

## Business English News 30 – Drones

### Discussion Questions

1. Before drone delivery becomes mainstream, what factors need to be resolved or considered?
2. What are the advantages and limitations of using drones for everyday purposes? Explain.
3. How would you protect against violation of privacy from drones?

### Transcript

Is it a bird, is it a plane, no it's a **drone**! What was once a dream for science fiction fans is now **inching closer** to reality. Gone are the days when **messenger pigeons** brought us a **scroll** of news tied to its foot. Powerful companies are **pouring money into** what they hope will be the birth of a new delivery market, as the Atlantic reports:

The commercial drone industry has a new best friend, and that friend is powerful and **loaded**. It's Google, which recently **unveiled** its secret drone delivery program, Project Wing, meaning another **tech titan** now has **skin in the commercial UAV game**. One that just might have enough **clout** to make delivery drones happen.

Google, Amazon, and a **handful** of others have **embarked on** a project that may change the way consumers receive products, and the commercial drone industry is **poised to take off** with **far-reaching** applications. As the Smithsonian Magazine explains drones have **come a long way** from their original purpose, and today can be found in agriculture, security, and even Hollywood:

Drone technology was developed for military use, but **a growing number** of alternatives have **popped up** in the last decade. **Citrus** farmers now use drones to **monitor** crops. **Conservationists keep tabs** on **endangered species**, as well as any **poachers**. Police departments are thinking of using them in rescue and **hostage** situations. Drones have even helped shoot some major feature films, including *Man of Steel* and *Skyfall*.

Last year, Amazon announced that they were testing drone delivery with the hopes of one day being able to **guarantee** a 30-minute delivery time to customers within a 10-mile **radius** of their **distribution center**. It's a big change from Amazon's normal way of doing business, as Information Week notes:

Traditionally **reserved** Amazon appeared to be **coming out of its shell** to vie for **mindshare** as a technology leader **alongside** Google, a company that has **gone to great lengths** to present itself as an innovator and to **shine a light** on its **moonshot projects**.

There appears to be neither a **shortage** of money to be made nor **hurdles to overcome** as developers large and small try to **tap into** a multi-billion dollar market. The **fiscal boost** and job creation potential is something that governments in the US and around the world would **warmly welcome**. From Gizmodo:

In a **fact sheet** about Project Wing, Google **pointed out** that integrating **autonomous machines** into U.S. airspace will **boost** the economy by at least \$13.6 billion in the first three years, and in 10 years could add as many as 100,000 jobs.

Using drones for the military is one thing, but delivering packages with them is **another thing entirely**. Given the **legal and regulatory obstacles**, it may prove harder to set up a package delivery system with drones than it is to use them for battle. Slate Magazine had this to say:

This technology is going to develop fast, almost certainly faster than we can **legislate** it. That's why we need to **get ahead of it** now. There are **legitimate concerns** about how **AI** and **autonomous technology** will impact the work force and our quality of life.

Improving the lives of billions of people will certainly mean more than a delivery drone that drops off a book at your doorstep. Managing **natural disasters**, monitoring traffic information, transporting medicine and **vaccines**, and researching **urban planning** could see significant changes in the years ahead. Even insurance agents could see a piece of the action, as the Insurance Journal explains:

After a **catastrophe** hits, mobile units filled with **adjusters** are on site to **evaluate** property damage. **Flash forward** five years and an **insured** may never meet the property adjuster **handling** his or her **claim**. Instead, a drone is sent to evaluate damage within hours of it occurring. Claims are closed at **breakneck speed** as adjusters handle a much higher **volume**.

While it's perhaps too soon to know exactly how this technology will be applied, drone delivery **has all the makings** of a new era in **consumerism**. But, as Mashable concludes, it's sure to be exciting:

With Project Wing, Google has taken an aircraft design from history's **junk pile** and turned it into a **template** for the future of drone delivery. We're still years away from getting **backscratchers** flown right to our front doors, but the **armada** of flying **robots** transporting them may end up looking more unusual than we ever thought.

## **Vocabulary**

**Drone:** A remote-controlled pilotless aircraft.

**To inch closer:** To move by small steps or increments towards a goal or position; "As Europe inches closer to recession, the ECB is asking for more reforms."

**Messenger pigeon: (also 'carrier' or 'homing' pigeon):** A type of pigeon that is trained to carry messages.

**Scroll:** A traditional roll of paper used for writing a document; "The ancient scrolls were written in a language that we could not understand."

**To pour money into something:** To give a lot of financial or monetary support to a project or idea.

**To be loaded:** To be extremely rich or wealthy; "Bill Gates is loaded, but he also donates billions of dollars to charity every year."

**To unveil:** To reveal, show, or disclose for the first time; "The tech world was very excited for the Apple Watch to be unveiled."

**Tech titan:** An extremely important technology company or developer (e.g. Apple, Samsung, Google, etc.).

**To have skin in the game:** To have a personal investment (usually financial) in an organization or activity, and therefore an interest in its success.

**UAV (Unmanned aerial vehicle):** Commonly known as a drone; an aircraft without a human pilot aboard.

**Clout:** Having influence or power, especially in politics or business; "Sasha doesn't have the clout to make big decisions, but the CEO values his opinions."

**Handful:** A quantity that fills the hands, a small number or amount; "The HR team will be interviewing a handful of candidates for the sales position this afternoon."

**To embark on:** To start or begin, usually a journey or adventure; "When Janos embarked on his journey as a musician he had no idea he would be so successful."

**To be poised:** Prepared, ready, or in the right position; "The teacher's association is poised to continue their attack on government school tests."

**To take off:** To be important, popular, or successful; "We've worked hard to build up our user base, and hopefully our e-commerce business will really take off next year."

**Far-reaching:** Having important and significant effects or implications; "Replacing the entire management team will have far-reaching consequences for our company."

**To come a long way (from):** To make a lot of progress or improvement; "Although the change have been small, over the years the iPhone has come a long way from its original design."

**Growing number (of):** Increasing amount; "A growing number of university graduates are leaving Europe to look for opportunities abroad."

**To pop up:** To suddenly appear or become important; "It seems a new discount clothing shop pops up every month in our city."

**Citrus:** A category of fruit including oranges, grapefruit, and lemons/limes.

**To monitor:** To observe or keep track of something; "Medical students have started using Google Glass to monitor their patient's vital signs."

**Conservationist:** a person who promotes preservation and careful management of natural resources and of the environment; "Dr. Jane Goodall is a conservationist who is famous for her work with chimpanzees."

**To keep tabs (on):** To observe carefully; "Our purchasing department has asked us to keep tabs on expenditures."

**Endangered species:** A plant or animal species present in such small numbers that it is at risk of becoming extinct.

**Poacher:** A person who hunts or catches game or fish illegally.

**Hostage:** A person who is taken or held as security until a demand, usually financial, is met.

**Guarantee:** a formal assurance (typically in writing) that certain conditions will be fulfilled, especially that a product will be repaired or replaced if not of a specified quality.

**Radius:** a straight line from the center to the outside edge (circumference) of a circle or sphere.

**Distribution center:** A centrally located warehouse that organizes and monitors the delivery of goods or products.

**Reserved:** Without the tendency to take big risks, slow to show emotion or opinion; "Meg may seem reserved, but she's one of the most aggressive negotiators we have."

**To come out of one's shell:** To become more friendly or sociable; "Natalia has really come out of her shell since being promoted to the director of the institute."

**Mindshare:** Consumer awareness of a product or brand.

**(To be) Alongside:** Close to the side of, next to; "Our university works alongside a number of charities to raise money for the homeless."

**To go to great lengths:** To make a big or considerable effort to reach a goal or objective; "I've gone to great lengths to get you this job because I'm confident you'll be a fantastic supervisor."

**To shine a light (on):** To make something clearer or easier to understand by giving more details or a simpler explanation.

**Moonshot project:** A difficult or ambitious project; "Colonizing Mars has always been a moonshot project, but it may happen sooner than you think."

**Shortage:** A lack or insufficient amount of something; "Due to a shortage of time, we haven't been able to complete your order."

**Hurdle to overcome:** An obstacle or difficulty that must be surpassed; "In life, there are always hurdles to overcome. How you respond determines your success."

**To tap into:** To establish a connection with or have access to; "We may need to tap into our emergency funds if we want to replace the equipment that we lost in the fire."

**Fiscal boost:** Monetary gain or increase derived from increased economic activity.

**Warmly welcome:** To happily receive people or information/news; "News that our marketing firm was merging with a new startup was warmly welcomed by the entire staff."

**Fact sheet:** a presentation of data in a format which emphasizes key points concisely.

**To point out:** To indicate or specify; "As I pointed out in my previous interview, I have more than 10 years of experience and can speak 3 languages."

**Autonomous machine:** A tool or piece of equipment that is not controlled by others or by outside forces.

**Boost:** Increase or rise in the value or level of something; "Because of his hard work over the past year, Karen was given a big boost to her salary."

**(To be) Another thing entirely:** Something else completely; "Translating a restaurant menu, but reading a legal contract in another language is another thing entirely."

**Legal and regulatory obstacle:** Laws or regulations that block one's way or makes an activity more difficult.

**To legislate:** To make or enact laws; "Even though the teachers were on strike, the provincial government legislated teachers back to the classroom."

**To get ahead of something:** To act early or before something occurs; "In order for us to get ahead of our competition, we need to focus on innovating the best products possible!"

**Legitimate (concerns):** Genuine, valid, or reasonable; "Our clients have a legitimate complaint with their vacation package; the hotel they stayed at was absolutely unsuitable to stay at."

**AI (Artificial Intelligence):** Computer systems able to perform tasks such as visual perception, speech recognition, and decision-making.

**Autonomous technology:** See 'Autonomous machine'.

**Natural disaster:** A natural event such as a flood, earthquake, or hurricane that causes great damage or loss of life.

**Vaccine:** Medicine to prevent or cure someone against a disease or illness; "A growing number of parents prevent their children from getting vaccines for diseases like measles and smallpox."

**Urban planning:** the branch of architecture dealing with the design and organization of urban space and activities.

**Catastrophe:** A sudden and widespread disaster; "If we can't get our email system repaired by the end of the day it's going to be a complete catastrophe."

**Adjuster:** Someone who investigates insurance claims and recommends an effective settlement; "A good claims adjuster doesn't become too emotionally involved in their cases."

**Evaluate:** To judge the value or condition of someone or something in a careful and thoughtful way; "After a 6-month training period, we'll evaluate your performance and discuss which areas we need to improve."

**Flash forward:** To transition to a later event or time.

**Insured:** Someone who has, or is covered by, a type of insurance.

**To handle:** To manage or control a situation or problem; "Our company handles the international relocation needs of both individuals and businesses."

**Claim:** An official request for something, such as money, that is owed to you; "You can submit your insurance claim to our HR department and they'll process it for you within 21 days."

**Breakneck speed:** To do something extremely or dangerously fast.

**Volume:** Amount or total; "The volume of Amazon's deliveries increases by nearly 300% during the Christmas season."

**To have (all) the makings of:** To have the clear ability for becoming something; "I've always thought that our boss had the makings of a fantastic CEO."

**Consumerism:** The actions of people who spend a lot of money on goods and services.

**Junk pile:** An accumulation of old and discarded products.

**Template:** Something that serves as a model for others to copy; "If you're using a template for your CV, you should always remember to personalize it to the job you're applying for."

**Backscratcher:** An tool/implement with a long handle, used for scratching one's back.

**Armada:** A large group of moving things; "An armada of container ships crossed the ocean to deliver goods from Southeast Asia."

**Robot:** A mechanical device that is capable of performing a variety of complex tasks by being programmed in advance; "Hollywood likes to depict robots that have somehow taken over the world, but I don't think it will ever happen."

## Language Review

### A. Collocations

Match words from each column to make collocations found in the article.

1. Inch	a. Center	
2. Urban	b. Number	
3. Endangered	c. Project	
4. Flash	d. Planning	
5. Distribution	e. Speed	
6. Moonshot	f. Species	
7. Breakneck	g. Forward	
8. Growing	h. Closer	

### B. Vocabulary Quiz

- According to the article, Amazon hopes to deliver packages to customers:
  - In half an hour or less.
  - Within 10 miles of their headquarters.
  - Alongside Google.
  - Sometime this year.
- Which of the following effect is NOT likely to occur with the development of drones?
  - Significant job creation.
  - Boost to the economy.
  - New era in consumerism.
  - Decrease in the quality of life.
- "A \_\_\_\_\_ of clients have complained about technical problems \_\_\_\_\_ since they upgraded their operating system."
  - Claim / Embarked on
  - Handful / Popping up
  - Clout / Taken off
  - Shortage / Tapping into
- "There were hard times and good ones, but we \_\_\_\_\_ since Mr. Slim left Armada Inc. to become our CEO."
  - Came a long way
  - Has come a long way
  - Have come a long way
  - Come a long way from

5. "Before we \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves, I think we need to understand what kind of impact selling the company will have on our staff."
- Kept tabs on
  - Shone a light on
  - Warmly welcome
  - Get ahead of
6. "Greg claims to have ordered 100 units of the new machinery, but we're out of stock. This is a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ problem!"
- Reserved
  - Catastrophic
  - Autonomous
  - Insured
7. "I \_\_\_\_\_ the situation with the unions as best I can. They are making a number of \_\_\_\_\_ requests."
- Handled / legit
  - Handles / legitimize
  - Am handling / legitimate
  - Have handles / legislate
8. Offices around the country are emphasizing the need to \_\_\_\_\_ office supplies like paper and printer ink.
- Conserve
  - Consume
  - Poach
  - Adjust
9. "This monitor is a piece of junk! I('ve) \_\_\_\_\_ to Sara, but she told me we can't afford a new one."
- Point it out
  - Point out it
  - Pointed out it
  - Pointed it out
10. Despite continuous innovation, \_\_\_\_\_ have yet to become a part of daily life.
- Pigeons
  - Robots
  - Armadas
  - Titans

## **Answers**

### **A. Collocations**

1. Inch Closer
2. Urban Planning
3. Endangered Species
4. Flash Forward
5. Distribution Center
6. Moonshot Project
7. Breakneck Speed
8. Growing Number

### **B. Vocabulary Quiz**

**1/a, 2/d, 3/b, 4/c, 5/d, 6/b, 7/c, 8/a, 9/d, 10/b**

### **Online Practice**

Click the "Launch" button to open the **online practice:**

Launch Quiz