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## **David Beckham to defend marriage in court**

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**20 October, 2005**

## THE ARTICLE

### **David Beckham to defend marriage in court**

Real Madrid soccer star David Beckham and his wife, former Spice Girl Victoria, are taking legal action against a British tabloid that claimed their “happy marriage” is a sham. The celebrity couple is to sue the *News of the World* newspaper and deny allegations that they are deliberately using a façade of being happily married to make their “Beckham brand” more lucrative. The newspaper alleged on September 12 last year that the Beckhams’ marriage was “on the rocks” because of supposed acts of adultery committed by David. At a pre-trial hearing, the couple’s lawyer said he had advised the Beckhams to argue that the newspaper had maliciously slandered them and that the article was pure fallacy.

The article contentiously suggested that because the Beckhams’ “substantial fortunes depend on their public perception, [they] have been cynically and hypocritically trying, for financial reasons, to convince the public that they continue to enjoy a happy marriage.” The article also claimed David had been on the edge of a nervous breakdown because of arguments with his wife. A lawyer for the newspaper, Richard Spearman, commented on the high profile marriage, asking: “Is it unhappy, rocked by rows and tensions because of David Beckham’s infidelity, or is it happy? We say unhappy.” Mr. Spearman has asked the presiding judge to demand the Beckhams hand over private effects that would be “crucial” to the defence. The Beckhams are adamant they are a “happily married couple”.

## WARM-UPS

**1. CELEBRITY MARRIAGE:** You are now married to the celebrity of your choice. Decide who your famous spouse is. Walk around the class and talk with the other “husbands and wives” about life married to a celebrity. What are the good and bad things about being married to someone famous?

**2. “ON THE ROCKS”:** Which of the following things would be enough to put a happy marriage on the rocks? Talk about them with your partner. Rank them in order of most serious. Which can you forgive? How many times?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Your spouse goes to the movies with another man / woman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your spouse sleeps with another man / woman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your spouse becomes an alcoholic and gambler.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your spouse spends too much money.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your spouse wants to spend more time with his/her mother than with you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You disagree over how to raise your children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ One of you wants children, the other doesn't
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your partner stops telling you he/she loves you

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Real Madrid / David Beckham / Spice Girls / tabloids / happy marriages / adultery / slander / substantial fortunes / nervous breakdowns / arguments / happiness*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. DAVID BECKHAM:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with David Beckham. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. TABLOID OPINIONS:** In pairs / groups, talk about what you think of these opinions on tabloids:

- a. I don't understand anyone who buys tabloids – they're rubbish.
- b. Tabloids print the news we want to hear – about celebrities and stars.
- c. There is very little news in tabloids.
- d. Editors of tabloid newspapers have no morals – they knowingly print lies.
- e. Tabloids are fun. Broadsheets are too serious.
- f. People have a right to know about the lives of the stars.
- g. It was tabloids and their paparazzi that caused the death of Princess Diana.
- h. The popularity of tabloids shows how unsophisticated a lot of people are.

**6. BECKHAM SEARCH:** Find out what other students know about David and Victoria Beckham. After you have finished, sit with your partner(s) and share and talk about what you found out.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. David Beckham is to defend the concept of marriage in court.       | T / F |
| b. Beckham and his wife will sue a British tabloid newspaper.         | T / F |
| c. The newspaper accused the Beckhams of pretending to be married.    | T / F |
| d. The newspaper article reported David was unfaithful to his wife.   | T / F |
| e. The article conscientiously suggested the Beckhams lied.           | T / F |
| f. The tabloid alleged David was on the edge of a nervous breakdown.  | T / F |
| g. The Beckhams may have to hand over private effects in the hearing. | T / F |
| h. The Beckhams are adamant they are a happily married couple.        | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| a. taking legal action | disguise       |
| b. sham                | possessions    |
| c. facade              | misconception  |
| d. maliciously         | insistent      |
| e. fallacy             | spitefully     |
| f. substantial         | suing          |
| g. hypocritically      | unfaithfulness |
| h. infidelity          | abundant       |
| i. effects             | farce          |
| j. adamant             | deceitfully    |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. taking legal action           | allegations                  |
| b. deny                          | and tensions                 |
| c. the Beckhams' marriage was    | committed by David           |
| d. acts of adultery              | on the rocks                 |
| e. the article was pure          | against a British tabloid    |
| f. substantial                   | are a happily married couple |
| g. on the edge of                | fallacy                      |
| h. rocked by rows                | judge                        |
| i. presiding                     | fortunes                     |
| j. The Beckhams are adamant they | a nervous breakdown          |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### David Beckham to defend marriage in court

Real Madrid soccer star David Beckham and his wife, \_\_\_\_\_ Spice Girl Victoria, are taking legal action against a British tabloid that claimed their "happy marriage" is a \_\_\_\_\_. The celebrity couple is to \_\_\_\_\_ the *News of the World* newspaper and \_\_\_\_\_ allegations that they are deliberately using a facade of being happily married to make their "Beckham brand" more \_\_\_\_\_. The newspaper alleged on September 12 last year that the Beckhams' marriage was "on the \_\_\_\_\_" because of supposed acts of adultery committed by David. At a pre-trial \_\_\_\_\_, the couple's lawyer said he had advised the Beckhams to argue that the newspaper had maliciously slandered them and that the article was \_\_\_\_\_ fallacy.

*deny*

*sham*

*hearing*

*lucrative*

*former*

*pure*

*sue*

*rocks*

The article \_\_\_\_\_ suggested that because the Beckhams' "substantial fortunes depend on their public \_\_\_\_\_, [they] have been cynically and hypocritically trying, for financial reasons, to \_\_\_\_\_ the public that they continue to enjoy a happy marriage." The article also claimed David had been on the \_\_\_\_\_ of a nervous breakdown because of arguments with his wife. A lawyer for the newspaper, Richard Spearman, commented on the high profile marriage, asking: "Is it unhappy, \_\_\_\_\_ by rows and tensions because of David Beckham's infidelity, or is it happy? We say unhappy." Mr. Spearman has asked the \_\_\_\_\_ judge to demand the Beckhams hand over private effects that would be "\_\_\_\_\_ to the defence. The Beckhams are \_\_\_\_\_ they are a "happily married couple".

*edge*

*perception*

*crucial*

*rocked*

*contentiously*

*adamant*

*convince*

*presiding*

## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### David Beckham to defend marriage in court

Real Madrid soccer star David Beckham and his wife, \_\_\_\_\_ Spice Girl Victoria, are taking legal action against a British \_\_\_\_\_ that claimed their "happy marriage" is a \_\_\_\_\_. The celebrity couple is to sue the *News of the World* newspaper and deny allegations that they are deliberately using a \_\_\_\_\_ of being happily married to make their "Beckham brand" more \_\_\_\_\_. The newspaper alleged on September 12 last year that the Beckhams' marriage was "on the \_\_\_\_\_" because of supposed acts of adultery committed by David. At a pre-trial hearing, the couple's lawyer said he had advised the Beckhams to argue that the newspaper had maliciously \_\_\_\_\_ them and that the article was pure \_\_\_\_\_.

The article \_\_\_\_\_ suggested that because the Beckhams' "substantial fortunes depend on their public perception, [they] have been \_\_\_\_\_ and hypocritically trying, for financial reasons, to convince the public that they continue to enjoy a happy marriage." The article also claimed David had been on the edge of a nervous \_\_\_\_\_ because of arguments with his wife. A lawyer for the newspaper, Richard Spearman, commented on the high profile marriage, asking: "Is it unhappy, \_\_\_\_\_ and tensions because of David Beckham's infidelity, or is it happy? We say unhappy." Mr. Spearman has asked the \_\_\_\_\_ judge to demand the Beckhams hand over private effects that would be "\_\_\_\_\_ to the defence. The Beckhams are \_\_\_\_\_ they are a "happily married couple".

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'legal' and 'action'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "TABLOID" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about tabloids, gossip, slander and libel.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| • taking       | • substantial |
| • sue          | • cynically   |
| • deliberately | • edge        |
| • alleged      | • rocked      |
| • rocks        | • effects     |
| • pure         | • adamant     |

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of David and Victoria Beckham?
- c. What do you think of tabloid newspapers?
- d. How would you feel if your private life was exposed in the newspapers on a daily basis?
- e. Do you think there should be tighter controls on tabloids to tell the truth more often?
- f. What do you least or most like about tabloids?
- g. Do you believe everything you read in the newspapers?
- h. What would you do if someone maliciously slandered you in public?
- i. Do you know of any couple whose relationship is on the rocks?
- j. Why are people so interested in celebrities and the gossip that surrounds them?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think it's possible that David and Victoria are presenting a facade to get more money?
- d. What problems do you think people in celebrity marriages face?
- e. Do you think reading tabloids every day is a sign of a lack of intelligence?
- f. Do you row and argue a lot?
- g. Who do you think will win this trial?
- h. What would you do if your partner was unfaithful to you?
- i. Describe the happiest married couple you know?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## **SPEAKING**

**MARRIAGE GUIDANCE:** Take turns in playing a marriage guidance counselor and an unhappy spouse. Student A (the unhappy spouse) chooses a question and asks for advice. However, Student A is never happy with the advice and tells Student B (the counselor) what is wrong with it. Student B must try again with new advice.

- a. What do I do if I think my marriage is on the rocks?
- b. Why should I put up with him/her any longer?
- c. Why does he/she irritate me every time he/she opens his/her mouth?
- d. Have I married the wrong man/woman?
- e. Why doesn't he/she ever clean the house?
- f. What do I do about his/her infidelity?
- g. How can I love a man/woman who is always so selfish?
- h. How do I convince him/her to have kids?
- i. What do I do if I think my husband/wife is not attractive?
- j. Why does he/she argue with me every time I bring up money?
- k. Why am I so afraid to talk to him/her?
- l. Why can't he/she let go of his/her mother?
- m. Why am I ten times more affectionate than he/she is?
- n. Why do we keep having the same arguments?
- o. Why can't I forgive him/her for the bad things he/she has done in the past?
- p. When I plan something, why does he/she put a damper on it every time?
- q. Why does my whole life feel like a constant "to do" list?
- r. Why do I want to date every attractive man/woman I see on the train?

Change partners and tell each other the different advice you gave and received and how that advice was taken.

Choose several of the above questions and agree on the best advice.

Repeat the above by role playing unhappy husbands and wives.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on the Beckhams. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. MARRIAGE GUIDANCE:** Create an information poster outlining your ideas for a long-lasting marriage. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all think of similar ideas?

**4. LETTER:** Write a letter to David and Victoria Beckham. Tell them what you think of this case. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. F      f. T      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| a. taking legal action | suing          |
| b. sham                | farce          |
| c. facade              | disguise       |
| d. maliciously         | spitefully     |
| e. fallacy             | misconception  |
| f. substantial         | abundant       |
| g. hypocritically      | deceitfully    |
| h. infidelity          | unfaithfulness |
| i. effects             | possessions    |
| j. adamant             | insistent      |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. taking legal action           | against a British tabloid    |
| b. deny                          | allegations                  |
| c. the Beckhams' marriage was    | on the rocks                 |
| d. acts of adultery              | committed by David           |
| e. the article was pure          | fallacy                      |
| f. substantial                   | fortunes                     |
| g. on the edge of                | a nervous breakdown          |
| h. rocked by rows                | and tensions                 |
| i. presiding                     | judge                        |
| j. The Beckhams are adamant they | are a happily married couple |

### GAP FILL:

#### David Beckham to defend marriage in court

Real Madrid soccer star David Beckham and his wife, **former** Spice Girl Victoria, are taking legal action against a British tabloid that claimed their "happy marriage" is a **sham**. The celebrity couple is to **sue** the *News of the World* newspaper and **deny** allegations that they are deliberately using a facade of being happily married to make their "Beckham brand" more **lucrative**. The newspaper alleged on September 12 last year that the Beckhams' marriage was "on the **rocks**" because of supposed acts of adultery committed by David. At a pre-trial **hearing**, the couple's lawyer said he had advised the Beckhams to argue that the newspaper had maliciously slandered them and that the article was **pure** fallacy.

The article **contentiously** suggested that because the Beckhams' "substantial fortunes depend on their public **perception**, [they] have been cynically and hypocritically trying, for financial reasons, to **convince** the public that they continue to enjoy a happy marriage." The article also claimed David had been on the **edge** of a nervous breakdown because of arguments with his wife. A lawyer for the newspaper, Richard Spearman, commented on the high profile marriage, asking: "Is it unhappy, **rocked** by rows and tensions because of David Beckham's infidelity, or is it happy? We say unhappy." Mr. Spearman has asked the **presiding** judge to demand the Beckhams hand over private effects that would be "**crucial**" to the defence. The Beckhams are **adamant** they are a "happily married couple".