

Convenience at What Cost?

Advanced (C1-C2)



Part 1. Read the statements below. Without discussing yet — just decide: does each one feel broadly true, broadly false, or somewhere in between? Mark your reaction, then compare with your partner.

- We now expect things that would have seemed miraculous twenty years ago to arrive in two hours.
- The easier a task becomes, the less we value completing it.
- We have outsourced so many small discomforts that we've also outsourced the satisfaction that came with them.
- Convenience has made us more efficient and more impatient in equal measure.



Part 2. Choose one option in each pair. Give a reason or example.

The satisfaction of doing something the slow, effortful way	or	the relief of getting the same result instantly?
Fewer options, decided for you	or	unlimited choice, decided by you?
A skill you had to work hard to acquire	or	a tool that does it better and faster than you ever could?
Friction as a feature – something that slows you down with purpose	or	friction as a flaw to be eliminated wherever possible?
A relationship maintained through regular, effortful contact	or	one sustained more passively through ambient digital presence?
Knowing how to do something yourself	or	knowing exactly who or what to delegate it to?

Part 3. Read the statements. Say which feel true, which you resist, and which feel uncomfortable to admit. Explain why.

- There are things I no longer know how to do because I stopped needing to.
- I have become noticeably less patient with things that used to feel normal – waiting in queues, slow Wi-Fi, delayed responses.
- I sometimes wonder whether the ease of modern life has made me slightly softer in ways I wouldn't have chosen.
- I appreciate convenience most when I've recently experienced the alternative.
- There are relationships in my life that exist largely because staying in touch requires almost no effort.
- I have occasionally chosen the harder option deliberately – not because it was better, but because it felt more honest.

Part 4. Discuss the following questions.

- What is something you used to do manually or effortfully that you've since automated, outsourced, or simply stopped doing? What, if anything, did you lose?
- Think about your tolerance for waiting, slowness, or inconvenience compared to five or ten years ago. Has it changed? Does that bother you?
- Is there an area of your life where you have deliberately kept things inconvenient — where you've resisted the easier option? Why?
- Do you think the expectation of convenience is generational, or has it affected everyone more or less equally?

Part 5. Look at the areas below. For each one, say whether convenience has changed things mostly for better, mostly for worse, or in ways that are genuinely hard to separate.

How we communicate with friends	How we navigate and travel	How we find romantic partners
How we read and consume news	How we shop and consume	How we work and collaborate
How we learn new skills	How we experience entertainment	How we manage health and fitness
How we cook and eat	How we remember things	How we make decisions



Part 6. Match each expression to its meaning. Then use three of these expressions to say something honest and specific about how convenience has affected your own life.

Frictionless

To atrophy

The path of least resistance

A low-effort relationship

To outsource a decision

Ambient intimacy

Tolerance for discomfort

To erode

1. _____ the sense of closeness that comes from passively following someone's life online without direct contact
2. _____ designed to remove all obstacles, effort, or resistance from a process or experience
3. _____ to gradually diminish or wear away something — a skill, a boundary, an expectation — over time
4. _____ the easiest available course of action, often chosen instinctively rather than consciously
5. _____ a connection maintained with minimal active investment — often sustained by digital proximity rather than genuine contact
6. _____ to delegate a choice to an algorithm, app, or other person rather than making it yourself
7. _____ to gradually weaken or disappear through lack of use — used of skills, muscles, or capacities
8. _____ the capacity to endure inconvenience, difficulty, or frustration without immediately seeking relief

Part 7. Read each situation. Choose the response that feels most honest. Then discuss what it reveals.

You realise you haven't called a close friend in months. You've seen their posts, liked a few things, exchanged occasional messages. The relationship feels fine, but also somehow thinner than it used to be.

1. You accept that this is just how friendships evolve — lower maintenance, still real.
2. You feel a quiet guilt that you've been confusing digital proximity with actual contact.
3. You call them. The conversation reminds you that the shortcut wasn't the same thing.
4. You wonder whether they feel the same — and whether both of you have quietly let it slide.

You're trying to decide between two restaurants for dinner. You spend ten minutes reading reviews, scrolling menus, checking ratings — and feel more confused and less hungry than when you started.

1. You close the app and go somewhere you already know you like.
2. You let the algorithm decide and feel vaguely relieved not to have chosen yourself.
3. You make a decision quickly, partly out of frustration, and it turns out fine.
4. You notice that you've spent more energy deciding than you will spend eating.

A skill you once had — navigating without GPS, cooking from scratch, writing by hand, remembering phone numbers — has quietly faded. You notice it when you need it and it isn't there.

- You feel a flicker of loss, then remind yourself the tool exists for a reason.
- You decide to practise it again — not because it's necessary, but because the loss bothers you.
- You feel oddly embarrassed, as though you've let something slip that mattered.
- You wonder how many other capacities are quietly atrophying without you noticing.

Part 8. Read the statements. Say whether you agree, disagree, or partly agree.

- Convenience is morally neutral — what matters is what we do with the time and energy it frees up.
- The skills that atrophy through disuse are rarely the ones we miss — the ones we miss are the habits of mind that went with them.
- We are now so accustomed to having things on demand that the act of waiting has become genuinely distressing rather than merely inconvenient.
- Relationships that require effort to maintain are, almost by definition, more meaningful than those that don't.
- The companies that profit most from convenience are also the ones most invested in making us less capable of managing without them.
- There is something quietly radical about choosing the harder option when the easier one is available.

Part 9. Think about the things you no longer do — or rarely do — because a more convenient alternative exists. Choose one and discuss with your partner.

- What was it, and when did you stop?
- Was it a conscious decision, or did it happen gradually without you noticing?
- Is there anything you miss about doing it the old way — or is the convenience straightforwardly better?
- If you tried to do it again now, do you think you still could?

Part 10. Read the two viewpoints. Which do you find more intellectually honest? Where do you personally sit?

Viewpoint A

Convenience is one of the great achievements of modern life. It has freed billions of people from drudgery, democratised access to food, transport, entertainment, and connection, and created time that can be spent on things that genuinely matter. The nostalgia for friction and effort is largely a middle-class indulgence — most people who had less convenience in the past weren't ennobled by it.

Viewpoint B

The problem with optimising for ease is that ease is not the same as meaning. The friction we have removed was often also the texture — the small resistances that gave shape, rhythm, and satisfaction to ordinary life. A life from which all inconvenience has been eliminated is not a richer life. It is a smoother one, which is a different thing entirely.

Part 11. Tell your partner about something you have chosen to do the harder way — or something you wish you hadn't let convenience erode.

Think about:

- What the thing is and why the harder version mattered to you
- Whether the effort involved was incidental or actually part of the point
- What you think you would have lost if you'd taken the easier route
- Whether you managed to hold the line — or whether convenience won in the end

REFLECTION

Complete the sentences in your own words.

- One convenience I am genuinely grateful for is... because...
- One thing I have let atrophy through convenience that I'd like to reclaim is...
- An area of my life where I want to reintroduce a little more friction is...
- The most honest thing I can say about my own relationship with convenience is...