**McDonald’s Script**

Hi. Good morning everybody. How are you today? Before I begin, as always, I'd just like to say that if you go to my site: stevenaskew.com, you can find the script for this talk and some listening questions and sample answers, as you can for all of my other talks. And, if you want to keep listening, if you want to keep learning something in English, then don't forget to subscribe.

OK. Today, I want to talk to you about McDonald's. Now, McDonald's is a little bit of a guilty pleasure of mine. I do like McDonald's. I know a lot of people don't. A lot of people say you shouldn’t eat McDonald's, but I do actually like McDonald's. I don't eat it very often. Possibly once every two months, but when I do go I tend to overindulge. I might have a Big Mac set, a super-sized Big Mac set and some chicken nuggets and a drink and a coffee. Probably quite a lot, but, still, I don't have it very often. It is a little bit of a pleasure of mine.

Now, I want to talk to you a little bit about McDonald's today, so we're going to start with the background, of course. You may or may not know that McDonald's was started by two people called McDonald. They were brothers. Richard and Maurice McDonald. The McDonald brothers. They opened up the very first McDonald's restaurant in San Bernardino, California. Now, the first McDonald's was actually a McDonald's barbecue restaurant, and they generally sold mostly barbecued stuff. However, during the running of their restaurant, they realized that the hamburger that they were selling was more popular than anything else. They were making more of their profits from the hamburger, so they decided, of course, to ditch the barbecue and to stick with the hamburger. They introduced hamburgers, drinks and potato chips. But, after a while, they turned those potato chips to French fries, of course. Now, in the beginning, they sold hamburgers for about fifteen cents a hamburger. Pretty cheap at the time. Now, they were very popular and very famous because of a couple of things. First was of course, the price of the hamburger and the second thing was the speed at which they could deliver that hamburger. And that speed came from something they called the speedee service system. They didn't actually invent that system. It was invented by a restaurant chain called White Castle, I believe, but they did improve on it. And that speedee service system meant that few people could make a burger much faster. So, if you reduce the number of people it takes to make the burger, you can reduce the cost of the burger, and you can sell fast burgers at a low cost. Now, because they can serve these burgers quickly, because they can serve them fast, fast food, they get more people coming through. Your regular restaurant, you have people sit down. You serve a burger, you cook the burgers individually, which takes a long time, you serve the burgers, the people sit down, eat the burger and then they leave. Maybe you charge more for the burger, but you don't get many customers going through. The original McDonald's idea was you charge a very low price for the burger, you serve it very quickly and you push customers out and you get a very high turnover. And of course, if you’re selling cheap things in bulk, in the end you make more profit. Now, the McDonalds brothers had a few ideas about how to make customers move through their restaurants very very quickly. One thing they did was they didn't have any heating. I mean, maybe it wasn't that cold in California, but still, in the winter that would move people out. Another thing they had angled seating. The seats were actually angled ever so slightly forward. That does two things: firstly, it makes them not very comfortable, but secondly, it makes you hunch over your food, and if you're hunched over your food you're concentrating on your food and you eat much more quickly. Another thing they did is they had spread out seating. They didn't encourage people to sit together and talk. They made it very very unsociable in … unsociable I suppose. They wanted people to move, not sit and talk. Another thing they did, they served their drinks in cone cups. What does that do? It means you can’t put the drink down, you have to hold the drink in one hand, which makes you eat much faster. So, the brothers had these ways of making the fast food faster, of getting the customers out, of creating a very high turnover. And the very very first McDonald's mascot was based on this speedee service system. He was called Speedee. He was a hamburger with a chef's hat. Of course, the mascot we know now, the Ronald McDonald the clown, wasn’t introduced until 1965.

OK. So, the brothers have this hamburger restaurant that becomes very popular and they start to franchise. They have five or six restaurants, I think, into about the early 1950s. Now then, of course, a man called Ray Kroc comes onto the scene. Ray Kroc was a milkshake machine salesman and he found out that the McDonalds brothers were using six of his milkshake machines and he became curious. So, he went along to see why, and he became so fascinated with the idea of the system, the speedee service system, the overall philosophy of the hamburger fast food business that he thought… that he decided he wanted in on this action. So, he managed to persuade the brothers to give him the rights for nationwide expansion, and he agreed to give the brothers 0.5% of the gross profits. The brothers themselves were not overly keen on expanding. They were very keen to stay in this area, but he could see a market for this. So, he got the rights for expansion and he starts to expand. In fact, in 1958, there were 34 shops, 1959, there are 102 shops, Then, 1961, Ray Kroc can see the future of McDonald’s, so he buys the brothers out for $2.7 million. Back then 1961, $2.7 million dollars was quite a lot of money. Now, we talked about this with Starbucks a little bit. In Starbucks, Howard Schultz, he bought out the three creators of Starbucks. In this case, Ray Kroc buys out the creators of McDonald's. And we always think looking back, if only they hadn't sold, they would be multi-billionaires by now. But of course, that's incorrect thinking I suppose. Because without Howard Schultz in Starbucks, and without Ray Kroc in McDonald's, these businesses may not have become what they became. It was because of these people that they expanded to such an extent. If Ray Kroc hadn't bought McDonald's, I probably wouldn't be standing here talking to you about a chain called McDonald’s. So, that's a little bit interesting I thought.

So, Ray Kroc buys the business and he starts to expand. Now, a couple of things that help McDonald's in their expansion here is marketing and flexibility. Ray Kroc realizes very early on that advertising is a very important part of any business, so he puts a lot of his profits into advertising. And flexibility. McDonald's is always researching, always doing market research, always trying to find out what their customer wants. Because, with any business, what is most important? It's the customer of course. And this can be seen with two examples. Ray Kroc, he designed a Hawaiian style pineapple burger, and with all the tests they did, this was a huge failure. Nobody liked it. So, they cancelled it. Another idea, the fishburger. Ray Kroc hated this idea. He thought it would be insane. But, they trialed it. It was extremely successful. They brought it in and now, in any country of the world, you can buy a McDonald's filet of fish. So, what they do is they come up with an idea. They try it. If it works they keep going. If it doesn't work, they drop it. And that has made them very very popular because they have streamlined their products to appeal to the most people as possible. Another thing they do is they also focus on the details. Now, they want to make your customer experience good. They want to provide you with a cheap burger, very very quickly. So, a few examples of the way they think is … for example, they've researched how many patties you can put in a box before they get squashed down. That means they can ship more and the more they can ship, the cheaper the shipping charges become, the cheaper your burger becomes. They’ve researched whether it's better to ship the burger completely cut or partly cut. And they worked out completely cut, because if the burger is completely cut it saves a few seconds in the grilling … in the cooking process. They've patented a machine that cooks the burger on both sides at the same time. People that work in hamburger restaurants used to be called burger flippers, because once the burger is cooked on one side, they flip it over, cook the other side. But, McDonald's has a machine that you pull down and it cooks the burger on both sides at the same time. Obviously speeding up the process.

OK. So, then there are a few more developments. In 1968 the Big Mac is invented of course. Expansion continues. They move into Canada. They move into other countries. Canada in 1970ish, I think, and Japan in 1971. So, in 1988 they have 10,000 shops. 1996 they have 20,000 shops. They are expanding at the rate of five stores per day. Of course, that kind of expansion rate cannot continue, but even so, today there are, in 2017 there are 36,899 McDonald’s all around the world. In 120 countries around the world, serving, apparently, 68 million customers a day. So, McDonald's these days is everywhere. They have hit a few problems. The recession. A number of different things. Health conscious people. And the trend, the expansion, has slowed down recently. They have had to close a few shops, but it probably won't last, and I'm sure they will continue to expand.

OK. So, that's basically the background. Let’s have a look at a few more interesting things. Firstly, so why do we like McDonald's? Everywhere you go you hear people complain about them. “They’re terrible, they’re terrible, they’re terrible, they're unhealthy, you shouldn't use them.” And yet, people do. 68 million people every day do use McDonald's. So, why do we like them? Well, familiarity. In any country of the world you go to, if you like the food, if you don't like the food, McDonald's is always the same. If you go to McDonald’s in America, Italy or Japan, you will always find similar things and they will taste pretty much the same. They’re convenient. There are McDonald'ses everywhere. They are addictive. Salt, sugar, fat. These are addictive substances like nicotine in tobacco, in smoking … in cigarettes, they release dopamine in our … in our brains and they cause us to become chemically addicted to these things. Advertising. McDonald's spends $2.5 five billion dollars advertising globally. Which, actually, even though that's a lot, it is not quite as much as Coca-Cola who spend about $3 billion dollars a year, but still they're advertising, so they're always in our consciousness.

All right. Now, here's the most important part of this talk I suppose. Problems. Problems associated with McDonald's. Well, obviously, the first one is obesity. In the developed world, in the Western developed world, we have an obesity epidemic. If you look at America, if you look at the U.K., other European countries, if you look at Australia, these countries are generally becoming obese. I think about forty percent of Americans are now technically obese. And people blame this on McDonald's. People say McDonald's is making the country fat. And I'm not sure about that. I have two ways of thinking about this. The first way of course, is if you are sufficiently educated, if you know what's in a McDonald's burger, and you still go out and buy it and choose it. If you still go out and choose it, buy it and eat it, then McDonald's is not to blame. You are the one making that conscious choice, you are the one going out and buying that burger. If you become fat, if you have heart disease, it's entirely your own fault. However, there is another way of thinking and I realized this listening to Jamie Oliver's amazing TED talk. I'll put a link to that somewhere down the bottom here. And he made me aware that some people don't have that choice, either through education, or lack of money. A lot of schools don't teach about good cooking, they don't teach about nutrition, they don't teach about food. He shows a lot of children that don't even know what a vegetable is. And if you are brought up in a family where your parents and parents have only ever eaten McDonald's, you have no alternative. If you cannot afford to eat healthily, if you don't have the education to … to … to know how to eat healthily, then you have no choice. And, in that case, yes, I think McDonald's is responsible. They have a responsibility to educate these people and to make them aware of what they're eating. And, McDonald’s has started to introduce some healthier options. They have salads and things. But, their salad dressings are incredibly unhealthy. But, still, they're not doing enough to educate people, I think. Ok. That's obesity.

Globalization. We talked about this with Starbucks. Starbucks and McDonald’s are the faces of globalization. Some people say McDonaldization. That's a nice word. McDonald’s is everywhere. It's always the same. They do have regional varieties. In Japan, in India you can get … in India you can get vegetarian burgers. In Japan you can get rice burgers. There are different variations, but generally McDonald's is the same wherever you go. In fact, they’re so much the same that The Economist magazine uses the Big Mac to work out price disparity between countries. They have the Big Mac index. What that does is it looks at the price of Big Macs in a range of different countries and from that you can work out the cost of living. Right now, at the moment, the most expensive Big Mac in the world is in Switzerland, which is $6.81, and the cheapest Big Mac in the world is in India, $1.62. So, by knowing those prices you can generally know the standard of living in those countries. So, globalization.

Children. McDonald's is very conscious that if you can make children eat McDonald's, if you can addict children to McDonald's from a very early age, they will be customers for life. And, generally that is true. And they do that in a number of ways. Obviously, the Happy Meals, they have toys. Children go there for the toys. They have … their mascot is a clown. The mascot is a bright, colorful, cheerful, happy clown. The colors; bright, beautiful colors. They have play areas for children. They have family seating areas. They have movie tie ins. Any time there's a children's movie released by Disney or Pixar, any of those companies, McDonald's releases toys and products that go along with that. So, they are working very hard to get children into their restaurants because once you're a customer you're always a customer.

And the last problem I suppose, is the environmental problem. The environmental factors involved in McDonald's. McDonald’s, they are trying to recycle. After the ozone layer problem was discovered they got rid of their polystyrene boxes. They stopped using C.F.C.s, and they've moved to paper and plastics, but they're trying to recycle. They do use a lot of recycled paper every year. However, it's nowhere near enough. And, of course, there are the other environmental factors. Have you ever thought about how that hamburger comes to you? How that beef is raised? Well, your average cow, to make one hamburger, you need 2500 liters of water. You need 8m2 of rainforest to make just one hamburger. In fact, 91% of the rainforest destruction in the Amazon is because of, well, hamburgers. Not just McDonald's, but because of the beef industry. The forest is cleared to make grazing land because you can make more money grazing cattle than you can any other way from the land. So, they cut down the trees, they sell the timber, then they put cows on the land. 91% of the deforestation in the Amazon is because of beef. 15% of the emissions that are causing global warming come from livestock, come from cows. The methane, the CO2, all of that. The food. Every year … not every year, sorry … every day in the world, all the people on the world eat approximately 661 million tons of food. OK? All of the livestock in the world eat approximately 4.2 billion tons of food. If we were to get rid of half of the cows in the world, half of the livestock in the world, we could feed everybody in the world to an excellent standard. If 50% of people in the world became vegetarian, we could feed the world. We certainly could. Anyway, there's a few problems for you to think about.

Another problem which isn't really because of McDonald’s, it's because of the way of the world the moment is a ... McDonald’s is slowly moving towards automation. Right now, you can go in to McDonald's and you have an automated ordering screen, touch screen, and you can order … you can, in fact you can design your own burger. You order it, and then you go and pick it up from another window. What does that do? It eliminates the person at the desk. So, McDonald's, along with many other industries, are trying to reduce the number of workers they have. What does that do? Well, of course that reduces the price of your burger. But, of course, it puts people out of work. But, that's going to happen in the future. That's happening everywhere. That's not something we can avoid and that's something I would like to talk about in another talk. Someone once said that teachers, we are teaching students for a future where 80% of the jobs they will do haven't yet been invented. And how do we possibly plan for that? No idea. That would be an interesting talk one day.

Anyway, so that was McDonald's. I hope you enjoyed it. As always, don't forget, if you did like this video then press the like button down here, share it to your friends, other people that want to learn something in English. I would love you to tell them about this. If you want to subscribe, that buttons down here, about here, I think. Thank you. And if you have any thing you'd like me to talk about, anything you'd like me to research, just put an idea in the comments at the bottom down here and I will try to research it and talk about it. Anyway, thanks for listening. This was fun. Talk to you next time. Bye.

**McDonald’s Questions**

1. What does Steven usually have when he goes to McDonald’s?

A: A cheeseburger set, a coffee, a drink and a fishburger.

B: A chicken burger, a drink, a coffee and a Big Mac.

C: A chicken nugget set, two coffees and a cheeseburger.

D: A Big Mac set, chicken nuggets, a drink and a coffee.

2. Why did the McDonald brothers move from barbecue to only hamburgers?

A: They sold mostly potato chips but started to sell French fries.

B: They saw that most of their profits came from hamburgers.

C: They could not sell enough barbecue.

D: They knew that hamburgers would never sell well enough to be profitable.

3. What words go in this sentence? Their hamburgers were popular because they were \_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_.

A: delicious / cheap

B: big / filling

C: cheap / fast

D: fast / small

4. Which one of these is not a way the brothers created a high turnover?

A: Angled seating

B: Not enough seats

C: No heating

D: Spaced out seats

5. Why did Ray Kroc buy the brothers out?

A: He could see that the business would get bigger.

B: He knew that people would lose their desire for hamburgers.

C: He thought that $2.7 million was not a lot of money.

D: He found a way to make hamburgers more quickly.

6. Steven says, “And that has made them very very popular because they have streamlined their products.” Which of these words is closest in meaning to “streamlined”?

A: Marginalized

B: Simplified

C: Convoluted

D: Magnified

7. What is the advantage of having a machine that can grill a hamburger on both sides at the same time?

A: You can cook burgers faster.

B: You can cook burgers more thoroughly.

C: You can cook burgers for an exact amount of time.

D: You can cook burgers only in the middle.

8. In 1996, at what rate is McDonald’s expanding?

A: 3 stores a day

B: 5 stores a day

C: 10 stores a day

D: 15 stores a day

9. How many people eat McDonald’s every day?

A: 680,000

B: 6,800,000

C: 68,000,000

D: 680,000,000

10. Which of these is not a reason why we like McDonald’s?

A: Because they are full of sugar, salt and fat.

B: Because they are everywhere.

C: Because they are so colorful.

D: Because they are always in our consciousness.

11. What group of people does Steven think McDonald’s is responsible for?

A: People that use lots of vegetables.

B: People that make a conscious choice to eat McDonald’s.

C: People that learn how to cook at school.

D: People that don’t know how to eat healthily.

12. What is the Big Mac index used for?

A: To see how many Big Macs a country eats.

B: To find out the price differences between countries.

C: To try to lower the cost of hamburgers in expensive countries.

D: To help McDonald’s see where they are selling the most hamburgers.

13. Which of these is not a method that McDonald’s uses to bring children into its restaurants?

A: Play areas

B: Movie tie-ins

C: Free Happy Meals

D: A bright, colorful clown

14. Which of these would not happen if we all stopped eating meat tomorrow?

A: Fewer trees would be cut down in the Amazon rainforest.

B: Global warming emissions would decrease.

C: We would be able to feed many more people.

D: Fewer CFCs would be released.

15. Do you think McDonald’s and fast food restaurants like them should be banned?

16. Can you think of a way to fight obesity?

17. What is a health problem that is affecting your country? What can be done about it?

18. In many countries, tobacco companies are not allowed to advertise. Do you think fast food companies should be held to the same standard?

19. When people visit a foreign country, do you think it is ok to eat McDonald’s?

20. McDonald’s will soon be completely automated. We should stop this trend before it is too late.

**McDonald’s Answers**

1. D 2. B 3. C 4. B 5. A 6. B 7. A 8. B 9. C 10. C 11. D 12. B 13. C 14. D

15. McDonald’s and fast food restaurants like them should be banned? Do you agree or disagree? State your reasons.

I disagree with this statement. Fast food restaurants should not be banned because that is an unnecessary level of control. Instead of an outright ban, they should be regulated more carefully and forced to educate people.

Banning something because it is unhealthy is a step too far. If we were to ban fast food restaurant, where would we draw the line? Would we ban ice cream shops, soft drink vendors and hot dog merchants? All of these are equally unhealthy. We single McDonald’s out from the pack because it is so prevalent, but there are many other unhealthy foods out there. To ban McDonald’s is ridiculous.

However, McDonald’s and other fast food vendors should be more carefully regulated. By this I mean that they should be forced to display the ingredients, nutritional value and explain the health risks prominently. I don’t mean with a small amount of text buried away on their homepage, I mean in large font, next to the cash desk and all over the wrapping. In many countries, tobacco companies are forced to display the health risks for tobacco all over the packaging. Fast food vendors should be made to do something similar.

Secondly, McDonald’s and other fast food merchants should be made to educate people about healthy food options. Admittedly, this is primarily the government’s responsibility, but they are failing at it on many levels. If done well, this could boost McDonald’s sales and gave them an incredible public relations victory. Imagine that McDonald’s teams up with a national supermarket, or Amazon, and creates a line of healthy burgers. I mean really healthy, not fake healthy. These burgers would use all-natural ingredients and they would be easy to prepare. McDonald’s would hold classes on how to cook them, Amazon would sell the ingredients and people could have them delivered to their houses. In one sweep, more people would use McDonald’s and their public image would jump. They would be doing what the government cannot do. If the CEO of McDonald’s reads this, remember that it was my idea. Ha ha.

With regulation and positive education from McDonald’s, an outright ban would be completely unnecessary.

16. Can you think of a way to fight obesity?

Combatting the obesity epidemic is obviously not easy. It must be a four-step process. Step 1: education. Step 2: exercise programs. Step 3: changing individual thinking. Step 4: changing public thinking.

Step 1: education. As Steven says in his talk, Jamie Oliver explains this more clearly in his TED talk than I ever would be able to. However, to summarize him, we need to educate people on the dangers of obesity and eating unhealthily, and we need to educate them in the ways of good nutrition. They need nutrition and cooking classes in their schools. If you cannot teach children how to cook and eat healthily, then you have lost the battle.

Step 2: exercise program. Obviously, you need to bring exercise back into schools. You also need to educate the public on the benefits of exercise, and you need to make people want to exercise. This is the hardest part. Japan does it well. In Japan people walk, cycle and run. It is a social activity.

Step 3: changing individual thinking. You need to target procrastination and encourage delayed gratification. We have become a society of now. We can travel to another country in hours rather than weeks, we can have a package delivered in hours rather than days and we can receive a message in seconds rather than hours, days or weeks. We have lost the ability to delay gratification. We would rather watch TV than run. The pleasure of watching TV is instant. The gratification from running is not. You will lose weight and be healthier, but that will take time.

Step 4: changing public thinking. We are creating a society where it is ok to be obese. Fat shaming is frowned upon. We have plus plus sized models. We are creating the idea that it is not just ok, but it is natural to be obese. This must change.

So, if all these four steps can be targeted, the obesity epidemic will be solved. But, they won’t be, and things will get worse.

17. What is a health problem that is affecting your country? What can be done about it?

I live in Japan and there are numerous health problems affecting the country, but I would like to focus on Alzheimer’s disease. Japan has one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Currently a woman in Japan can expect to live well into her 80s and, in the next thirty years, that will rise into the mid-90s. Coupled with this is a very low birth-rate making a rapidly aging society. By 2050, 45% of the population will be over 65 and 15% will be over 80. In a country with so many elderly people, care is obviously a big issue. Most elderly people can look after themselves and, thanks to the health benefits of technology, these elderly people are going to be self-sufficient until very late in their lives. Unless they become mentally deficient. Currently, 35% of people over 85 have Alzheimer’s disease. Imagine if that figure stays the same when 15% of the population are over 85. 5% of the population of Japan, at current levels, would be 6,000,000 people with Alzheimer’s! Who is going to care for them?

There aren’t currently any cures for Alzheimer’s, but there are advances in the research every now and again. This problem will not be unique to Japan so the governments of the developed world need to see the risk and direct more money at the research departments.

18. In many countries, tobacco companies are not allowed to advertise. Do you think fast food companies should be held to the same standard?

I don’t think they should be held to the same standard. Tobacco and fast food are not comparable. Fast food may be unhealthy but, in moderation, coupled with a well-balanced diet and exercise program, the effects are minimal. Tobacco, even in moderation, is harmful to the person smoking it and all of the people in the vicinity.

19. When people visit a foreign country, do you think it is ok to eat McDonald’s?

Of course, it is ok. People can eat whatever they want, wherever they are. However, I would like to strongly advise against it. In the school I work in, we have students that go to Canada every year. A number of them tell me before they go that they will hate Canadian food. They only go for ten days and they tell me that they will not be able to survive without their national food and they are 100% certain they will hate all of the food that they get. That makes me angry. If you visit a country and don’t like the food, that is absolutely fine. Of course you will not like all of the food around the world. But you MUST try it first. I ate worms in Spain. I didn’t like them. But I ate them. If you try the food and it doesn’t agree with you, then go and get a Big Mac and I won’t say a thing. But, if you go to that country with the preconceived notion that you will not like the food, then I will not be happy.

20. McDonald’s will soon be completely automated. We should stop this trend before it is too late.

I don’t think this is a trend that is stoppable. Throughout history, technological advances have not been something you can roll back. Once we have a new technology (cars, computers, washing machines, atomic bombs) we adapt to live with it. We can never go backwards. Automation is an inevitable process and it is something we will have to learn to live with. It is inevitable for the simple reason that it is cheaper. We are always looking for cheaper products. Right now we outsource to China and Vietnam, but a robot will always be cheaper. They can work faster, more accurately and without ceasing. Plus, they don’t have unions and don’t need pensions or insurance. The questions shouldn’t be “should we stop this trend”, the question should be, “how do we live with this trend?”