NEWS LESSON

When Your Hobby Starts Asking Too Much of You



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you keep a hobby if you never improved at it?
2. What do you enjoy doing without showing anyone the result?
3. Does sharing a hobby online make it more fun or more work?

2 Key words

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

1	**monetising**	☐	A	if possible, as the better choice
2	**embedded**	☐	B	not good or large enough
3	**inherently**	☐	C	fixed firmly inside something
4	**polished**	☐	D	as a natural, basic part of something
5	**psychological**	☐	E	not producing anything useful or valuable
6	**preferably**	☐	F	connected with the mind and feelings
7	**unproductive**	☐	G	very smooth and carefully prepared, with no mistakes
8	**inadequate**	☐	H	making money from something

3 Read

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

A runner's watch counts every kilometre, and a friend says your cakes should be sold. A May 2026 Forbes article asked what is gained and lost when a hobby becomes a business.

1 The language of leisure can sound strangely similar to the language of work. Runners monitor performance, readers set annual targets and amateur cooks build online audiences. A run can become a target to beat, and a hobby can start to look like a business waiting to happen. For some people, the pressure follows them into the time meant to be their own.

2 It is difficult to escape the message that leisure should deliver something: better fitness, a polished portfolio, an audience or preferably a second income. Pleasure alone can sound oddly insufficient.

3 A May 2026 Forbes article considered the practical and psychological questions involved in turning a hobby into a business. It is business advice, not evidence of a social trend, but it points to a real tension: monetising an interest may create opportunity, but it can also replace spontaneous enjoyment with deadlines, customer expectations and financial risk. The decision is not inherently good or bad; its consequences depend on what the person wants from the activity.

4 Personal development can be genuinely rewarding. Mastering a musical instrument or improving at a sport may produce confidence and satisfaction. The problem begins when improvement becomes an obligation rather than a chosen challenge, or when comparison with strangers online makes ordinary enjoyment seem insufficient. Of course, discipline and enjoyment are not opposites. Musicians may delight in practising a challenging piece, just as runners can find satisfaction in improving their times.

5 Digital platforms intensify this possibility by making achievement visible and measurable. A slow run can be compared with thousands of recorded performances, while a private creative project can begin to look disappointing beside a carefully edited online portfolio. Such comparisons may motivate some people and discourage others.

6 There is a social inequality embedded in advice to resist the pressure. Someone with secure finances might freely choose to keep painting as an unpaid pleasure. Another person may welcome an opportunity to earn money from an existing skill because their regular income is inadequate. Defending leisure should not involve brushing aside the economic realities behind side hustles. The distinction is whether ambition has been freely chosen or quietly imposed. An activity that once helped somebody switch off should not automatically become another arena for performance reviews.

7 Consider the difference between mastery and obligation. An amateur musician might enjoy demanding practice because the challenge itself is rewarding, while another may value familiar songs played imperfectly at home. Both are legitimate relationships with an activity. Trouble sets in when achievement becomes the default standard and the person whose goal is relaxation begins to feel inadequate.

8 Social platforms can intensify this pressure by making extraordinary performances seem ordinary, though they can also support learning and community. A more thoughtful culture of leisure would allow individuals to define success differently at different stages of life. An activity can change purpose as circumstances change, moving from serious competition to casual enjoyment or even towards paid work. The meaningful distinction is whether those changes are chosen or imposed.

9 Ultimately, the question is who controls the purpose of an activity. A hobby may be competitive, commercially successful or deliberately unproductive. What makes it meaningful is not necessarily how impressive the result appears. There is value in maintaining at least some spaces where a person can be a beginner, make mistakes and enjoy the process without having to demonstrate progress.

Sources: Forbes. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

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

1. The writer suggests that a person's finances can affect how freely they choose to keep a hobby unpaid. T F NG
2. The Forbes article is presented as evidence that hobbies are becoming more commercial. T F NG
3. The text reveals how many people now earn money from a side hustle. T F NG
4. The text implies that online comparison can affect both runners and people with creative projects. T F NG
5. The writer thinks a hobby that turns into paid work has necessarily lost its value. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

ambition	arena	imposed	intensify	legitimate	mastery	portfolio	tension

1. Rising rents will only _____ the pressure on households that already struggle to pay their bills.
2. Years of training had left the mountaineer with a quiet _____ of her sport.
3. The new rules were _____ on small firms that had no time to prepare.
4. Her objections were entirely _____ , and the committee admitted it should have listened sooner.
5. The festival has become a political _____ where rival parties compete for attention.
6. A noticeable _____ remained between the two founders after the argument over pricing.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Critics called the advice _____ because it assumed everyone could afford to work for free. (REALISTIC)
2. Her _____ to practise every evening surprised even her coach. (DETERMINED)
3. The _____ of fitness apps has made comparison almost unavoidable. (PREVALENT)
4. Several members found the weekly targets _____ and quietly stopped attending. (ENCOURAGE)
5. Many people enjoy familiar songs played _____ at home. (PERFECT)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some phrasal verbs need an extra preposition after the particle, as in run out of or look down on. Learn the whole chunk, not only the two words.

across	apart	down	forward	on	out	up

1. Instead of dwelling _____ every mistake, the amateur cellist simply enjoyed the rehearsal.
2. The newsletter was meant to build _____ an audience for her pottery, but few people subscribed.
3. Anyone who dislikes the pressure of rankings can simply opt _____ of the leaderboard.
4. The coach tried to play _____ the runner's injury, insisting it was minor.
5. The club was meant to be relaxing, but its strict rules came _____ as one more obligation.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

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

1. When does a hobby start feeling like another job?
2. Would you rather be average at something you loved or excellent at something you disliked?
3. What could help someone try a hobby without feeling judged?

9 Role-play: should you sell your cakes?

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

Student A · the friend

You love your friend's cakes and think they should open an online shop. Give at least two reasons. Listen to their worries and answer them.

Student B · the baker

You bake for fun and your friend says you should sell your cakes. You are not sure. Explain what you enjoy now and what worries you.

Useful phrases

You should really sell these!

I'd love to, but I'm worried it'd feel like work.

What's stopping you?

I bake because it's relaxing, not because I want money.

We could start small and see how it goes.

That's a fair point, I hadn't thought of that.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the baker decide to sell, and what made the difference?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 intensify · 2 mastery · 3 imposed · 4 legitimate · 5 arena · 6 tension

6 Word forms

1 unrealistic · 2 determination · 3 prevalence · 4 discouraging · 5 imperfectly

7 Language focus

1 on · 2 up · 3 out · 4 down · 5 across

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