NEWS LESSON

The Word of the Year Is About Doing More



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Do you try to improve your sleep, your diet or your exercise?
2. Which words from the internet have entered your own language?
3. Is there anything in your life you would like to do less of?

2 Key words

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

1	**limit**	☐	A	a way that something is done again and again
2	**connects**	☐	B	told someone that something bad might happen
3	**warned**	☐	C	saying what is bad about someone or something
4	**criticising**	☐	D	the point where you cannot go any further
5	**confident**	☐	E	the feeling when you need to sleep or rest
6	**tiredness**	☐	F	sure that you are right or that you can do something well
7	**pattern**	☐	G	a number that shows how well you did
8	**score**	☐	H	joins or links to something else

3 Read

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

Dictionary.com has chosen "maxxing". It means pushing something as far as it will go, and it is now attached to almost everything.

1 Every year, dictionaries choose a word of the year. For 2026, Dictionary.com has chosen "maxxing". It is not really a word on its own. It is an ending that you add to other words, and it means pushing something as far as it will go.

2 People talk about sleepmaxxing, which means doing everything possible to sleep well. They talk about proteinmaxxing their breakfast, booksmaxxing their reading, or cozymaxxing on a Friday night. There is even nonnamaxxing, which means living a little more like an Italian grandmother. Steve Johnson, who works on the dictionary, said the team chose it because it connects to so many different parts of life.

3 The idea is older than it looks. Players of the game Dungeons and Dragons have talked about "min-maxing" their characters for years, and the term appeared in mathematics as far back as the 1940s. What has changed is the volume. By August 2026, Dictionary.com found the word being used 19 times as often online as its average month in 2025.

4 Why did this particular ending spread so fast? Daria Bahtina, a linguist in the United States, says the pattern is easy to copy but easy to understand. You can invent a word nobody has heard before, and people will still know what you mean straight away.

5 Not everybody is pleased. Jennifer Donnelly, a researcher in Ireland, has warned that the word suggests you can finish improving yourself. Health, sleep, friendships and habits are not tasks you complete. If you treat them as a score, she argues, you may spend your life watching and criticising yourself.

6 Not all of the advice is good advice either. A confident video is not a health plan, and more is not automatically better for every body.

7 Then there is the tiredness. Writing in the Guardian, the columnist Polly Hudson says we have now reached maximum maxxing. Her joke solution is a new word: "minning". Instead of pushing something to the limit, you do it less, or not at all. She admits the whole thing is a game with language.

8 It is only a joke column, not a movement. But the joke works because the feeling behind it is real. Somewhere in the last few years, ordinary things became projects. Breakfast became a strategy. Sleep became a score.

9 Perhaps the useful question is not how to optimise your evening. It is whether every part of your life needs to be improved at all.

Sources: The Guardian, 'Maxxing' is Dictionary.com's word of the year; Dictionary.com, 2026 word of the year; Polly Hudson, Let us make 2027 the year of minning, The Guardian. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

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

1. Hudson's new word, minning, means doing something less, or not at all. T F NG
2. Jennifer Donnelly says that health is something you can finish improving. T F NG
3. Daria Bahtina has invented a maxxing word of her own. T F NG
4. Bahtina says people understand a new maxxing word even if they have never heard it before. T F NG
5. The text says that Hudson's column has started a big movement. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

average	habits	movement	ordinary	pleased	solution	spread

1. Not everybody is _____ with the new word, and some people have complained about it.
2. The _____ number of students in our classes is about twenty.
3. A good _____ to a problem is one that is simple and really works.
4. The news _____ quickly, and by the evening everyone in the office had heard it.
5. Brushing your teeth twice a day is one of my best _____ .

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Dictionary.com _____ "maxxing" as its word of the year for 2026. (CHOOSE)
2. The columnist Polly Hudson _____ that we have reached maximum maxxing. (SAY)
3. Players of Dungeons and Dragons _____ about min-maxing for years. (TALK)
4. By August, Dictionary.com _____ that people used the word 19 times as often as usual. (FIND)
5. Ordinary things _____ projects. (BECOME)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Linking words join ideas. Use because for a reason, so for a result, but and however for a difference, and or for a choice.

because	but	however	if	or	so	unless

1. Sleepmaxxing is popular _____ many people want to sleep well.
2. The ending is easy to copy, _____ new words appear every week.
3. It is only a joke, _____ the feeling behind it is real.
4. Some people enjoy tracking their sleep. _____ , others find it tiring.
5. Would you like to improve your sleep _____ your breakfast?

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

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

1. Should dictionaries add words from social media? Why or why not?
2. Is it healthy to measure things like sleep and food?
3. What would you choose as the word of the year?

9 Role-play: maxxing or minning?

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

Student A · the maxxer

You love tracking your sleep, food and steps. You want your friend to join a 30-day plan with you. Explain what you enjoy about it, and listen to your friend's worries.

Student B · the minner

You're tired of scores and targets. You want a weekend with no apps and no plans. Say why, and ask your friend to try it with you.

Useful phrases

I've been tracking my sleep for a month.

That's too much like homework for me.

I'd rather do less, not more.

Don't you feel better when you can see the numbers?

We could try a plan that's half and half.

I'm not sure that's fair, but I'll try it.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree on a plan, and who changed their mind?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 pleased · 2 average · 3 solution · 4 spread · 5 habits

6 Verb forms

1 chose or has chosen · 2 says · 3 have talked · 4 found · 5 became

7 Language focus

1 because · 2 so · 3 but · 4 However · 5 or

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