

UNIT 10: READING

HISTORY OF THE MOBILE TELEPHONE

The first mobile phone design was registered with the US government as early as 1908. However, this phone was more like a two-way radio than the little hand-held phone that so many people carry everywhere with them today. The earliest phones were fixed in vehicles, such as cars and boats, and were mostly used by the army and navy.

In Europe, these mobile radio-phones were first used on German trains between Berlin and Hamburg in 1926, for first-class passengers only. All of these early mobile phones were operated by staff who were specially trained.

The first publicly available mobile phone service was introduced in Sweden in 1956. The problem was that the phone weighed 40kg! However, the size of phones was gradually reduced during the 1960s and 1970s. Still, the majority of these phones, right through until the 1980s, were installed in cars rather than carried around by people.

In the 1980s, mobile phones started to become more common and the more people used mobile phones, the easier it was for the companies to grow. The phones used in the 1980s were still large and bulky by our standards. Lighter phones, weighing only 100–200g, were introduced in the 1990s.

Until this point development had been slow over 90 years. Recently, however, with the introduction of digital technology and the increasing popularity of mobile phones, this has changed.

Since the 1990s, mobile phone technology has progressed incredibly fast. Cameras were first put into mobile phones in 1997, and phones able to store and play music files were introduced in 2004. Nowadays, anything digital – from computer games and video cameras to personal organisers and even computers – can be built into your mobile phone.

1 Answer these questions about the text.

- 1 In what way was the first registered mobile phone different from the ones we use today?
- 2 Which was the first country in Europe to use mobile phones?
- 3 What was the difference between the phones introduced in Sweden in 1956 and those available before that?
- 4 Describe what happened to the size of mobile phones between the 1950s and 1990s.
- 5 What is the biggest difference in mobile phone development before the 1990s and after?
- 6 Why has this change in development happened since the 1990s?

2 Can you guess the meaning of these phrases?

- 1 two-way radio It's a radio that _____.
- 2 hand-held phone It's a phone that _____.
- 3 first-class passenger It's a passenger who _____.