

The world's richest man

Every year, Forbes magazine publishes its list of the richest people in the world. This year, it is not Bill Gates who occupies the famous number one slot. He was recently overtaken by the Mexican billionaire, Carlos Slim Helú.

1 Practise saying the following numbers aloud.

64	\$53 billion	\$53.5 billion	1,011
200	248	793	16

2 Scan the article and write in the missing numbers. Use the numbers from exercise 1.

'And the richest man in the world is....'

Move over, Bill Gates. The co-founder and famous head of Microsoft has just lost his place as the world's richest man in the Forbes list to Carlos Slim Helú of Mexico. Much is being made of the fact that Slim is the first non-American for (1)years to top the list. His estimated wealth is (2)..... Gate's wealth? (3), although Gates famously gives away a considerable amount of his money to charity.

Who is Carlos Slim Helú? He owns so many companies, over (4)....., that he has 'lost count' of exactly how many. His companies operate across a wide range of fields: the airline industry, banking, construction, mining, printing, retail and most famously, telecoms. He bought companies cheap and turned them around, killing off the competition. Despite his enormous wealth, he prefers a pen and paper to using a computer; he wears a cheap plastic watch; and his house boasts just six bedrooms, although they are said to be filled with art treasures by Renoir and Van Gogh.

According to the latest list from Forbes, there are now (5).... billionaires in the world. That's a big increase on a year ago, when (6)..... billionaires were listed. (7)..... of them live in Europe. Sixty-two of them are Russian oligarchs. The number of billionaires in China has doubled to (8).... in the last year. Some welcome the rise in the number of rich people and see it as a positive sign; others see it as negative - a return to the days where people were obsessed with greed and wealth.

Not only are we obsessed by the rich, we love lists! The Forbe's lists are certainly an established part of the annual business calendar. They list the rich, famous celebrities and the world's best companies. From the Oscar nominations to the short-list for the Booker prize, we love reading Top Fives, industry awards for the best adverts, hotels or airlines. Maybe reading lists stops us worrying about the economic gloom. As does dreaming about what we would do if we were as rich as Bill, sorry, as Carlos Slim.

3 Read the complete article. What do you learn about the world's richest man? Which other lists are mentioned?

4 Decide if the following words are nouns (N), verbs (V) or both (B).

head	list	estimate	wealth	give
charity	operate	industry	construction	increase
sign	return	prize	award	dream

5 Work in small groups to answer the questions / complete the task. Be ready to report back to the whole class.

- Do you think it is positive that the number of billionaires is increasing? Why / Why not?
- Are you familiar with any other 'business lists' e.g. are there any industry awards in your field?
- Make a list of five things you would you do / buy if you were one of the world's richest people. Use some of the following ideas and add your own: *charity / art / invest in (companies) / house / buy / travel to.*