

UNIT 1 / AS1 (Tracks 1-2)

- Narrator:** Mr Morris calls his son, Benny.
- Benny:** Hello?
- Mr Morris:** Hi Benny, it's Dad.
- Benny:** Hi Dad! How are you?
- Mr Morris:** Not very well, I'm afraid. I have something to tell you. I've made up my mind. I'm divorcing Mama.
- Benny:** You're doing what?
- Mr Morris:** I'm divorcing Mama. But I don't want to discuss it. I'm merely telling you because you're my oldest child, and I thought you ought to know.
- Benny:** But ... but.... Dad! What happened?
- Mr Morris:** I don't want to get into it. My mind is made up.
- Benny:** But Dad, you can't just decide to divorce Mama just like that after 54 years together. You must tell me what happened.
- Mr Morris:** It's too painful to talk about it. I only called because you're my son, and I thought you should know. I really don't want to get into it any more than this. You can call your sister and tell her. It will spare me the pain.
- Benny:** But where's Mama? Can I talk to her?
- Mr Morris:** No, I don't want you to say anything to her about it. I haven't told her yet. Believe me it hasn't been easy. I've agonized over it for several days, and I've finally come to a decision. I have an appointment with the attorney the day after tomorrow.
- Benny:** Dad, don't do anything rash. I'm going to take the first flight down. Promise me that you won't do anything until I get there.
- Mr Morris:** Well, all right, I promise. Next week is Thanksgiving. I'll hold off seeing the attorney until after Thanksgiving. Call your sister in New Jersey and break the news to her. I just can't bear to talk about it anymore.
- Benny:** OK, Dad. Speak to you later.
- Mr Morris:** Thanks, Son. Speak to you later.
- Narrator:** Half an hour later.
- Mr Morris:** Morris speaking.
- Lizzie:** Hi Dad, it's Lizzie.
- Mr Morris:** Hello, Lizzie. Did you speak to Benny?
- Lizzie:** I did. Benny told me about the divorce. He says that you don't want to talk about it on the telephone. But we MUST talk, Dad! Good news is Benny and I were able to get plane tickets for everyone. So we will be arriving in Florida the day after tomorrow with the kids. But promise me that you won't do anything until we both get there.
- Mr Morris:** Oh, all right. I promise.
- Lizzie:** Fine, Dad. See you the day after tomorrow.
- Mr Morris:** That'll be good. See you then.
- Mr Morris:** Well Mary, it worked this time. Both the kids are coming the day after tomorrow. But what are we going to do next time to get them to come home for the holidays?

UNIT 2 / AS 2 (Tracks 3-4)

- Lance:** Hello there! This is Lance. Here is my 100% sure tip for a cheap but wonderful date. Great for anniversaries or Valentine's day, too. Let's see ... I rented a helium tank from a local party store and bought a bag of balloons. My girlfriend was at college that day and I have a key to her car. I stuffed her car completely with helium-filled balloons with love messages written on each one. When class let out, everyone watched her go to her car and open the door. All the balloons came floating out. I watched from a distance and took pictures of the balloons floating off into the sky so she could remember the moment. She was thrilled!
- Rachel:** Hi everyone! This is Rachel. And here is my cheap date idea for you. It was our anniversary and I didn't have a lot of money, but I wanted to do something special for my boyfriend. So I took him to the dollar store and gave each of us six dollars. I told him to go throughout the store and find five things that remind him of me. Then to buy them and wait for me outside. I also went to get five things for him. I got him things like a light bulb because he lights up my life and candy because he is always so sweet. We then went to dinner and exchanged our gifts and explained them. It was cute and we both still think about it today!
- Larry:** Here is Larry's recipe of how to get closer to bookworms. One day I asked a girl out on a date whose favourite activity was reading. So, for our first date I surprised her when, after dinner, I took her to a large bookstore. I asked her to pick out 5 or 6 of her favourite books. I did the same. Then we met up again, sat down in a quiet corner, and took turns talking about the book we chose, why we enjoyed it, reading some of our favorite parts out loud, etc. It was a great way to make conversation and to learn about each other, not to mention getting closer to that special someone.
- Debby:** This is Debby here and all those women out there who have a partner who loves football should take notes now. My husband is a HUGE football fan, so one evening, before he got home I decided to do a football-themed romantic date for him. I bought a great little football vase and put some orange, "boy-colored" flowers in it. I got him some of his favorite chicken wings. I put his actual football on the bed, dimmed the lights, added some candles, and for the final touch, I put on his FAVORITE football shirt. He LOVED it!!! AND, it hardly cost me anything!

Workbook Audio Scripts

UNIT 3 / AS 3 (Tracks 5-6)

- 1 Massive reductions at the ladies' clothes department. Tops from 5.99 in all colours of the rainbow. All sizes available.
- 2 Think big this summer! Our brand-new collection of XXL bathing costumes have just arrived.
- 3 Shopping with a crying, moody child isn't much fun. But you don't need to drag your children along as you are doing your shopping. Our crèche provides professional care and a safe, child-friendly environment with many toys and books just for 8 pounds an hour. Follow the monkey footprints to the 4th floor.
- 4 Dear customers, our store is just about to close. Please proceed to the check-out desks. We will be open tomorrow again from 10 a.m to 8 pm. We'd like to thank you for visiting us today and we hope to see you again soon.

UNIT 4 / AS 4 (Tracks 7-8)

- Reporter:* More than a thousand low-income families will become homeowners for the first time thanks to their own work and \$18.7 million in funding announced today Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson. Jackson said HUD builds on the work the families themselves do. Mr Jackson, what is HUD?
- Mr Jackson:* HUD helps low-income Americans with their housing problems. We also support the homeless, the elderly, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. HUD works side-by-side with families to make their American Dream come true. With a little help from HUD, these families with their own work create a place they can call home.
- Reporter:* How does this happen practically?
- Mr Jackson:* We give the money to buy land and install or improve infrastructure, such as water, electricity, gas. Homebuyers also contribute to the construction of the homes.
- Reporter:* In what ways?
- Mr Jackson:* They participate in the building of the houses. This can be any type of work, painting, roofing, decoration. Their work may also help buyers who are unable to do these jobs due to disabilities or other reasons. Frequently, persons with disabilities are able to do administrative tasks. Homebuyers' own work reduces the cost of their homes greatly.
- Reporter:* Thank you very much, Mr Jackson. If you need help with your housing problem, join a HUD project and contribute your own work.

UNIT 5 / AS 5 (Tracks 9-10)

- Reporter:* Good afternoon and welcome to Animal World! I'm Karen Dell. Today we are going to look into the question: Are we humans really the only thinking animals on this planet? Here in the studio I have Professor Brainright to help me answer this question.
- Professor B.:* Good afternoon.
- Reporter:* Professor Brainright, have you got a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer?
- Professor B.:* Let me give you an example first. A policeman in Vancouver, Canada, feels a duck picking at his trousers. The duck pulls and pulls, and then leads the policeman to a hole. The officer finds her little ducklings trapped in the hole and frees them. So to answer your question: it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that animals are smart.
- Reporter:* Many scientists, however, ranked humans as the smartest animals and all other animals as unable to think. They based their opinion on research and experiments. Were they wrong?
- Professor B.:* Today's studies show that animals solve problems, make decisions, and show emotions. We share the planet with thinking animals. But animals have different skills from ours. If we, say, designed an experiment with humans and bats, like close your eyes and tell me what's in the room, humans would fail and bats would pass. This doesn't mean humans are stupid. It means we don't use sounds to tell us where objects are. If this testing isn't fair on humans, we can easily see how some of the tests on animals are not fair either.
- Reporter:* So our skills are different from those of many animals. Have you found similarities, too?
- Professor B.:* All animals have the mental tools for three tasks: recognizing objects, evaluating quantity, and navigation, that is finding places.
- Reporter:* Evaluating quantity? Do you mean maths?
- Professor B.:* Yes. Animals can tell the difference between more and fewer. If you don't believe me, do this experiment: place three pieces of food in one box and one piece in another box near an animal. Step back from the boxes and watch which box the animal chooses. Repeat the steps, but change the amount of food in each box.
- Reporter:* What conclusions can you draw from this experiment?
- Professor B.:* If the animal repeatedly chooses the box with more food in it, that animal can evaluate quantities.
- Reporter:* Thank you very much for these interesting ideas, Professor Brainright. Let me finish this interview with a question: Do you think we should change the way we treat animals? Karen Dell, Animal World.

UNIT 6 / AS 6 (Tracks 11-12)

- Reporter:* Have you ever wanted to live abroad and experience a foreign culture, meet new people and learn a foreign language? The Erasmus Programme is a perfect choice for you! Dave Williams is a communications officer for an Erasmus Student Network section, ESN for short. Dave, what is the Erasmus Programme?

- Dave:** The Erasmus programme is a European Union founded programme. It offers the possibility to students of studying abroad in another European country for a period of between 3 and 12 months.
- Reporter:** Who can take part in this programme?
- Dave:** To participate in the Erasmus programme, you must fulfil the following three conditions: First of all, you must be a citizen of one of the participating countries. Participating countries typically are the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area. You also must be a student at a university or college. The third condition is that you have completed at least the first year of your university studies.
- Reporter:** So practically if you are a second- or third-year university student from the EU, you could spend a whole year at a university in another EU country.
- Dave:** Yes, that's right. One year is the maximum length of stay.
- Reporter:** Studying aboard is usually very expensive. Do participants get a grant?
- Dave:** Yes, you can apply for a grant. The grant doesn't cover all the living costs, though. It covers the differences in costs of living abroad and in your own country. So even if your country is a cheaper country than the one you are going to, life isn't going to be more expensive for you there than it would be at home. In addition, you'll only pay the university fees in your home country if you need to pay there. So there's no extra fee for your course abroad.
- Reporter:** Mm, that sounds pretty good! What about time? How does your stay at a university abroad change the time when you can finish your degree? Say, your university course at home is a three-year course. Obviously, you want to finish it in three years if possible. If you decide to spend a year at a university in another country, you won't be able to finish in three years, will you?
- Dave:** Yes! You can finish your university course at home at the same time as those students who didn't study abroad. It is because at home you get credits for your courses abroad. You do not need to repeat any of those courses back at home.
- Reporter:** Where can students get information about Erasmus grants?
- Dave:** Contact your local Erasmus office or one of the local Erasmus Student Network sections. You can easily find ESN sections if you visit www.esn.org.
- Reporter:** Dave Williams, many thanks.
- Dave:** No trouble at all.

UNIT 7 / AS 7 (Tracks 13-14)

- Dave:** Summer is nearly here and we're all thinking more and more of the music festivals. In our most recent survey, we asked you what your biggest worry was concerning festivals. Susie has the results. Susie!
- Susie:** Thanks, Dave. Besides the toilets (no surprise there), your biggest worry is the cost. However, there is another way...
- Dave:** Yes, that's right! Join the team of litter pickers, stewards and catering staff who help the festivals to run smoothly and you could get the music for free, and maybe even earn some money. Sounds too good to be true? Well, listen to the Oxfam festival job ad and decide afterwards.
- Woman1:** Are you over 18? Would you like to listen to your favourite bands for free this summer, while helping to fight world poverty?
- Woman2:** Oxfam is looking for stewards for seven festivals this season, from Leeds to Womad. You'll receive full training, and then you'll be required to work three eight-hour shifts during the festival. Your role could include checking tickets, checking the site for potential dangers such as fires, or reporting lost and found children.
- Young man:** In return, you'll get free entrance to the festival, a meal ticket for every shift worked, a separate camping area with toilets and showers, and a very different festival experience.

UNIT 8 / AS 8 (Tracks 15-16)

When you're homeless, normal everyday life is totally out of your reach. You're an outsider. For one thing, you don't eat when you're hungry. Then you don't do things like going to work or school. And you know what? You MISS school, and you MISS work. You don't have programmes like going out with mates either. Going out? It really sounds ridiculous if you're homeless as there's nowhere you could go OUT being out all day and all night every day and every night. No one would give you work because you smell and look unhealthy and scruffy. Your only chance is to go begging, spending hours outside in hot or cold weather repeating, "Spare some change, please, spare some change!" After a while your only dream is buying a decent cup of hot tea in the winter. Boys of my age save up for CDs or motor bikes. I save up for a cup of tea. Then there are the nights. You're lucky if you don't need to fight for a doorway to put down your sleeping bag or you don't get mugged. And there's no such thing as a pleasant warm night. You will be cold, no matter what. And you will be in a lot of pain, too because there's no such thing as a nice and soft doorway or ground. But that's not the worst thing of all, you know. The worst is that you are not considered to be a guy any more. Normally a young bloke like me, if he sees a girl passing by, he'll smile and maybe chat her up a bit. It is not a big deal. If the girl likes the bloke, they may meet again and start going out together. If you're homeless, forget about the opposite sex. It just wouldn't work. A dirty look's the maximum you'd get.

UNIT 9 / AS 9 (Tracks 17-18)

- Reporter:** Good morning! This is Food Watch, Les Timber speaking. Today I have Clare Sound with me in the studio. Clare is a leading nutritionist, who has planned the diets of many celebrities. Today she is here to help us with our questions about fast food. First of all, Clare, what is fast food and why is it so popular?

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- Clare:** Fast food is any food that is quick, convenient, and usually inexpensive. You can buy fast food just about anywhere that sells food and snacks. Vending machines and fast-food chains are probably the most common places to find fast food. It's so popular because for under \$5.00 you can usually get a meal that's filling.
- Reporter:** How can fast food be so inexpensive?
- Clare:** Fast food is inexpensive because it is usually made with cheaper ingredients such as high-fat meat, instead of nutritious foods such as lean meats, fresh fruit, and vegetables.
- Reporter:** Is fast food always bad?
- Clare:** There is no such thing as "bad" food. All foods can fit into a healthy meal plan! It's true that fast food is usually high in fat, calories, and cholesterol, but eating fast food every once in a while is not going to cause you problems. If you eat too much fast food over a long period of time, though, it can lead to health problems like high blood pressure, heart disease, and becoming overweight.
- Reporter:** How often is it OK to have fast food?
- Clare:** Once a week is just about all right for most people.
- Reporter:** Is some fast food healthier than others?
- Clare:** Yes. A lot depends on your choice. Here are some tips: Choose a grilled chicken sandwich instead of fried chicken or chicken nuggets. Choose soups that are not cream based. Have low-fat salad dressings instead of the full-fat kind. Have a salad instead of fries. Use mustard or ketchup instead of mayonnaise. Order smalls instead of "super-sizing." Select leaner meats like turkey or grilled chicken instead of fried items, like burgers or steak. Choose water, low-fat milk, or diet sodas instead of sugary fizzy drinks. If fruit and veggies are available, try to add them into your meal. For example, have lettuce and tomato on sandwiches or burgers. To be able to make the right choices, check the website of the fast-food restaurant for nutrition facts.

UNIT 10 / AS 10 (Tracks 19-20)

- Police Communicator:** Police emergency, where is your emergency?
- Caller:** Hello, I'm calling from 13 Swinton Terrace in Hamilton.
- PC:** Yes.
- Caller:** Listen, I've got a bit of a problem. I can see two guys out in the road outside my place, they seem to be fighting. Basically, they are punching each other.
- PC:** Alright, OK sir, can I have your name please?
- Caller:** Yes, the name's Taylor, Michael Taylor.
- PC:** Michael Taylor, OK Michael, what's the phone number you're calling from?
- Caller:** It's 555 2748.
- PC:** 2748, OK – so whereabouts are you right now Michael?
- Caller:** Well, I'm at my place, which is 13 Swinton Terrace.
- PC:** Alright, can you tell me how many people there are?
- Caller:** Well, there are two guys out on the road.
- PC:** Yes.
- Caller:** Err, one's punching the other and err...
- PC:** OK, alright, are they using anything as weapons at this point?
- Caller:** Well no, the big guy is just punching the other one with his fists.
- PC:** Alright, so you're telling me they are right outside your house. Are they on the street or on the footpath?
- Caller:** Yeah, they're on the street, I think there is a car there but I can't really see much else.
- PC:** OK Michael, can you tell me please what they look like. We'll start with the first chap, what does he look like?
- Caller:** Well the guy that's doing all the hitting, he's got a blue shirt on...
- PC:** Uh huh.
- Caller:** ...and wearing shorts and trainers.
- PC:** OK, and the other chap, what does he look like?
- Caller:** It's a bit hard to tell. He's wearing sort of dark clothing, he's got a black hoody and jeans and no shoes on.
- PC:** OK. Alright. So we have two chaps out on the street, one dressed in a blue shirt, shorts and trainers and he's the one punching the other chap is that correct?
- Caller:** Yes that's right.
- PC:** Alright sir...
- Caller:** It looks pretty serious, the guy that's being punched – he's not moving – he's ... just taking it.
- PC:** Could you just stay on the phone with me Michael, and the police will be with you as soon as possible.
- Caller:** OK.
- PC:** I've put the job in and they should be with you very shortly. Just in the meantime...
- Caller:** I can see the police now.
- PC:** OK Michael, I'm going to hang up now, and I will get the police to come and see you. So you just stay put, and the police will come and see you shortly.

UNIT 11 / AS 11 (Tracks 21-22)

You have reached Strongfield Leisure Centre. For information on opening times, membership and day entrance charges, press 1.
Strongfield Leisure Centre is open from 6.30 am to 10.30 pm every day except for bank holidays. Member-

ship fees are as follows: Family Membership costs £84.00, which covers a maximum of two adults and two children. Adult Membership costs £42.00. Student and Senior Memberships are £21.00. Disabled people and people with special needs get free membership. All membership cards are valid for 30 calendar days. Please note that membership cards are not transferable. Day entrance charge for non-members is £3. Guest's day entrance charge for a maximum of two non-members accompanying a member is £2. To get back to the main menu, press zero.

For information on swimming pool opening times and prices, press 2.

The pool is open from 10.00 am to 9.00 pm every day when the centre is open. Adult members can use the swimming pool for £3.00 while we charge non-members £6.00. Student and senior members pay £2.40, while non-members pay £4.40. A member family ticket costs £7.80 and the non-member one costs £14.80. All non-member swimming pool prices include day entrance charges. To get back to the main menu, press zero.

For information on squash, badminton and table tennis facilities and charges, press 3.

Courts are open from 6.30 am to 10.00 pm. Squash court charge is £6.60 an hour. Table tennis table charge is £5.50 an hour. Badminton and tennis court charges are £9.00 an hour.

Non-members also need to pay a day entrance charge. Phone 01622 719345 for booking. You can also arrange for a specialised trainer at the same number. Sports equipment is available for hire. Please ask at reception or phone 01622 713240 to make arrangements. To get back to the main menu, press zero.

UNIT 12 / AS 12 (Tracks 23-24)

Reporter: Meet Josh 'Rinse' Roberts, the winner of the Radio 1 & UK Club Culture Under-18's DJ Search. After a hard battle against the other two finalists, Josh came out on top using his own mixes and even MCing over his set. Up to now what have you been doing as a DJ?

Josh: Well, I have been DJing nearly 6 years now. I started out just with a pair of CD decks and a mixer doing local discos and house parties. My break came when I was 15. I sent off a demo to a regional dance music radio station and I ended up doing two one-hour sets for them.

Reporter: What's your mixing style?

Josh: My style of mixing is based on my hero DJ EZ but it is by no means the same. When playing in clubs, I normally do a cut and paste style set. I also MC on my sets. I try and make sure the crowd are concentrating on me 100% of the time.

Reporter: As an under-18 DJ, have you found it hard getting gigs?

Josh: It's hard because a lot of clubs don't want to take the risk. I've got an agent now so things are looking up.

Reporter: What kind of preparation did you do for the final?

Josh: Practice, practice, practice, I can't tell you how many times I practised my set!

Reporter: Your 15-minute set at the final impressed 2,000 clubbers. What was the winning trick?

Josh: I had my own remixes. The highlight of my set was a mix-up of Queen's We Will Rock You.

Reporter: What was the winning prize?

Josh: I got some DJ equipment and a place on Radio 1's master class.

Reporter: Have you studied music so far?

Josh: I study music technology full-time.

Reporter: What is there in the future for you, do you think?

Josh: Once I've finished college, I hope to become a radio presenter and a club DJ, working across the country and abroad.

Reporter: What advice can you offer to other people under 18 who want to be DJs?

Josh: Just stick to it, hopefully you'll get a break. Believe in yourself as well, that's very important.

UNIT 13 / AS 13 (Tracks 25-26)

1 National Express: Next please! ... Good afternoon. How can I help you?

Girl: Good afternoon. I've lost my young person's coach card. Can I get a replacement, please?

NE: No, unfortunately you can't. We cannot be held responsible for this type of personal loss. You will need to buy a new one.

Girl: Oh, dear, I'm a student, you know. I don't have much money.

NE: You could perhaps contact your insurance company. They may be able to help. Would you like to buy a new one now?

Girl: I really don't know. I still might be able to find the old one. So perhaps I'll just try and look for it again.

NE: If you find your lost card after you have bought a new one, then we will give you a full refund for the new card.

Girl: Oh, OK, I'll get one then.

2 NE: Next please!

Man: A return to Piccadilly, please.

NE: Do you want to travel by tube?

Man: Tube?

NE: Yes, the underground.

Man: Yes, yes!

NE: We do not sell tickets for the underground, I'm afraid.

Man: No ticket for underground here?

Workbook Audio Scripts

- NE:* No.
Man: Where?
NE: Go to the underground station.
Man: This is not underground?
NE: No, this is a coach station.
- 3** *NE:* National Express, can I help you?
Woman: Oh, yes, hello. I've lost my ticket – what do I do?
NE: Was it an e-ticket or did you buy it at a ticket office?
Woman: I booked it on-line.
NE: That's good luck then. You can reprint your ticket. Do you have the ticket number and the security code?
Woman: I'm not sure...
NE: Well, you can't reprint your ticket without those numbers. You were given these numbers when you booked on-line, remember?
Woman: Yes! Here they are! What do I do now?
NE: Find the 'Lost ticket' option on our website and click on view and print your e-Ticket again
Woman: Great! Many thanks. Bye!
NE: A pleasure. Bye!
- 4** *Man:* I'd like to get a ticket to Liverpool, please.
NE: Single or return?
Man: How much are they?
NE: The single ticket is £12 and the return is £14.
Man: The difference is only two pounds?!?!? That's ridiculous! Your single tickets are far too expensive!
NE: Costs are calculated on the basis that all journeys are return. By selling single tickets, we run the risk that services are empty on the return journey. That's why we encourage our customers to buy return tickets.
Man: This policy definitely works if you ask me. A return to Liverpool then, please.

UNIT 14 / AS 14 (Tracks 27-28)

- Reporter:* "Life is either an incredible adventure...or nothing at all." This is the slogan of Incredible Adventures, a very unusual travel agency offering extraordinary holidays. I have Hugh Daring, marketing manager of Incredible Adventures in the studio with me. Mr Daring, what is the most extraordinary holiday you offer?
- Mr Daring:* It's not easy to choose as we offer all sorts of diving and flying holiday experiences, but perhaps the most special one is our Orbital Space Adventure package.
- Reporter:* What does it involve?
- Mr Daring:* Participants do Russia's Cosmonaut Training Program and if they complete it successfully, they can travel to space.
- Reporter:* It sounds expensive. What does all this cost?
- Mr Daring:* We don't know exactly. The total cost of an Incredible Orbital Space Adventure can range from \$15 million to \$25 million. It mainly depends on the mission profile, that is what you want to be able to do in space. For example, would you like to train for a space walk?
- Reporter:* How serious is the training?
- Mr Daring:* Very. There are four training steps that everyone must complete before travelling into space: Step One is the Medical Qualification Evaluation. You will undergo the most intense medical examination of your life.
Step Two is theoretical training, lectures and active hands-on simulator training.
Step Three is learning how to work as a valuable member of a cosmonaut team.
Step Four is actual training with other members of your assigned mission team.
- Reporter:* What happens if someone is not fit enough or if they drop out because the training is too hard for them?
- Mr Daring:* You will only pay for the training and services you receive. In the event you do not complete all training, or are not accepted for a flight to space, any unused funds will be refunded.
- Reporter:* Where is the training held?
- Mr Daring:* Some of these training activities will take place at the Gromov Flight Research Centre outside Moscow, and some will take place at the legendary Star City.
- Reporter:* How long is the training?
- Mr Daring:* Normally six and a half months.
- Reporter:* Thank you Mr Daring. If you have \$25 million and six and a half months for your next holiday, this is the holiday for you. I don't think I'll see you there.

UNIT 15 / AS 15 (Tracks 29-30)

- Reporter:* Planning to buy a new MP3 player? Stay with us. Zeno's here with the results of his survey on the best MP3 players to buy. Zeno.
- Zeno:* It will be no surprise that the best MP3 player around is the Memo, especially now that it can play video. Although not everyone is a fan of its short, wide shape, most say that the player is extremely easy to use. Audio quality is first rate, and video playback looks great despite the small 2-inch

screen size. The 8 GB memory can store around 2,000 songs or equivalent video. It comes in a rainbow of colours. One complaint is that it has been made incompatible with some third party video accessories that worked with earlier-generation players.

The Creative Guru generally comes very close to the Memo in reviews, plus it has more features. It is heavier than the Memo, but it has a slightly larger, video-capable 2.2-inch colour LCD touch screen that doubles for navigation. Sound and video are given uniformly high marks, and there's a long list of extras: FM tuner, voice recorder, equalizer, Macromedia Flash Player, Flash games and an alarm clock.

Critics say that Plus Top is best value for your money. Sound quality and battery life are great, according to reports. The 1.5-inch OLED screen falls short compared to the display on the Memo, but it's OK for viewing short video clips and photos. Unlike the Memo, the Plus Top offers an FM radio. A 2 GB version is also available. All current Plus Top MP3 players are compatible with Doors Media Player.

And finally let me recommend a budget MP3 player. Reviews say there are a number of good sub-\$100 MP3 players available, but this Thrift 35 model gets a slight edge because of its easy-to-use interface and better overall physical design. Sound quality is excellent, as is the built-in FM radio, though the lack of FM recording capabilities is a disappointment. A unique pop-out design protects the built-in USB connector so there's no need for a cable or for an easy-to-lose cap. One flaw in some reports is that tested battery life is shorter than advertised.

Reporter: Thank you Zeno. And now ...