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Japanese cars still most reliable

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THE ARTICLE

Japanese cars are the most reliable in the world. That's according to J.D. Power and Associates, an international market research company. J.D. Power's asked thousands of car owners about problems they had with their cars in the first three years of ownership. The Lexus car topped the reliability list, for the fourteenth year in a row. Lexus is Toyota's luxury car brand. The survey found that Lexus cars were getting better and better. They had 120 problems per 100 vehicles, down from 145 problems in the 2007 study. "That's a pretty good track record," said Dave Sargent, a J.D. Power's executive. Lexus was first place in six categories, while other Toyota and Honda cars led four categories. Toyota's Prius hybrid was the winning compact car.

Mr Sargent said that reliability in cars is improving every year. In the past two years, the industry average has improved from 237 problems per 100 vehicles to 206. Land Rover, sold earlier this year to India's Tata Motors, was the worst-performing brand, with 344 problems. Sargent also said the "seriousness" of the problems was decreasing. The complaints being reported a few years ago were "hard" problems, such as serious technical defects. Sargent said these were becoming less common. He told reporters it is now more likely that car owners will complain about "soft" problems, like strange noises or wear and tear of the car's interior. He added that: "Improved quality is good for everybody, [especially] for the consumers, who don't have the annoyance of problems [and costs]."

WARM-UPS

1. RELIABLE: Walk around the class and talk to other students about being reliable. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Japanese cars / reliable / market research / luxury car / problems / first place / improving / averages / complaints / technical defects / strange noises / wear and tear

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. RELIABILITY: Are you happy with the products you buy? Look at the goods and services below. Write down the most and least-reliable company related to them. Change partners and share your ideas. Agree on the best and worst for each.

| Good / Service | Most reliable company | Least reliable company |
|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Car | | |
| Computer | | |
| Music player | | |
| Mobile phone | | |
| English school | | |
| Airline | | |

4. QUICK DEBATE: Students A strongly believe that Japanese cars will always be the world's most reliable cars; Students B strongly believe another nation will soon overtake the Japanese. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

5. PROBLEMS: What problems do you experience with the things below? Discuss this with your partner(s). Are these problems getting bigger or are they disappearing?

- cars
- computers
- mobile phones
- English schools
- public transport
- government
- restaurants
- other _____

6. CARS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'cars'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A market research firm found Japanese cars to be the most reliable. | T / F |
| b. Japanese makers have topped the reliability list for the past 14 years. | T / F |
| c. Only 145 people said they had problems with their Japanese car. | T / F |
| d. Toyota's energy-saving hybrid car was the most reliable of all cars. | T / F |
| e. Industry-wide, overall reliability worsened in the past year. | T / F |
| f. The best-performing non-Japanese car maker was Land Rover. | T / F |
| g. Car owners are now more likely to complain about strange noises. | T / F |
| h. People will complain about wear and tear more than engine problems. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. reliable | a. headed |
| 2. according to | b. irritation |
| 3. topped | c. faults |
| 4. track record | d. small |
| 5. compact | e. deterioration |
| 6. improving | f. trustworthy |
| 7. defects | g. getting better |
| 8. likely | h. past performance |
| 9. wear and tear | i. in the opinion of |
| 10. annoyance | j. probable |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Japanese cars are the most | a. in a row |
| 2. an international market | b. defects |
| 3. The Lexus car topped | c. common |
| 4. the fourteenth year | d. research company |
| 5. Lexus was first place | e. tear of the car's interior |
| 6. the industry average | f. reliable in the world |
| 7. serious technical | g. good for everybody |
| 8. becoming less | h. has improved |
| 9. wear and | i. the reliability list |
| 10. Improved quality is | j. in six categories |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Japanese cars are the most _____ in the world. That's according to J.D. Power and Associates, an international market research company. J.D. Power's asked _____ of car owners about problems they had with their cars in the first three years of _____. The Lexus car topped the reliability list, for the fourteenth year in a row. Lexus is Toyota's _____ car brand. The survey found that Lexus cars were getting better and better. They had 120 problems per 100 vehicles, _____ from 145 problems in the 2007 study. "That's a _____ good track record," said Dave Sargent, a J.D. Power's executive. Lexus was first place in six _____, while other Toyota and Honda cars led four categories. Toyota's Prius hybrid was the winning _____ car.

down
thousands
pretty
reliable
luxury
ownership
compact
categories

Mr Sargent said that reliability in _____ is improving every year. In the past two years, the industry _____ has improved from 237 problems per 100 vehicles to 206. Land Rover, sold earlier this year to India's Tata Motors, was the worst-performing _____, with 344 problems. Sargent also said the "seriousness" of the _____ was decreasing. The complaints being reported a few years ago were "hard" problems, such as _____ technical defects. Sargent said these were becoming less common. He told reporters it is now more _____ that car owners will complain about "soft" problems, like strange noises or _____ and tear of the car's interior. He added that: "Improved quality is good for everybody, [especially] for the consumers, who don't have the annoyance of problems [and _____]."

wear
serious
average
problems
cars
costs
likely
brand

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

Japanese cars are the _____ the world. That's according to J.D. Power and Associates, an international market research company. J.D. Power's _____ car owners about problems they had with their cars in the first three years of ownership. The Lexus _____ reliability list, for the fourteenth _____. Lexus is Toyota's luxury car brand. The survey found that Lexus cars were getting better and better. They had 120 problems per 100 vehicles, _____ problems in the 2007 study. "That's a _____ record," said Dave Sargent, a J.D. Power's executive. Lexus was first place in six categories, while other Toyota and Honda cars led four categories. Toyota's Prius hybrid was the _____.

Mr Sargent said that _____ is improving every year. In the past two years, the industry average has improved from _____ 100 vehicles to 206. Land Rover, _____ year to India's Tata Motors, was the worst-performing brand, with 344 problems. Sargent also said _____ the problems was decreasing. The complaints being reported a few years ago were "hard" problems, such as serious _____. Sargent said these were becoming less common. He told reporters it is now more likely that car owners will complain about "soft" problems, like strange noises or _____ of the car's interior. He added that: "Improved quality is good for everybody, [especially] for the consumers, who don't have _____ problems [and costs]."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'wear' and 'tear'.

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| wear | tear |
|-------------|-------------|

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• most• three• row• 120• pretty• hybrid | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• two• sold• seriousness• common• soft• costs |
|--|--|

STUDENT CAR SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about cars in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

| | STUDENT 1 _____ | STUDENT 2 _____ | STUDENT 3 _____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. | | | |
| Q.2. | | | |
| Q.3. | | | |
| Q.4. | | | |
| Q.5. | | | |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

CAR DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'reliable'?
- c) Are you reliable?
- d) Are you happy with the reliability of the things you buy?
- e) Have you ever had a problem with a car?
- f) What do you think of Japanese cars?
- g) How do you think Toyota can stay number one for 14 years in a row?
- h) Would you buy a Toyota after reading this article?
- i) What are your favourite and least favourite cars?
- j) How do you think Toyota bosses feel about being number one?

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CAR DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think cars will ever become 100 per cent reliable?
- c) How important is reliability to you?
- d) Are you surprised that Land Rover was the worst-performing car?
- e) Do you worry about the wear and tear of the things you buy?
- f) Do you read consumer guides or look at consumer Internet sites before you buy something?
- g) Do you think car companies care about reports such as the one in the article?
- h) What other "soft" problems do you think cars might have?
- i) What annoyances have you had recently with things you've bought?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Toyota's boss?

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LANGUAGE

Japanese cars are the most reliable in the world. That's according (1) ____ J.D. Power and Associates, an international market research company. J.D. Power's asked thousands of car (2) ____ about problems they had with their cars in the first three years of ownership. The Lexus car (3) ____ the reliability list, for the fourteenth year in a row. Lexus is Toyota's luxury car brand. The survey found that Lexus cars were getting better and (4) _____. They had 120 problems per 100 vehicles, (5) ____ from 145 problems in the 2007 study. "That's a pretty good track record," said Dave Sargent, a J.D. Power's executive. Lexus was first place in six categories, while other Toyota and Honda cars led four categories. Toyota's Prius hybrid was the (6) ____ compact car.

Mr Sargent said that (7) ____ in cars is improving every year. In the past two years, the (8) ____ average has improved from 237 problems per 100 vehicles to 206. Land Rover, sold earlier this year to India's Tata Motors, was the worst-performing brand, (9) ____ 344 problems. Sargent also said the "seriousness" of the problems was decreasing. The complaints (10) ____ reported a few years ago were "hard" problems, such as serious technical defects. Sargent said these were becoming less common. He told reporters it is now more (11) ____ that car owners will complain about "soft" problems, like strange noises or wear and tear of the car's interior. He added that: "Improved (12) ____ is good for everybody, [especially] for the consumers, who don't have the annoyance of problems [and costs]."

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | (a) for | (b) to | (c) with | (d) by |
| 2. | (a) ownership | (b) owner | (c) owners | (d) owns |
| 3. | (a) topped | (b) tipped | (c) tapped | (d) taped |
| 4. | (a) betterment | (b) betters | (c) best | (d) better |
| 5. | (a) low | (b) under | (c) down | (d) below |
| 6. | (a) winning | (b) winner | (c) won | (d) win-win |
| 7. | (a) reliant | (b) reliably | (c) reliable | (d) reliability |
| 8. | (a) industrious | (b) industry | (c) industrial | (d) industrialist |
| 9. | (a) which | (b) while | (c) well | (d) with |
| 10. | (a) were | (b) was | (c) being | (d) be |
| 11. | (a) liked | (b) likely | (c) likes | (d) likelihood |
| 12. | (a) quality | (b) quantity | (c) qualification | (d) quantification |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about the reliability of different cars. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. CARS: Make a poster about your favourite cars. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. MOST UNRELIABLE: Write a magazine article about a car owner with the most unreliable car in the world. Include imaginary interviews with the car owner and the boss of the car company.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to Toyota's boss. Ask him three questions about Toyota cars. Make three suggestions on what he should do to improve his cars. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

6. DIARY / JOURNAL: You are a car. Write your thoughts on your daily life. Include your opinions on your driver(s) and the way they drive you and treat you. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. T c. F d. F e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. reliable | a. trustworthy |
| 2. according to | b. in the opinion of |
| 3. topped | c. headed |
| 4. track record | d. past performance |
| 5. compact | e. small |
| 6. improving | f. getting better |
| 7. defects | g. faults |
| 8. likely | h. probable |
| 9. wear and tear | i. deterioration |
| 10. annoyance | j. irritation |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Japanese cars are the most | a. reliable in the world |
| 2. an international market | b. research company |
| 3. The Lexus car topped | c. the reliability list |
| 4. the fourteenth year | d. in a row |
| 5. Lexus was first place | e. in six categories |
| 6. the industry average | f. has improved |
| 7. serious technical | g. defects |
| 8. becoming less | h. common |
| 9. wear and | i. tear of the car's interior |
| 10. Improved quality is | j. good for everybody |

GAP FILL:

Japanese cars still most reliable

Japanese cars are the most **reliable** in the world. That's according to J.D. Power and Associates, an international market research company. J.D. Power's asked **thousands** of car owners about problems they had with their cars in the first three years of **ownership**. The Lexus car topped the reliability list, for the fourteenth year in a row. Lexus is Toyota's **luxury** car brand. The survey found that Lexus cars were getting better and better. They had 120 problems per 100 vehicles, **down** from 145 problems in the 2007 study. "That's a **pretty** good track record," said Dave Sargent, a J.D. Power's executive. Lexus was first place in six **categories**, while other Toyota and Honda cars led four categories. Toyota's Prius hybrid was the winning **compact** car.

Mr Sargent said that reliability in **cars** is improving every year. In the past two years, the industry **average** has improved from 237 problems per 100 vehicles to 206. Land Rover, sold earlier this year to India's Tata Motors, was the worst-performing **brand**, with 344 problems. Sargent also said the "seriousness" of the **problems** was decreasing. The complaints being reported a few years ago were "hard" problems, such as **serious** technical defects. Sargent said these were becoming less common. He told reporters it is now more **likely** that car owners will complain about "soft" problems, like strange noises or **wear** and tear of the car's interior. He added that: "Improved quality is good for everybody, [especially] for the consumers, who don't have the annoyance of problems [and **costs**]."

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - b 2 - c 3 - a 4 - d 5 - c 6 - a 7 - d 8 - b 9 - d 10 - c 11 - b 12 - a