



People all over the world love listening to music and most have their favourite songs which they listen to again and again. But how did it start? When could people first choose the music they wanted to listen to?

The 1900s: the player piano

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, pianos became very popular and rich families bought ‘player pianos’. A player piano plays music that is programmed on paper rolls with holes in them and you can also play it like a ‘normal’ piano. In the mid 1920s player pianos began to disappear – mainly because the radio (it was called the wireless in those days) got more popular.

The 1910s: the first phonographs

As early as 1877, there were phonographs to play music on and by the 1910s, many families had one. The music was on ‘records’ made of aluminium foil. People could listen to them only a few times before the foil broke. Later the music was on wax cylinders. Those could hold longer recordings (two to four minutes), and people could play them more often.

1920-1940s: Gramophones and record players

Gramophones were similar to the phonographs, but they used flat vinyl disks and not cylinders to hold the music. The disks went round, and first a steel needle, then later a small diamond, ‘took’ the music off the record. Some music specialists and disk jockeys still use vinyl records today.

The 1960s onwards: cassettes and the Walkman

In the 1960s, the cassette recorders became popular. A big step towards modern technology was the invention of the first portable cassette player, the ‘Walkman’, by the Japanese company, Sony in 1979. For the first time people could listen to their favourite music while they were travelling, doing sports, or going for walks.

You probably know the rest of the story. You know what audio CDs, MP3 and MP4 players are. But do you know what will come next?

COMPREHENSION

1. Read the article and give a title. (1pt)

.....

2. Write the main idea for the article. (1pt)

.....
.....

3. Answer the following questions. (4pts)

1. When did player pianos begin to disappear?

.....

2. What was the problem with the first record?

.....

