhelmed.

### MAN FOUND DEAD AT HOME – LIZARDS EATING HIS BODY

DOVER, Del (AP) – Several pet lizards were found eating the corpse of their owner in his apartment, police said. Police were called to Ronald Huff's apartment in Newark, Del. on Wednesday after he failed to show up for work, investigators said. Huff, 42, lived alone and had last been seen on Sunday. Seven Nile monitor lizards, the largest measuring 6 feet long, were recovered and brought to the SPCA. Director John Caldwell said that the lizards are "alive and well". He added that one of the reptiles recovered was acting aggressively, "actually going towards you – mouth open."

## Discussion

Discuss these questions in pairs or small groups:

1. Why did the authorities go to Antonio Villalba's house?
2. How do you know it was a big job?
3. Were all the cats in Audrey Weed's apartment found dead?
4. Why do you think someone would keep all those cats?
5. Do you think Ronald Huff was killed by his lizards?
6. What size were the lizards?

## Language

1. The following expressions are common ways to talk about habits. Underline the verbs.

- It's a hard habit to break.
- I'm trying to cut down.
- I've been meaning to give up.
- Once you start, you can't stop.

Do you have equivalents in your language?

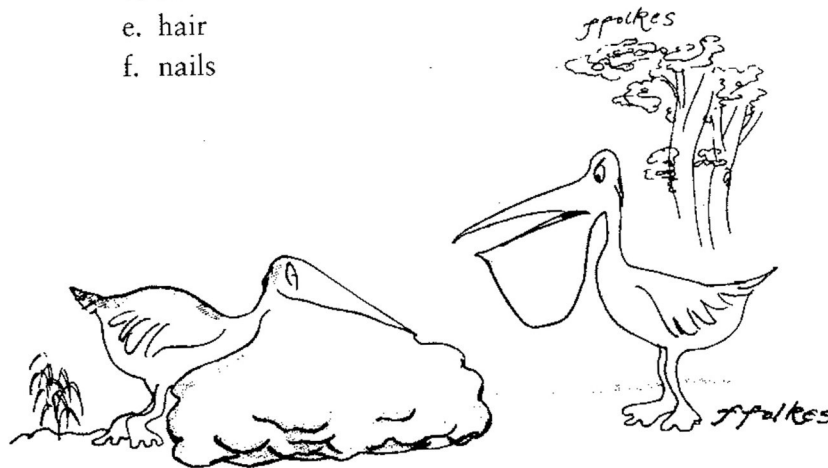
2. Match the following to complete the bad habits:

- |                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. bite your      | a. fingers  |
| 2. crack your     | b. knuckles |
| 3. grind your     | c. nose     |
| 4. pick your      | d. teeth    |
| 5. snap your      | e. hair     |
| 6. play with your | f. nails    |

## Discussion

Work in pairs or small groups. What habits do the following refer to?

- I'm down to two packs a day now.
- OK, just a drop.
- My nails never grow.
- Get your finger out of there!
- He stays up all night watching.
- I get on and I can't get off – I just surf all day long.
- I just can't throw things out.
- I can't resist a bargain.
- I have a terrible sweet tooth.



"Hoarder!"

## Questionnaire – are you a hoarder?

Are you a hoarder? Do you find it impossible to throw things out? For some people, such as Antonio Villalba in the article, this is a real problem – now officially recognised by doctors as an obsessive-compulsive disorder. Some people find it impossible to throw anything away – even hoarding used bottles, empty cereal packets, etc. But aren't we all in some small way secret hoarders? Tick which of the following things you secretly hoard:

- ordinary plastic carrier bags
- carrier bags from famous shops
- empty wine bottles
- empty jam jars
- old newspapers
- old magazines
- favourite old clothes
- programmes from concerts or plays
- pens
- old cosmetics

Find other people in the class who share your weakness. Are there other things which you are willing to admit to hoarding?