

Starting up

- What are some of the upsides and downsides of commuting:
a) by public transport and b) by car?
- Read through the whole article. Then do the exercise below.

Reading 1

Read the article again and complete the table.

	First vehicle tested	Second vehicle tested
Name of type of vehicle		
Supplier		
Make		
Model		
Price		
Weight		
Commute time (first use)		
Competition		
Advantage		
Disadvantage 1		
Disadvantage 2		
Disadvantage 3		
Disadvantage 4 (on this occasion of using it)		

My new commute? e-scooter and e-bike put to the test

¹ I've been commuting to the Financial Times in the City from south London by bus and rail for a decade but trains are overcrowded and unreliable. I want to find a greener way to get around town and to have more fun while I'm at it. E-bikes, as well as powered scooters, are suddenly everywhere on the streets of big cities. I set out to test-ride them and see if they can improve my commute.

² E-bikes

Riese & Müller is the Rolls-Royce of electric bikes, according to Dan Parsons, director of operations at Fully Charged, an e-bike shop in south London. With a £4,000 price tag, I see what he means. I've barely ridden a bike in London but today I'm test-riding its Charger Vario. This bike weighs a hefty 26kg but that means it has serious street presence. I arrive at the FT in 30 minutes, cutting a quarter of an hour from my regular commute, without breaking into a sweat.

I wonder whether there is much of a market for an electric bike that costs £4,000 when Lime and Uber offer them to hire for less than £10 an hour but Mr Parsons compares it to when the first rental bikes arrived in London. "We were all worried but they encouraged people who weren't cyclists to buy bikes. We hope Lime and Uber will have the same effect on the e-bike market," he says.

³ E-scooters

In recent months, electric scooters have started to appear everywhere in London. At the Inokim showroom I pick up its Light 2 model. From the minute I get on, I cannot stop smiling. It only takes moments to get used to the throttle control and brakes. If anything, I become a little too confident. Cruising at the 21mph top speed, I have to hang on when I go over a pothole. The suspension doesn't cope brilliantly with cobbled streets, either.

My journey home from work again takes half an hour but the commute the following morning is less successful — after forgetting to put it on to charge overnight, the scooter runs out of battery after five minutes. It folds up, so I wheel it to the nearest train station to finish my journey. At 16kg, I wouldn't advise carrying it for long but you can also ride it like a traditional scooter.

I feel like a child forced to give up his favourite toy when the time comes to return the Light 2 but at £1,200 it costs considerably more than £400 entry-level e-scooters from Chinese company Xiaomi.

⁴ The legal issues

I was surprised to discover that riding electric scooters on the road is illegal in the UK. When I tested the electric scooter, the law was not being enforced; I passed several police cars and officers without turning any heads. Bird, the Californian e-scooter sharing start-up, operates in more than 120 cities in 15 countries but in the UK is restricted to offering customers short rides around the Olympic Park because it qualifies as private land. "London is a congested city, the average car speed is 6mph and the air quality is terrible. Eventually, hopefully, we will see a shift in the law," says Bird's Harry Porter.



Vocabulary – identifying forms

Look at the whole article to find the following words and expressions in sections 1-4.

Section 1

- 1 A present perfect continuous tense referring to travel
- 2 A word with a prefix meaning 'ten'.
- 3 An adjectival form with a prefix meaning 'too much'.
- 4 An adjective with a prefix meaning 'not'.
- 5 A phrasal verb meaning 'decide' or 'start'

Section 2

- 6 An adverb meaning 'hardly'
- 7 An irregular past participle that could also be applied to horses
- 8 An adjective meaning 'heavy'
- 9 A verb meaning 'rent' and noun form related to 'rent'
- 10 Another word for 'perspiration'

Section 3

- 11 A phrasal verb meaning 'collect'
- 12 A noun meaning 'accelerator'
- 13 A verb form meaning 'travelling at a good, constant speed'
- 14 An adjective meaning 'well'
- 15 A compound referring to the low end of a product range

Section 4

- 16 An adjective with a prefix meaning 'not'
- 17 A verb meaning 'functions'
- 18 A passive verb meaning 'applied'
- 19 A passive verb meaning 'limited'
- 20 A noun meaning 'change'

Grammar – verbs + -ing versus infinitive

Choose the correct verb form, *-ing* form or infinitive, to complete these sentences. Use any additional words that are necessary. (In one sentence, both forms are possible.)

- 1 From the minute I get on, I cannot stop smiling (smile)
- 2 I had arranged _____ a test drive with the showroom. (take)
- 3 In the showroom, I practised _____ the scooter. (use)
- 4 I tried to avoid _____ into things, but I failed. (drive)
- 5 I apologised _____ the shop's furniture. (hit)
- 6 They lent me the scooter for two days and I looked forward _____ my first trip to the office. (make)
- 7 Driving the scooter involves _____ holes in the road. (avoid)
- 8 I liked the scooter so much that I postponed _____ it. (return)
- 9 E-bikes and e-scooters are both great, but the problem with both machines is that I can't afford _____ one. (buy)
- 10 However, I might consider _____ an e-bike – they're so cheap. (rent)
- 11 In the UK, politicians intend _____ up the debate about allowing them on pavements. (open)
- 12 Users will no doubt insist _____ able to use them on pavements, and the law will change. (be)

Reading 2

Which is/are the correct 'takeaway(s)' from the final paragraph of the article?

Riding e-bikes and e-scooters on public roads and pavements is:

- a) illegal in many countries.
- b) legal in California.
- c) only possible in London in the Olympic Park.
- d) illegal in the UK but will perhaps become legal one day.
- e) illegal in the UK, but will become legal quite soon.

Further discussion / Group work

- 1 Have you used an e-bike or e-scooter for travelling to work or your place of study?
If you have, talk about your experiences. If not, would you consider using one? Give reasons.
- 2 What are the downsides of collective scooter and bike schemes seen in many cities:
a) for users of the bikes and scooters, b) for other road users, c) for pedestrians?

ANSWER KEY**Reading 1**

	First vehicle tested	Second vehicle tested
Name of type of vehicle	Electric bike (or e-bike)	Electric scooter (or e-scooter)
Supplier	Fully Charged	Inokim
Make	Riese & Müller	Inokim
Model	Charger Vario	Light 2
Price	£4000	£1200
Weight	26kg	16kg
Commute time (first use)	30 mins	30 mins
Competition	Lime, Uber	Xiaomi
Advantage	Street presence	Easy to learn how to use
Disadvantage 1	Price	Suspension
Disadvantage 2		Heavy to carry
Disadvantage 3		Price
Disadvantage 4 (on this particular occasion of using it)		Flat battery

Vocabulary

- | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 I've been travelling | 6 barely | 11 pick up | 16 illegal |
| 2 decade | 7 ridden | 12 throttle | 17 operates |
| 3 overcrowded | 8 hefty | 13 cruising | 18 enforced |
| 4 unreliable | 9 hire, rental | 14 brilliantly | 19 restricted |
| 5 set out | 10 sweat | 15 entry-level | 20 shift |

Grammar

- 2 to take
- 3 using
- 4 driving
- 5 for hitting
- 6 to making
- 7 avoiding
- 8 returning
- 9 to buy
- 10 renting
- 11 to open or opening
- 12 on being

Reading 2

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