

# Elon Musk



## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is Elon Musk famous for?
2. What is an entrepreneur?
3. Are you interested in travelling to space?  
What about living on Mars?
4. Why is failure one key to success?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. entrepreneur        | a) required, not optional   |
| ___ 2. obsolete            | b) an attempt to achieve something                                      |
| ___ 3. fascinated          | c) related to the first few years of post-secondary studies             |
| ___ 4. mandatory           | d) the settlement of many in a new place                                |
| ___ 5. undergraduate       | e) a business, company, or major project                                |
| ___ 6. enterprise          | f) a wealthy person who invests in other people's ideas or businesses   |
| ___ 7. shares              | g) the state of not having enough money to pay one's bills and debts    |
| ___ 8. potential           | h) a person with ambitious ideas who creates new products or businesses |
| ___ 9. colonization        | i) part of the profits shared by investors                              |
| ___ 10. venture capitalist | j) very interested or intrigued by something or someone                 |
| ___ 11. endeavour          | k) no longer useful or used   |
| ___ 12. bankruptcy         | l) the possibility for future success                                   |

## Reading

1. Elon Musk is an **entrepreneur** and self-made billionaire who uses his wealth to explore the future of technology. Over the years, Musk has made several predictions about our future on earth and in space. He believes that steering wheels will soon become **obsolete** and artificial intelligence (AI) will be human's greatest threat.
2. Elon Musk was born in South Africa on June 8, 1971. His father is South African and his mother is Canadian. Musk was **fascinated** by technology from an early age. At 12 years old, he coded his own video game and sold it for \$500. Five years later, he moved to Canada to avoid **mandatory** military service.
3. Musk began his **undergraduate** studies at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario. He later transferred to the University of Pennsylvania and earned degrees in economics and physics. He was accepted into Stanford University to do a PhD but dropped out after two days to start his own company.
4. Musk's first profitable **enterprise** was Zip2, an online city guide software, which he co-created with his brother Kimbal. Musk sold the company for 307 million dollars and used his profits to start X.com, the electronic payment service that later became PayPal. When eBay bought PayPal in 2002 for 1.5 billion dollars, Musk owned 11% of the **shares**.
5. Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) was Elon Musk's next big venture. Musk's fascination with transportation and the **potential** for space **colonization** inspired him to read books on how to build rockets. In 2012, SpaceX's *Dragon Capsule* became the first commercial spacecraft to dock on the International Space Station. Since **venture capitalists** are often hesitant to invest in space technology, Musk used all of his own money and resources to finance his rockets.
6. While overseeing his aerospace company, Musk also ran Tesla Motors, an electric car company. In 2006, Tesla made history when it released its Roadster, an electric car that could travel 245 miles (394 km) on a single charge. In 2018, SpaceX made headlines when it successfully sent Musk's own personal Roadster into orbit on his latest reusable rocket, *Falcon Heavy*.
7. Exploration and innovation are costly **endeavours**, and despite his accomplishments, Musk's net worth dropped 17% in a single month in 2018 and Tesla Inc. neared **bankruptcy**. Only time will tell what the future holds for this world-famous visionary who believes that today's failure is tomorrow's success.

*"If you're not failing, you're not innovating enough."*

—Elon Musk

### Thrillionaires

Visionaries like Elon Musk who use their wealth to finance technology and exploration are sometimes referred to as "thrillionaires," which is a combination of the words *thrill* and *billionaire*.

# Comprehension

## A. Timeline

Complete the timeline by adding six milestones from Elon Musk's biography. Compare your timeline with a partner.

1. Elon Musk was born in South Africa on June 8, 1971.
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Musk read books to study how to build rockets.
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Tesla Inc. got close to bankruptcy in 2018.

## B. Ask & Answer

Practise asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

1. How has Elon Musk accumulated wealth over the years?
2. What did you learn about Elon Musk's family members?
3. What is Musk's educational background?
4. Why did Musk have to use most of his own money to get SpaceX off the ground?
5. Where is Musk's own vehicle mentioned in this lesson? Why was it mentioned?
6. What is implied about Elon Musk at the end of the reading?

# Vocabulary Review

## A. Odd One Out

Circle the word that does not belong in the group.

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 1. a) mandatory<br>b) inspirational<br>c) expected | 4. a) investment<br>b) shares<br>c) merge              | 7. a) undergraduate<br>b) degree<br>c) capital                 |
| 2. a) possibility<br>b) fascinated<br>c) potential | 5. a) potential<br>b) obsolete<br>c) out of use        | 8. a) investors<br>b) venture capitalists<br>c) undergraduates |
| 3. a) endeavour<br>b) effort<br>c) entrepreneur    | 6. a) resettlement<br>b) enterprise<br>c) colonization | 9. a) bankruptcy<br>b) endeavour<br>c) debt                    |

## B. Vocabulary in Context

Look at the words below with a partner.  
 Try to remember why each word was in the reading.  
 Take turns choosing a word and explaining its role in the text.  
 Use your own words.

### Words:

- entrepreneur
- obsolete
- mandatory
- undergraduate
- shares
- colonization
- ~~venture capitalists~~
- bankruptcy

### Example:

It's difficult to convince **venture capitalists** to invest in space exploration, so Elon Musk had to use his own money to get SpaceX off the ground.

# Making Predictions

## A. Future Progressive

The future progressive (or future continuous) is often used to make future predictions. Here are some of Elon Musk's predictions.

**Form:**  
**will + be + -ing verb**

<b>Pattern A</b>	
<b>Independent Clause</b>	<b>Dependent Clause / Time Marker</b>
We <b>will be relying</b> mainly on solar power...	within 20 years.
Most Americans <b>will be using</b> electric cars...	by 2030.
Automakers <b>won't be installing</b> steering wheels...	when autonomous cars take over the roads.

<b>Pattern B</b>	
<b>Dependent Clause / Time Marker</b>	<b>Independent Clause</b>
Before 2040, ...	computers <b>will be outperforming</b> humans.
By 2060, ...	a million people <b>will be enjoying</b> life on Mars.
When robots take over Earth, ...	humans <b>will be living off</b> of a universal basic income.

# Making Predictions cont.

## B. Practice

Now write your own predictions using the future progressive tense.

<b>Pattern A</b>		
#	Independent Clause	Dependent Clause / Time Marker
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

<b>Pattern B</b>		
#	Dependent Clause / Time Marker	Independent Clause
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

## Discussion

1. Elon Musk believes steering wheels will soon become obsolete. Do you agree with this prediction? Are you looking forward to the age of autonomous vehicles? Why or why not?
2. Musk is often described as a self-made billionaire. What qualities does a person need to become so successful at a young age?
3. Elon Musk believes that building high-tech tunnels is the key to alleviating traffic in urban areas. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not?
4. Musk has always been fascinated by technology. What are you fascinated by? Can you use this interest to contribute to the world's bright future?

## Further Learning

Watch a video of Elon Musk on the odds of success from ESL Library's YouTube channel (Famous People playlist). Discuss these questions in small groups or as a class:

1. What does Elon Musk say about failure?
2. What does Elon Musk say about choosing a type of work?
3. Describe Elon Musk's work ethic.
4. What analogy does Elon Musk use to describe being the owner of a company?
5. What was your favourite piece of advice or quote from the video, and why?