
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

A threat to London's artwork?



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello, welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Neil...

Harry

And I'm Harry.

Neil

Now Harry, have you ever taken a '**selfie**' – that's a photo of yourself, usually with your mobile phone?

Harry

Yes, I have. I've taken them all over London with my children – of course selfies are very easy to take with your smartphone and recently we've seen some famous selfies featuring well-known people such as the one taken by actor, Ellen DeGeneres at last year's Oscars ceremony.

Neil

Yes, it seems that there are no limits to the places where you can **capture** yourself in a photo. But there is a limit on how far you can stretch your arm out and take a **snap** – a quick photo – of you and your friends.

Harry

That's true, so thank goodness for the **selfie stick** – an expanding pole to put your smartphone on which gives you a wider view. This means you can take in more of the background. Sounds like a good idea.

Neil

It does, but it's also causing a problem in some places around the world. More on that in a moment but let's not forget I have a question to ask you Harry.

Harry

OK Neil.

Neil

Well, we know some people love to take photos of themselves but perhaps not as much as Patrick Peterson. According to Guinness World Records he has taken the most 'selfies' in one hour – but do you know how many? Is it:

- a) 449
- b) 1,449
- c) 2,449

Harry

Well, I guess he's gotta move and be in a different position so I'm not going to go for the highest one. I'm gonna say 1,449.

Neil

OK, well, we'll find out the answer at the end of the programme. But now let's talk more about the dangers of the selfie stick! They can certainly be useful for taking photos from a different **viewpoint** and it does mean that you get more people in your photo.

Harry

Sales of the selfie stick have **soared** – or risen quickly - since last year and they are now a common sight at tourist destinations. They're great if you want to take a better photo but they're very annoying if you're not involved with the photo.

Neil

Yes and this is particularly frustrating if you're trying to look at paintings and sculptures at an art gallery. They just get in the way and can be very **distracting**.

Harry

You mean they stop someone giving their full attention to what they are looking at. Well, this is the reason that some famous art galleries around the world are putting **a ban** on selfie-sticks – a ban means they are no longer allowed.

Neil

Places such as the Smithsonian museums in the Washington and the Palace of Versailles in Paris were the first to do this and now the National Gallery in London have stopped them being used.

Harry

Let's hear the exact reasons why from the gallery's Doctor Susan Foister. What phrase does she use to mean trying to do the best thing for the visitors and for the paintings themselves?

Doctor Susan Foister, Deputy Director, The National Gallery

We have over 6 million visitors a year here, some of our rooms could get quite crowded,

so we have to find the right balance between the experience of our visitors close to the paintings and the safety of the paintings themselves.

Neil

So the National Gallery is a popular and busy place and it gets quite crowded – and it doesn't help the problem if people are holding up selfie sticks!

Harry

Yes – so they have **imposed** – or brought in – this ban to do the best thing for the visitors and for the paintings themselves – it's what Doctor Foister called 'the right balance'. She wants to give visitors trying to get close to the paintings a good experience.

Neil

And she makes the point that there's a risk that the painting, which can be worth millions of pounds, could be damaged by one of these sticks.

Harry

Of course you are still allowed to take a selfie, and some museums are '**sticking their neck out**' and still allowing people to use them.

Neil

A good idiom there Harry – you mean they're doing something that other people may not like – yes, places such as the ICA – that's the Institute for Contemporary Art – in London say selfie sticks are part of modern-day life.

Harry

Here is Catherine Stout, Head of Programmes at the ICA. How does she describe the type of visitors who go to her gallery?

Catherine Stout, Head of Programmes, ICA

We are very happy for our visitors to take their own photographs for personal use, of course we always secure the artist's permission, but actually because we have a very young audience they're completely engaged with social media, they want to use that forum to connect with each other, to share their experiences, if they wish to use a stick they're very welcome to do so as long as, obviously, the artwork is not damaged in any way.

Neil

So the people who visit that gallery are young and use social media a lot – they are '**engaged**' with it and they like to share their experiences. This means taking photos on their smartphones and if they want to use a selfie stick?

Harry

... then they are 'welcome to do so'. Just watch out where you stick it! I suppose, as long as you respect other visitors and don't get in the way, then it's ok to use one.

Neil

Well I'm not so sure. Anyway, it's time to reveal the answer to the question I asked you earlier.

Harry

Yes, this was about Patrick Peterson, who holds the record for taking the most selfies in one hour. You asked me if he took 449, 1,449 or 2,449 in one hour.

Neil

And you said 1,449, which was ... the correct answer! I wonder what he did with all those images...

Harry

He probably put them on social media.

Neil

Well we need to 'stick' to our six minutes of English but just before we run out of time, could you remind us of some of the vocabulary we've used today Harry?

Harry

Yes. We had...

selfie

capture

a snap

selfie stick

viewpoint

soared

distracting

a ban

imposed

sticking their neck out

engaged

Neil

Thank you. Well, that's it for now. Go to bbclearning.com to find more 6 Minute English programmes. Until next time. Goodbye!

Harry

Bye!

Vocabulary

selfie

a self-portrait taken on a smartphone

capture

to take a photograph

a snap

a quick and informal photograph

selfie stick

an extendable pole to hold your smartphone on

viewpoint

a place where you can see or watch something

soared

risen quickly

distracting

stopping you from concentrating on something

a ban

officially say something is not allowed

imposed

introduced

sticking their neck out

doing or saying something that other people may not like or agree with

engaged

(here) involved in doing something