

## Unit 8:

# Slacktivism



Getty Images

### A Warm-up

1. Match the activities with the photos.

a) *donating money*   b) *volunteering*   c) *canvassing*   d) *donating goods*   e) *raising awareness*



2. Have you participated in any of these activities?

3. Have you ever done something online to help people or an organization? What did you do?

## B Vocabulary

### 1. Match the words from the Academic Word List with their definitions.

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| a) awareness (n)       | _____ to show   |
| b) approximately (adv) | _____ need  |
| c) demonstrate (v)     | _____ to be more than                                   |
| d) exceed (v)          | _____ to make something legal                           |
| e) financial (adj)     | _____ give; donate                                      |
| f) contribute (v)      | _____ knowing and understanding about what is happening |
| g) legalize (v)        | _____ relating to money                                 |
| h) require (v)         | _____ about; close to; around                           |

### 2. Learn the different uses of these phrasal verbs.

1. Choose a preposition to complete a phrasal verb that means *to make something happen*:

**about**  
**on**  
**over**  
**part**

The changes to the website may **bring** \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of complaints from users.

2. Choose a preposition to complete a phrasal verb that means *to rely or depend on*:

**away**  
**on**  
**off**  
**part**

Can we **count** \_\_\_\_\_ your support in the future?

### 3. Personalization

- Do you think that university students should be required to take part in charity activities?
- Do you think the government should legalize some drugs?
- Have you done anything to contribute to a charity?
- Approximately how many foreign friends do you have?
- Who do you count on for advice in your life?

## C While Reading

### Complete the following exercises while reading the article on the next page.

- Fill in the blanks with the words from Vocabulary exercise 1.
- Find the phrasal verb *bring about* in the text.
- Find the phrasal verb *count on* in the text.
- What nouns in the text can go with the verb "draw"? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- What nouns in the text can go with the verb "raise"? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

# Helpful or Harmful?



In the summer of 2014, the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge went viral on social media. People all over the world filmed themselves pouring buckets of ice water over their heads and challenging friends to do the same. The campaign was to raise money and draw \_\_\_\_\_ to ALS, a deadly disease, but it also drew some criticism because many participants seemed more interested in social media popularity than helping others.

*Slacktivism* is a combination of the words "slacker" and "activism". The word is used to describe doing something online in support of a cause or event that does not \_\_\_\_\_ much time or effort, such as "liking" a post or sharing a news article. In the case of the Ice Bucket Challenge, it seemed that lots of social media users took the opportunity to post fun videos of themselves, but most did not donate any money to charity.

Traditional activism has been responsible for bringing about many positive changes in the world. The civil rights movement in the 1950's-60's is a good example, but social media has made it easy, maybe too easy, to \_\_\_\_\_ support for a cause. Clicking a like button or signing a petition is much easier than attending a demonstration, and retweeting a link is much cheaper than giving money to a charity. Critics say that today's "slacktivists" are lazy and not really helping anyone. There is even a possibility that slacktivism can hurt charities that count on people's generosity. Some studies have found that when people support a cause on social media, they are less likely to volunteer their time



or give \_\_\_\_\_ support for that same cause.

Of course, not everyone agrees. Other people argue that this kind of participation can raise awareness for a cause. But does awareness lead to change?

An LGBT organisation in America changed their logo colors to red and pink. They then encouraged people to change their Facebook profile pictures to this new red and pink symbol to show their support. \_\_\_\_\_ ten million users changed their profile photos and this started many discussions about same-sex marriage. We don't know if this campaign actually influenced the government's decision to \_\_\_\_\_ same-sex marriage, but it did show that many Americans supported gay rights.

And while some people still believe the Ice Bucket Challenge was mostly about narcissism, the donations it has raised \_\_\_\_\_ 100 million dollars, and many people learned about a very dangerous disease for the first time.

Like so many other issues in social media, the effectiveness of online activism depends on the efforts of users. Do you care enough about a cause to do more than "raise awareness"? Are you willing to \_\_\_\_\_ money or take part in volunteer work? Changing your Facebook profile picture or signing an online petition probably isn't going to change the world, but maybe it's a first step towards real action.

## Notes

went viral

slacker

rally

LGBT

## D Check Your Understanding

Circle true (T) or false (F) for the following statements about the article.

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. Many people who participated in the Ice Bucket Challenge did not donate any money | T / F |
| 2. Activism has never had positive effects in the past.                              | T / F |
| 3. There are different opinions on the effects of slacktivism.                       | T / F |
| 4. Slacktivism definitely influenced the decision to allow gay marriage in America.  | T / F |
| 5. The Ice Bucket Challenge didn't raise any money.                                  | T / F |

## E What Do You Think?

Which of these actions do you think can “make a difference”? Circle your answers and then ask a classmate for their answers.

Can \_\_\_ make a difference?

sharing a post	It can definitely make a difference	It might make a difference	not sure	It can't make any difference
liking someone else's post	It can definitely make a difference	It might make a difference	not sure	It can't make any difference
signing an online petition	It can definitely make a difference	It might make a difference	not sure	It can't make any difference
changing your profile picture	It can definitely make a difference	It might make a difference	not sure	It can't make any difference
donating money	It can definitely make a difference	It might make a difference	not sure	It can't make any difference
volunteering time	It can definitely make a difference	It might make a difference	not sure	It can't make any difference

### Further discussion

- Slacktivism: Is it helpful or not? Why do you think so?

## Project

Go to the website [change.org](http://change.org). Explore the website, checking out different causes that people have started petitions for. Are there any causes you are interested in? If you like, choose a cause that you are interested in and sign the petition.