

The Top 7 Phobias (Fears) People Have

Language Focus: 19 words, **Level:** Intermediate - Advanced

***Note:** Don't worry if you can't pronounce these fears, most native English speakers can't either :)

We are all afraid of something, but a few things are more widely feared than others. Let's take a look at the world's top seven **phobias**, and also some interesting unusual fears people have.

1. Arachnophobia - *fear of spiders*

Very few spiders **pose a threat** to human beings. In fact, a cat or dog is probably more of a threat to a person than your average spider. That doesn't stop people from being afraid of spiders, however, as arachnophobia is actually the most widely held fear. 48% of women and 12% of men are afraid of these **eight-legged** creatures.

2 Ophidiophobia - *fear of snakes*

Following close behind arachnophobia is ophidiophobia, which is a fear of snakes. While some **venomous** and large snakes do pose a threat to humans, your average garden snake is essentially **harmless**.

3. Acrophobia - *fear of heights*

Are you afraid of heights? If so, you're not alone. Over 10% of people are afraid of heights. Unlike many of our **primate** relatives, humans didn't evolve to live in trees, but instead on flat ground. Aerophobia, or the fear of flying, is also common.

4. Agoraphobia - *fear of open or public places*

Since humans evolved to live on the ground, most of us should love wide open spaces, right? **It turns out** that many people are actually afraid of crowded or open spaces! This is called agoraphobia, and comes in at number four on the list.

5. Cynophobia - *fear of dogs*

Dogs may be considered 'man's best friends', but **nonetheless**, many people are afraid of them. Given their sharp teeth, dogs can be a threat to humans, and especially children. Most dogs, however, would rather **play fetch** than attack a person.

6. Astraphobia- *fear of storms*

Thunder and lightning can make just about anyone jump. For people who suffer from astraphobia, however, their fear of thunder and lightning goes far deeper than the **initial** surprise. For many, it's an actual phobia. Maybe they shouldn't visit tropical countries!

7. Claustrophobia - *fear of small spaces*

Many people don't like small spaces, such as **elevators**. For some, the walls can feel like they are **closing in**, they feel like they're trapped and that they can't breathe. Some people even have nightmares that they are going to be buried alive.

Three Unique Honorable Mentions

1. Sidonglobophobia - fear of cotton balls

Believe it or not, a **good number** of people are afraid of cotton balls. Something as simple as a **q-tip** can cause a **panic attack**. Of course, many of us would probably be more afraid of having to pronounce “sidonglobophobia” than having to touch cotton balls.

2. Telephonophobia - fear of telephones

It's fun to try to say “telephonophobia” really fast. It is hard to believe in this day and age that people can be afraid of phones as nearly everyone has one. They are lucky that there are email or other forms of communication that don't involve telephones.

3. Pogonophobia - fear of beards

Beards have **made a big comeback** in recent years and are now considered very stylish. That's bad news for people who suffer from pogonophobia, which refers to a fear of **bearded** men.

Conclusion: So Many People, So Many Fears

There are **literally** hundreds of different phobias and many people are often afraid of things that are not very threatening. That might mean spiders, cotton balls, or just about anything else. I guess that is what makes each of us unique!

So how about you? What are you afraid of?

Language Focus : Vocabulary + Expressions

1. **pose a threat** - *are dangerous*
- *Animals with young children can get aggressive if they think that you **pose a threat** to their children.*
2. **eight-legged** - have eight legs
3. **Phobias** - (pl noun) an extreme or irrational fear of something
4. **Venomous** - (adj) poisonous, has venom inside which is released when they bite (talking about animals. Eg. snake)
5. **harmless** - (adj) cannot cause harm, not dangerous, not intended to cause harm
- *I told a **harmless** joke about my sister at her birthday party but she got upset. (not intended to cause harm*
6. **primate** - group of mammals which include monkeys, humans, apes etc.
7. **It turns out that** - the final result is/was
***To turn out (phrasal verb)** - to develop a particular way or to have a particular result
- *He is sad because his life didn't **turn out** as he expected.*
- *I was very nervous about my graduation speech but it **turned out** to be a lot of fun.*
8. **Nonetheless** - nevertheless, despite what has just been said or done, however
- *The old woman has only 100 euros left in her bank account. **Nonetheless**, she decided to give 70 euros to charity at Christmas.*

9. **play fetch** - a game where the owner of the dog throws a ball, stick, toy and the dogs runs to get it and bring it back to the owner.
- *Dogs get excited when they go to the park to **play fetch***
10. **Thunder and lightning** - loud noise and bright flashes of light that happen before or during a storm
- *My sister's dog is afraid of **thunder and lightning**. He hides under the bed when it starts.*
11. **Initial** - first
***Initials** - first letters of your first and last name used to sign a document.
- *The manager asked me to write my **initials** on the employment contract.*
12. **Elevators** - lift
- *We were stuck in the **elevator** for 3 hours during the storm.*
13. **closing in** - getting nearer or closer to someone
***To close in on sb** - to get closer or nearer to someone (usually someone that is trying to escape)
- *The police **closed in** on the thief who was hiding in the forest.*
14. **a good number of** - (quantifying phrase) a significant number of sth
- *He sold **a good number of** products for the company.*
15. **Q-tip** - a small stick with cotton on each end that you use to clean the inside of your ears
16. **A panic attack** - (noun) a sudden feeling of extreme fear or panic
- *Almost 47% of people have had **a panic attack** in their life.*
17. **made a big comeback** - (*Expression*) become popular or fashionable again
***To make a (big) comeback** - to return to success after failure or retirement (somebody) / to become popular or fashionable again (things e.g styles or cloths)
- *80's style clothes are **making a big comeback** in London.*
18. **Bearded** - (adj) have hair on their face (a beard)
- *Most of the men in the TV show Game of Thrones are **bearded men**.*
19. **Literally** - (adverb) used for emphasis meaning "actually". If you say sth "*literally happened*" it means you are not exaggerating and it actually happened.
- *He **literally** drank the whole bottle of whiskey himself.*

Language Focus: Exercises

Comprehension Questions: True or False ?

Say whether the following statements are true or false. If they are false, say why.

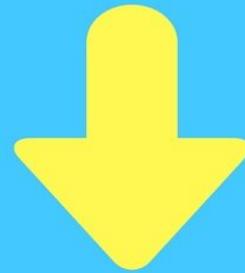
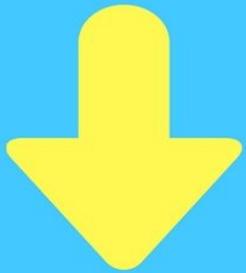
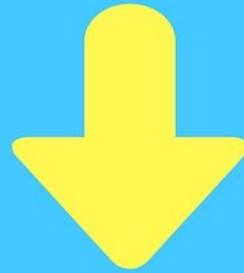
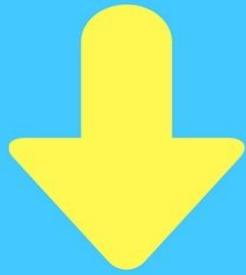
1. Most spiders are dangerous to humans.
2. Twice as many women are afraid of spiders than men.
3. Most garden snakes are not dangerous.
4. More than 10% of people are afraid of heights.
5. Beards are not very popular anymore.
6. Some people with claustrophobia have bad dreams.

Complete the sentences: EXERCISES

Complete these sentences with a **highlighted** word or phrase from the article.

1. Monkeys and apes are (*group of mammals like monkeys*)
2. Peanuts are to most people but can kill people who are allergic to them. (*not dangerous*)
3. My sister has a of snakes. Even if she sees a snake on TV she gets scared. (*irrational fear*)
4. I didn't follow the recipe when making the cake but it fine. (*the end result was..*)
5. My impression of China was that they people were very friendly. (*first*)
6. In some parts of Asia they have everyday during the summer. (*stormy weather*)
7. The couple spent all their savings on their new home. (*actually*)
8. There were people at Tom's birthday party. (*a significant number of*)
9. It was snowing heavily on the football pitch., they two football teams decided to play the match. (However, nevertheless)
10. The walls felt like they were (getting nearer or closer)
11. Lots of students get the week before their exams. (*sudden feeling of extreme fear*)
12. Advances in technology to jobs in the manufacturing industry. (*are dangerous*)
13. There are more snakes in the world than venomous spiders. (*poisonous*)
14. The singer is after taking a 5 year break from music. (*becoming popular again*)

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ANSWERS SHEET

Comprehension Questions: **True or False?**

1. FALSE- *"Very few spiders pose a threat to human beings"*
2. FALSE - 4 times as many women are afraid - 48%/12%
3. TRUE: *"your average garden snake is essentially harmless"*
4. TRUE: *"Over 10%....."*
5. FALSE: they have made a comeback
6. TRUE: *"Some people even have nightmares that they are going to be buried alive"*

Complete the sentences: **ANSWERS**

1. Monkeys and apes are **primates**
2. Peanuts are **harmless** to most people but can kill people who are allergic to them.
3. My sister has a **phobia** of snakes. Even if she sees a snake on TV she gets scared.
4. I didn't follow the recipe when making the cake but it **turned out** fine.
5. My **initial** impression of China was that they people were very friendly.
6. In some parts of Asia they have **thunder and lightning** everyday during the summer.
7. The couple **literally** spent all their savings on their new home.
8. There were **a good number of** people at Tom's birthday party
9. It was snowing heavily on the football pitch. **Nonetheless**, they two football teams decided to play the match.
10. The walls felt like they were **closing in**.
11. Lots of students get **panic attacks** the week before their exams.
12. Advances in technology **pose a threat** to jobs in the manufacturing industry.
13. There are more **venomous** snakes in the world than venomous spiders.
14. The singer is **making a comeback** after taking a 5 year break from music.