

NEWS LESSON

Why Are the 1990s Back?

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Which old object would you choose over its modern version?
2. Can you miss a time you never lived through?
3. What do you think people will miss about life today?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**teenager**	☐	A	nice to look at or think about, so you want it
2	**attractive**	☐	B	normal, not special
3	**constantly**	☐	C	about money
4	**discover**	☐	D	a young person between thirteen and nineteen years old
5	**ordinary**	☐	E	treated so that the pictures on a film can be seen
6	**discrimination**	☐	F	treating some people worse than others because of who they are
7	**financial**	☐	G	to find or learn something for the first time
8	**developed**	☐	H	all the time, without stopping

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Young people are choosing old cameras, CDs and baggy jeans, even when they never lived through the decade.

1 A teenager buys an old camera even though a phone takes clearer photographs. Another chooses a CD that holds only one album instead of millions of songs. Baggy jeans and 1990s bands are popular again, often with people who were not alive when they first appeared. Why would a generation with faster, easier technology want objects that do less? The answer may say more about life now than about the past.

2 In October 2026, Tate Britain in London opened an exhibition about art and fashion from the 1990s. It includes photographs, clothes and creative work from an important time in British culture. But the interest in the decade goes well beyond a museum. Old trainers, film cameras and music from the period are appearing everywhere from fashion shops to social media videos.

3 One reason is the way people used technology then. There were computers and mobile phones, but most people did not carry the internet around in their pockets. Friends often made plans on a home telephone. People listened to albums on CD players and took photographs on film cameras that could not show the picture immediately. They had to wait until the film was developed to find out how the pictures had turned out. Going out meant spending time together without constantly receiving messages.

4 This sounds attractive to people who feel tired of their smartphones. They may want fewer notifications and less pressure to share every moment. An old camera or simple phone can make life feel different for a while. It is also fun to discover music and clothes that your parents or older friends enjoyed. Something that was once ordinary can feel new again.

5 But memories of the past are not always fair. The 1990s had problems too, including wars, discrimination and financial worries. Modern technology has made many parts of life easier and safer. Perhaps the real attraction is not the decade itself but the idea of being less distracted. We cannot go back in time, but we can choose how we use our phones and how much attention we pay to the people around us.

Sources: Tate Britain. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Everyone buying 90s clothes remembers the decade personally. T F NG
2. The Tate Britain exhibition is about art and fashion from the 1990s. T F NG
3. In the 1990s, most people had the internet in their pockets. T F NG
4. The 1990s had some serious problems. T F NG
5. Sales of film cameras doubled in Britain in 2026. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

attention	decision	exhibition	generation	memory	notifications	pressure

1. Many phones send _____ every few minutes, so people keep looking at the screen.
2. A museum can hold an _____ of paintings, photographs or clothes for a few months.
3. Most students in my class are the same age, so we belong to the same _____ .
4. Students often feel _____ to get high marks, especially before exams.
5. It is rude to look at your phone when a friend needs your full _____ .

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. A teenager _____ an old camera even though a phone takes clearer photographs. (BUY)
2. In October 2026, Tate Britain _____ an exhibition about the 1990s. (OPEN)
3. Old trainers and film cameras are _____ everywhere, from fashion shops to social media. (APPEAR)
4. People _____ to albums on CD players and waited to see their photographs. (LISTEN)
5. Last year my cousin _____ an old film camera in a shop window. (SEE)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word, like out or off. The two words together have a new meaning. Choose the verb that fits the small word.

carry	find	give	go	hold	pull	switch

1. I need to _____ out whether the exhibition is free.
2. My grandfather used to _____ around a small radio everywhere.
3. Nobody can _____ back in time.
4. Some people _____ up social media for a month.
5. Please _____ off your phone before the film begins.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Which older habit would you bring back for a week?
2. Is using an old device a real break from modern life or another trend?
3. What makes an inconvenient object enjoyable to use?

9 Role-play: a phone-free weekend

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend with the idea

You want a phone-free weekend with your friend. You would use a film camera, play CDs and make plans on paper. Explain why you think it will be relaxing, and answer your friend's worries.

Student B · the friend with doubts

You like the idea a little, but you need your phone for work messages and for getting around. Ask questions, say what worries you, and try to agree a plan that you both like.

Useful phrases

I'd love to try a weekend without my phone.
It'd be nice to talk without any notifications.
But what if my boss needs to reach me?
We could check our messages once a day.
I'm not sure that's a good idea.
Let's give it a go and see what happens.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree a plan, and would you really do it?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 D · 2 A · 3 H · 4 G · 5 B · 6 F · 7 C · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 F · 2 T · 3 F · 4 T · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 notifications · 2 exhibition · 3 generation · 4 pressure · 5 attention

6 Verb forms

1 buys · 2 opened · 3 appearing · 4 listened · 5 saw

7 Language focus

1 find · 2 carry · 3 go · 4 give · 5 switch

This lesson is free. If it saved you time, you can support johnplusnews at **ko-fi.com/johnplusenglish**