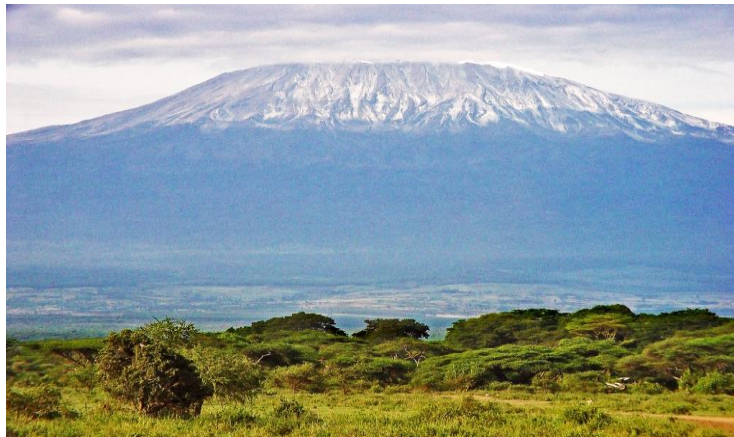


## Try something new for 30 days



**1 GRAMMAR** Complete the following questions using the correct past participle. Then answer the question below.

- 1 Have you ever (take) \_\_\_\_\_ a photo every day?
- 2 Have you ever (eat) \_\_\_\_\_ something unusual?
- 3 Have you ever (bike) \_\_\_\_\_ to school or work?
- 4 Have you ever (climb) \_\_\_\_\_ Mount Kilimanjaro?
- 5 Have you ever (learn) \_\_\_\_\_ to play a musical instrument?
- 6 Have you ever (write) \_\_\_\_\_ a novel?
- 7 Have you ever (give up) \_\_\_\_\_ sugar?

Are these questions about a specific time in the past, or your experience up to now?

**2 Work in pairs.** Ask and answer the questions in exercise 1. Give further information, or ask 'Have you ever wanted to?'

*Have you ever climbed Mount Kilimanjaro?*

*No, I haven't.*

*Have you ever wanted to?*

*Actually, yes, I'd love to, but I don't think I'm fit enough.*

**3 VIDEO** Watch Matt Cutts talking about his 30 day challenges. Which of the activities in exercise 1 has he done?

TALKS | IN LESS THAN 6 MINUTES

Matt Cutts: Try something new for 30 days

FILMED MAR 2011 • POSTED JUL 2011 • TED2011



**4 Watch the video again and choose which 4 things Matt Cutts says he learnt from the challenges.**

- A Doing a challenge helps him to slow down and appreciate his life.
- B Achieving something new made him feel better about himself.
- C He is not really a very adventurous person.
- D Anything is possible for a short period of time.
- E He has the ability to be a great novelist.
- F It isn't a good idea to try to do something very difficult.

**5a VOCABULARY Look at some examples of idiomatic language from the video. Can you guess the meaning?**

- 1 A few years ago, I felt like I was **stuck in a rut**....
- 2 So I decided to **follow in the footsteps** of the great American philosopher, Morgan Spurlock\* and try something new for 30 days.
- 3 ...instead of the months **flying by**, forgotten, the time was much more memorable.
- 4 Every November tens of thousands of people try to write their own 50,000 word novel, **from scratch**, in 30 days.
- 5 So why not think about something you have always wanted to try, and **give it a shot** for the next thirty days?

\*Morgan Spurlock is an American film-maker, well-known for documentaries where he tries something for 30 days.

**5b Now answer the following questions in ways which are true for you. Compare your ideas with a partner.**

- 1 If I feel stuck in a rut, I usually....
- 2 I'd love to follow in the footsteps of...
- 3 Time always flies by when I'm...
- 4 Cooking from scratch...
- 5 I've always wanted to give..... a shot.

**6 SPEAKING Look at Matt Cutt's list of challenges and write your own. Then compare your ideas in pairs or small groups. Choose a challenge each.**

## My 30 day challenges

**Add:**

Bike to work  
10,000 steps/day  
Take a picture a day  
Write a novel

**Subtract:**

No TV  
No sugar  
No Twitter  
No caffeine

Then think of a 30 day challenge to set your teacher!



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## Transcript

A few years ago, I felt like I was stuck in a rut. So I decided to follow in the footsteps of the great American philosopher, Morgan Spurlock and try something new for 30 days.

The idea is actually pretty simple. Think about something you've always wanted to add to your life, and try it, for the next 30 days. It turns out that 30 days is just about the right amount of time to add a new habit, or subtract a habit, like watching the news, from your life.

There's a few things I learned while doing these 30 day challenges. The first was, instead of the months flying by, forgotten, the time was much more memorable. This was part of a challenge I did to take a picture every day for a month. And I remember exactly where I was and what I was doing that day.

I also noticed that as I started to do more and harder 30 day challenges, my self-confidence grew. I went from desk-dwelling computer nerd to the kind of guy who bikes to work...for fun. Even last year I ended up hiking up Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa. I would never have been that adventurous before I started my 30 day challenges.

I also figured out that if you really want something badly enough, you can do anything for 30 days. Have you ever wanted to write a novel? Every November tens of thousands of people try to write their own 50,000 word novel, from scratch, in 30 days. It turns out all you have to do is to write 16,667 words a day for a month. So I did. By the way, the secret is not to go to sleep until you've written your words for the day. You might be sleep deprived, but you'll finish your novel.

Now, is my book the next great American novel? No, I wrote it in a month, it's awful! But, for the rest of my life, if I meet John Hodgman\* at a TED party, I don't have to say, 'I'm a computer scientist.'. No, no, if I want to, I can say, 'I'm a novelist.'

So here's one last thing I'd like to mention. I learned that when I made small, sustainable changes, things I could keep doing, they were more likely to stick. There's nothing wrong with big, crazy challenges. In fact, they're a ton of fun. But they're less likely to stick. When I gave up sugar for 30 days, day 31 looked like this..

So here's my question to you, 'What are you waiting for?' I guarantee you the next 30 days are going to pass, whether you like it or not. So why not think about something you have always wanted to try, and give it a shot for the next thirty days?

\* John Hodgman is an American author and humourist.

## Key and notes

1

1 taken 2 eaten 3 biked 4 climbed 5 written 6 given up 7 learned/learnt

These questions are about experience up to now. If we refer to a specific time in the past we will use present simple or continuous, not present perfect.

3

1,3,4,6,7

4

### True

A Doing a challenge helps him to slow down and appreciate his life 'The first was, instead of the months flying by, forgotten, the time was much more memorable. ...And I remember exactly where I was and what I was doing that day.'

B Achieving something new made him feel better about himself. 'I also noticed that as I started to do more and harder 30 day challenges, my self-confidence grew.'

D Anything is possible for a short period of time.' I also figured out that if you really want something badly enough, you can do anything for 30 days.'

F It isn't a good idea to try to do something very difficult. 'There's nothing wrong with big, crazy challenges. In fact, they're a ton of fun. But they're less likely to stick.'

### False

C He is not really a very adventurous person (he is now)

E He has the ability to be a great novelist. (he says his novel is terrible)

## 5a VOCABULARY Look at some examples of idiomatic language from the video. Can you guess the meaning?

1 A few years ago, I felt like I was **stuck in a rut** (in a situation which is boring and difficult to change)

2 So I decided to **follow in the footsteps** (do the same work or achieve the same success as someone before you) of the great American philosopher, Morgan Spurlock\* and try something new for 30 days.

3 ...instead of the months **flying by** (going quickly-used about time), forgotten, the time was much more memorable.

4 Every November tens of thousands of people try to write their own 50,000 word novel, **from scratch** (from the very beginning, so you have to do everything yourself), in 30 days.

5 So why not think about something you have always wanted to try, and **give it a shot** (make an attempt to do something) for the next thirty days?

**Note that there are transcriptions available on the TED website in a wide range of languages.**

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