



MASS SURVEILLANCE

“You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every moment scrutinized.”

George Orwell (1903 – 1950), from 1984

1. Mass Surveillance Discussion

1. What information should the government be allowed to collect on people? Which information should it be prohibited from collecting?
2. Under what circumstances should the police or other government agency be allowed to access someone's personal communications (like phone data, messages, internet history, or emails)?
3. Which people are most likely to be targeted by mass surveillance?
4. Which books, TV shows or movies have you seen that feature mass surveillance?
5. Are identity cards compulsory in your country? Where and when do you need to show ID? Do you consider this an invasion of privacy?
6. Are ID cards necessary in the fight against crime, or is it a way for the state to control people? How can ID cards help combat crime?
7. Are ID cards easy to fake? If so, doesn't this negate their use in the fight against crime?
8. Why are so many people around the world against the idea of ID cards?

2. Mass Surveillance Vocabulary

- **Big Brother** (noun) – used to refer to a government that exercises excessive control or surveillance over its citizens (from George Orwell's 1984).
- **CCTV (closed-circuit TV) / security camera** (noun) – a system of video cameras that records footage for live monitoring or to detect criminal activity.
- **facial recognition** (noun) – technology that can identify a person by scanning an image of their face.
- **DNA database / fingerprint database** (noun) – government databases that store DNA records or fingerprints that can be used to identify a person.
- **to eavesdrop** (verb) – to listen to someone else's conversation without their knowing.
- **to bug / tap** (verbs), **bug / wiretap** (nouns) – to use technology to intercept and listen to a person's phone calls; a technological device that can be placed inside a phone to allow another person to listen to the calls.

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun):

1. **Big Brother** is watching you.
2. It's rude to **eavesdrop** on people.
3. Our phones must be **bugged**; how else could the FBI have known where the stolen goods were hidden?
4. Special screens in shopping centres can use **facial recognition** technology to display bespoke adverts to shoppers by linking them to their social media profile and their likes.
5. The local council installed **CCTV** covering the entrances to the park in response to a recent increase in robberies in the area.
6. The police searched the **DNA database** and found a match to blood that was discovered at the scene of the crime.

Mass Surveillance vocabulary comprehension questions

1. Do you ever feel like Big Brother is watching you?
2. Do you consider CCTV cameras to be an invasion of your privacy or necessary in the fight against crime? Should there be more or fewer CCTV cameras in public places?
3. Should facial recognition cameras be placed in public places to help combat crime? What are some privacy concerns with this technology?
4. Should everyone's DNA and fingerprints be registered in a database? Why or why not? How might fingerprint and DNA databases be abused?
5. If you wanted to avoid eavesdropping by the government, what could you do?
6. What are some common reasons for bugging someone's phone?

3. Video: The Most Mysterious Book

You are going to watch a video by Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell called “Safe and Sorry – Terrorism & Mass Surveillance.”

Watch the video here: <https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-mass-surveillance/>

While you watch the video, answer the following questions:

Multiple choice

1. What did people demand in response to terrorist attacks?
a) *more fear* **b) more security** c) *more spying*
2. The FBI used immigration records to identify which people living in the United States?
a) Muslims b) *white supremacists* c) *criminals*
3. When did Edward Snowden leak documents that exposed the United States' domestic spying activities?
a) *2012* **b) 2013** c) *2014*
4. How many terrorist attacks has the NSA's surveillance program prevented?
a) *many* b) *all* **c) none**

Sentence completion

5. In 2016, the FBI asked **Apple** to disable the encryption of a terrorist's phone.
6. The NSA has the technology to activate the **camera** on your laptop.
7. People who want to maintain their privacy are not necessarily doing anything **wrong**.
8. Following the Paris terrorist attacks, the government expanded its anti-terrorist laws giving the police greater powers to conduct house raids and place people under house **arrest**.

Short answer

9. What were French anti-terrorism laws used against? **Climate change protests**
10. In Turkey, what were people sent to prison for thanks to anti-terrorism laws? **Criticising the government**
11. Who wins if the government restricts our freedom? **The terrorists**
12. Accessing millions of phones is not the same as searching what? **A single house**

4. Mass Surveillance Conversation Questions

1. In which countries is there a high level of state surveillance? Why do you think this is?
2. Have any government agencies been accused of abusing their powers to invade people's privacy in your country?
3. How would you feel if someone in the government had access to all your emails, phone calls, text messages and internet browsing history?
4. Apart from the government, who else might be collecting your personal data? What could they use this for?
5. Do you suspect the government uses crime and terrorism as an excuse to introduce laws so they can spy on the public to control them?
6. Could national security laws be used for unrelated things like spying on political opponents, anti-government protestors or environmental activists? Could this happen even in a democracy?
7. Do you agree with the saying, "nothing to hide, nothing to fear"?
8. Do you expect more or less mass surveillance in the future? Will we eventually be living in a 1984 world? Are we already?

5. Mass Surveillance Writing Task

Write about your opinion of mass surveillance. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- How governments observe their citizens.
- Why they want to do this.
- Whether there is too much state surveillance.

Alternative exam practice question:

Some people argue that mass surveillance is necessary in the fight against crime. Other people, however, claim that crime is just used as an excuse by government to introduce laws that allow them to spy on their own citizens. Discuss both of these views and give your own opinion.