



Rob: Hello I'm Rob and this is 6 Minute English. With me today is Finn. Hello Finn.

Finn: Hello Rob.

Rob: We're talking about noise today – and looking at some of the words and phrases associated with noise and its opposite: peace and quiet. But, as always, let's start with a question. A new survey in the UK has identified the ten jobs where people are most exposed to noise – noise that can cause serious damage to someone's hearing. Which one of these three jobs has the most exposure to noise?

- a) A nightclub worker
- b) A classical musician
- c) An airport ground staff worker

Finn: I think it's got to be c) the person who works in the airport. Planes are very noisy aren't they Rob?

Rob: That's true, very noisy. OK, we'll find out if you're right at the end of the programme. But now, let's make some noise! Or at least hear some noise. This is a typical **cacophony** of sound you can hear on a busy street in London. A cacophony is a mix of loud sounds.... Have a listen.

(Mix of sounds from a busy London street)

Finn: So we heard drills, and buses and church bells in there as well, didn't we Rob? It's a real **din** – or bad noise – but people in urban areas all around the world have to live with that sort of noise all the time.

Rob: Yes but I guess they get used to it and it's all part of city life but it does mean it can be difficult to hear yourself think! And I think you'll agree the world is becoming noisier?

Finn: It is. So let's hear from Doctor Stephen Dance who went to discover how bad the noise in London really is. How does he describe the noise for pedestrians?

Dr Stephen Dance. South Bank University:

We're here looking at the London soundscape, and as ever there is a fire engine going by, just as I'm talking. That is just as loud as it would be on a motorway but we're on a side street, so it's quite deafening for the pedestrians.

Rob: That's Stephen Dance experiencing a typical London soundscape – a soundscape is a mix of sounds heard in a particular location. And one of the sounds was that of a fire engine which was very loud!

Finn: It was – he described it as **deafening** for pedestrians – so, extremely loud and possibly causing deafness. But how would we know a fire engine was on its way to an emergency without such a sound?

Rob: It's a good point. Sometimes a loud noise is needed so it can be heard over other noises. And in other situations we sometimes make more noise **to drown out** – or cover up – the sounds we don't want to hear. So we turn our music up to drown out the sound of the washing machine for example!

Finn: But of course if everyone turns up their own music the noise becomes even greater. So, Rob, what is the solution?

Rob: Maybe we should all take **a vow of silence!** Just like a monk, we make a promise not to talk.

Finn: I think that would be impossible for you Rob! Anyway, what rich people used to do in history was move out of the city to the relative **tranquillity** of the countryside, but then there the silence was deafening!

Rob: And when you're in the country, you sometimes tune in to the smallest sounds, like a bird singing, and that can become just as irritating. But you have to admit those sounds are a lot more calming than the constant noise of city life?

Finn: Well you can sometimes hear birdsong in the city but it's the buildings that cause these natural sounds to be drowned out.

- Rob:** High rise buildings cause the sound to reflect off – or bounce off - each other causing the sound to be **amplified** – made louder. And buildings made of glass are even more reflective.
- Finn:** So there's not really a solution to reducing noise in the city – we're just going to have put on our headphones and listen to our own noise – heavy metal maybe, that would be good, wouldn't it Rob?
- Rob:** Hmm, well, listening to the tinny sound of music coming from you headphones whilst on a train can be really annoying.
- Finn:** Rob, maybe you should join a **noise abatement** group - these are groups of people who campaign to control levels of noise. They try to restrict planes flying over residential areas at night and encourage people not to disturb their neighbours by playing music too loudly. Maybe the big question really is what is noise? Some people may call a sound just noise whereas others may say it's **music to their ears** – a beautiful sound.
- Rob:** Well Finn, some people say that the best noise is no noise at all – or **silence is golden**.
- Finn:** Actually Rob, when you say 'silence is golden' it actually means it's often better to say nothing at all than say something stupid – so maybe it's time for us to stop making any more noise and just get out of here?
- Rob:** Not before I've given you the answer to today's question. Earlier, I said a new survey in the UK has identified the ten jobs where people are most exposed to noise. I asked which of these three jobs has the most exposure to noise?
- Finn:** And I said c) an airport ground staff worker. Was I right?
- Rob:** You were absolutely right. The answer is an airport ground staff worker. People who direct jet engines in landing and take-off and are subjected to 140 decibels of sound in one go. It's important to cover your ears with ear muffs in a job like that! OK, that's all we have time for today but please join us again soon for more 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.
- Both:** Bye.

Vocabulary and definitions

cacophony	noisy mix of loud sounds
din	loud, unpleasant noise
deafening	very loud so nothing else can be heard
to drown out	to stop something being heard by making a louder noise
a vow of silence	a promise or commitment not to speak for a certain amount of time
tranquillity	a state of peace and calm, without any noise
amplified	made louder
noise abatement	reduction in noise
music to my ears	a pleasant sound or something you want to hear
silence is golden	saying nothing is better than saying something

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