

Reading

You are going to read a magazine article about problems between neighbours. For questions 1–7, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which best fits according to the text.

- 1 Why doesn't the writer like her next-door neighbours' dogs?
A They wake her up.
B They bark at her.
C They are aggressive.
D They have sharp teeth.
- 2 According to the report, most people argue with their neighbours about
A dogs. B noise. C parking. D DIY.
- 3 What does the article say about Mediation UK?
A It gives a lot of money to charity.
B It has over fifty groups around the world.
C It was established by the United Nations.
D It has its head office in Bristol.
- 4 Some people decide not to buy a house because they don't like
A the people who live in the next house.
B other property in the area.
C the untidy garden of the house.
D the colour of the paint used on the house.
- 5 What do we find out about Mr Gladden?
A He invited people to come and look at his house.
B He started an argument with the council.
C He doesn't care what his neighbours think.
D He defended himself from attacks by neighbours.
- 6 The writer decided not to buy the house because
A it didn't have a good view.
B it was next door to a zoo.
C she didn't trust the owners.
D she disliked noisy dogs.
- 7 The writer's main aim in the article is to
A inform people what to do if they have problems with their neighbours.
B describe her own problems with her neighbours.
C illustrate the types and causes of problems between neighbours.
D explain the activities of the organisation Mediation UK.

Neighbours from hell –

I used to think my little corner of urban England was somewhere I could get away from the stress and strain of modern life — until they moved in next door. There are two of them. They are white, woolly and probably have sharp teeth as well as a loud bark. But every time their constant barking interrupts my sleep, I remind myself that, in many respects, I am lucky. The neighbours don't hold all-night parties, nor do they shout or throw crockery at each other, and, though their dogs may bark, they don't bite.

According to a recent report on 'nightmare neighbours', dogs are the fifth most common source of bad relations between neighbours. Noise of any description heads the list of complaints, followed by DIY* enthusiasts and parking disputes.

So what alternatives are there? One is to take legal action. But this can be time-consuming and expensive and does nothing to improve already difficult relationships. The other alternatives are to sell up and go, or to try to reach a solution with the help of someone neutral. Mediation UK was set up to help resolve community disagreements. The Bristol-based charity acts as an umbrella organisation for sixty regional groups, which are staffed by trained volunteers. In most cases, officers find that lack of communication is the main cause of conflict and that peace can be negotiated.

David Nation of Plymouth Mediation points to poor public housing and unemployment as additional factors. He also reports more cases of complaints from people who live in flats. Large houses built in the



nineteenth century and designed as single-occupation family homes have, he says, been converted into flats with little or no attention to sound insulation.

Buyers can also be put off by the external appearance of neighbouring houses. Anything from wild gardens to unusual external colour schemes can put off buyers — even though the offending property is next door. But it could be worse. John Gladden upset his neighbours by putting a huge fibreglass fish on the roof of his house. The council argued that he should have got planning permission, residents thought the fish did nothing to improve the appearance of the neighbourhood, and war broke out. Gladden defended his right of self-expression and proceeded to install an inflatable Santa Claus and a replica tank. Sightseers poured in, and homes nearby are now hard to sell.

As most problems offend the ears rather than the eyes, it's surprising that so few buyers take the trouble to check out their future neighbours. Estate agents* recommend making frequent visits to the area. It is pointless, after all, to expect people who are trying to sell their house to give an objective view of their neighbours. I recently went to view a house which looked promising — until I saw the neighbouring zoo. I decided I could live with the birds, the rabbits and the cats, but when I spotted the dogs I had my doubts. 'Do the alsatians next door bother you at all?' I asked.

'No, no,' they replied, 'not at all.'

'Oh yes they do,' insisted their six-year-old son. 'They bark all night and keep us awake.' Another lucky escape.

* **DIY:** Do-it-yourself, making and repairing things in your own home

* **Estate agents:** people who buy and sell houses for other people

Vocabulary

Adjectives and nouns

- 1 There are a number of adjective-noun collocations in the text. Which adjectives are used with the nouns in these sentences?
- bad loud sharp wild

a The neighbours' dogs have _____ teeth and a _____ bark.

b Dogs are the fifth most common source of _____ relations between neighbours.

c _____ gardens can put off house buyers.

- 2 Complete these sentences with one of the adjectives in 1 above. Sometimes there are two possibilities.

a We could hear _____ voices coming from the cellar.

b There have been several _____ increases in the price of bread this year.

c More and more species of _____ animals are becoming extinct.

d I must make an appointment to see the dentist — I think I may have a _____ tooth.

e Be careful — those are _____ scissors. You might cut yourself.

f When I was a teenager I went to lots of _____ parties.

g We've had such _____ weather recently. Let's hope it gets better.

h There was a _____ explosion as the fire reached the petrol tank.

Phrasal verbs with set

- 3 Replace the verbs in *italic* in these sentences with the correct form of *set* and one of these words.

back out off (something) on up

a A cat which got into the house through an open window *made* the burglar alarm ring.

b I'm going to write to the principal *expressing* my ideas for improvements to the school.

c Recently more and more people have been *starting* their own Internet companies.

d The police *made* their dogs *attack* the bank robbers as they tried to escape.

e The terrible rain storms we've had recently have *delayed* the house building programme by several months.

f We'd better *leave* early tomorrow. We've got a long way to travel.