Exercise 1: Listen to a radio discussion about some recent inventions. Choose the main topic of the discussion.

a. Some new inventions can really transform our lives.

b. Some joke inventions are not useful or necessary.

c. We really need to solve more problems through new technology

Exercise 2: Listen again. Are the statements True (T) or False (F)?

1. A Hoverbrella is an umbrella that you don't need to hold.

2. The presenter thinks a Hoverbrella would be useful.

3. The Stop Snacking Sweater prevents you from using your hands.

4. The presenter believes the sweater could solve the serious problem of people over-eating.

5. The Watch Your Step Rug encourages people to remove their dirty shoes.

6. The presenter finds it hard to believe that the rug is a genuine invention.

7. Matty Benedetto is a real inventor who produces joke inventions.

8. The presenter approves of the point that Matty is making through his unnecessary inventions.

ANSWER KEY

Exercise 1:

b

Exercise 2:

1-T   2-F   3-T   4-F   5-F   6-T   7-T   8-T

Audio script

P = Presenter   F = Fabio

P: Last week's show was all about new inventions that could have a big impact on the world. So, I thought that this week, we'd spend a bit of time seeing the other side of things and take a look at some inventions that are perhaps a little less crucial. With me is Fabio Corelli, a journalist for the magazine Technology Today. Fabio, I think you've got some examples of inventions that we could perhaps do without …

F: Yes. The first one is the Hoverbrella, which is basically an umbrella which you attach to a drone – you know, one of those small flying machines a lot of people use for taking photos. The idea is that you have a remote control and use it to keep the umbrella in the air, above your head.

P: So, like a hands-free umbrella?

F: Yes.

P: And, can you imagine it being useful?

F: Well, I mean, in theory you don't have to hold the umbrella, so you have both your hands free, but in practice, you do have to hold the remote control, so you don't really gain anything.

P: Yes, and I'd guess it would be quite tricky to keep it directly above your head.

F: Absolutely!

P: Well, that gets eight out of ten from me for being a pointless invention. What's the next one?

F: The next one is the Stop Snacking Sweater. This is to tackle the problem many of us face, which is grazing on snacks while we're watching TV. It's so difficult to resist, isn't it?

P: Oh, yes, I definitely suffer from that.

F: So this invention is basically a jumper, but the sleeves are joined together at the front and your hands stay inside the garment, …

P: Ah, and you can't be tempted to open a packet of crisps or a bar of chocolate!

F: Exactly.

P: I mean, clearly there is a serious problem with people consuming junk food, but I'm not sure an invention like this is going to solve it.

F: Quite. But the final one I want to mention is even more pointless – it's the Watch Your Step Rug. This is a rug for people who can't be bothered to take off their dirty shoes when they come into the house. It's basically a rug with holes in for your feet. So, the idea is, you step in the holes in the rug, so your feet go onto the floor beneath, so the rug will never get dirty.

P: Oh, no! Please tell me this isn't serious!

F: Yes, you guessed it. In fact, none of the inventions I've talked about are intended to be used. They have all been created by Matty Benedetto, for his website, 'Unnecessary inventions'. Matty is a genuine inventor, but he designs inventions to solve problems that don't really exist. He produces working models, often using a 3-D printer. Then, he uploads photos and videos of his inventions onto his website.

P: And what's his motivation?

F: Partly because he simply loves inventing things, and partly it's to show what a waste of time it is producing and selling things we don't really need.

P: Well, I definitely agree with that, especially when there are a lot of serious problems that people should be putting their minds to solving.