

Introduction

You can listen to a recording of this article at:

<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/magazine-articles/consumer-society>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- a pre-reading vocabulary activity
- the article that you can listen to
- a comprehension activity based on the article

Before you read

Exercise 1

In the table are words from the text. Below are sentences containing these words. Can you put the words into the gaps in the sentences?

choice	choose
influenced	probably
rewarding	unemployed
wrapping	

1. The could find work more easily if we didn't work more than 6 hours per day.
2. Being able to make your own things is more than buying.
3. We should be able to environmentally friendly products.
4. Consumers enjoy having a
5. Some products have too much
6. Try not to be by advertising.
7. If you enjoy making something it is good quality.

Read the article

Consumer society

by Julie Bray

"There is enough on earth for everybody's need, but not for everyone's greed."

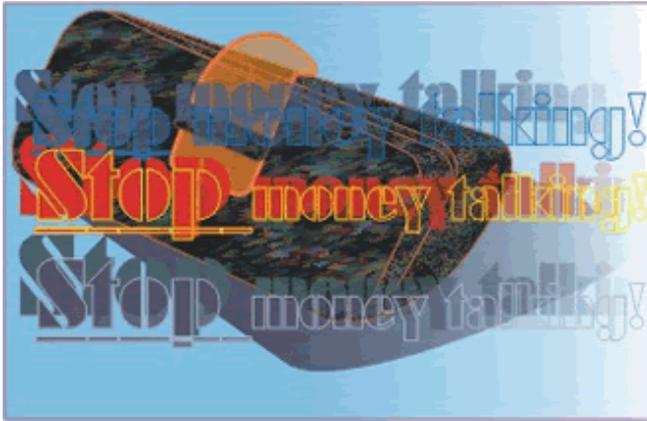
Gandhi

If we only bought things we needed, there would be enough for everybody. What do we need? What you need depends on how old you are and your way of life. Rearrange the list of things you can buy and put the things you think we most need at the top of the list.

A coat	A pair of trainers
Levi's jeans	Water
A CD player	A pair of jeans
A dental check-up	Paper
A restaurant meal	A telephone
Jewellery	Gold-coloured laces in your trainers

Food	An appointment at the hair salon
Paracetamol	Shampoo
An iPod	Beer
Toothpaste	A packet of M&Ms
Cushion covers	Table mats which match the curtains

If we don't need to buy so much, we don't need to work so much. We can take part-time jobs or reduce our working day from 8 hours to 6 hours. Some people are leaving very well-paid jobs to live a healthier life in the countryside or a more exciting life abroad. This is called 'downshifting'. Parents can spend more time with their children and the unemployed are given more opportunities to work.



If we start to respect saving the earth more than spending money, we will become 'conservers'. When we are conservers, we try to choose environmentally friendly products which are durable and last a long time. We may find growing our own vegetables or making our own clothes more rewarding than buying them.

What was the best thing you bought last week?

Could you choose from lots of different types? We like having a choice of what to buy. People who buy things are called consumers. Consumers have choices. We usually choose the colour, taste, smell or size of what we buy, but there are other choices we can make. The following questions will help you to consider these choices.

Where was it made?

If you don't like the place it was made, you might decide not to buy that particular product. A lot of people don't buy products from certain countries when they don't like the way the country is run. Was it made in a factory or on a local farm? If the product was unbelievably cheap, the people who made it might not have been paid much.

Who made it?

Do you know? If a friend made it, you probably like it more and you will want to keep it for a long time. If it was made by somebody who enjoyed making it, the quality and the design are probably better. Or does it look like it might have been assembled in a large factory?

There are children in Asia who make Santa Claus dolls for European children to play with. The children who make the toys don't celebrate Christmas because they are not Christian; they think of the dolls as work. Would it be better if the children in Europe made their own Christmas dolls?

What is it made from?

One of the places where we want to buy expensive luxuries is at the airport's duty-free shop. Next to the chocolate and cigarettes, there are beautifully shaped bottles and compact boxes full of perfumes and creams which promise to make you look and feel more beautiful. If you look at the ingredients you will find that the perfumes are mainly alcohol and the creams are mainly made of petroleum!

Almost all products are sold in packaging. Some products have too much packaging, creating more rubbish and using up resources. Some use recycled packaging, which is better for the environment.

Next time you go shopping, think about what you really need to buy. Don't deprive yourself of things you like, but decide what you should buy before you go out, so that you won't be influenced by advertisements or promotions. If it is more expensive to buy goods which don't have much packaging and things which are more durable, buy less. If you can choose to work less, decide which things you would like to make, do or grow yourself. Even though you have less money, your life will become richer!

After reading**Exercise 2**

Decide which is the best answer to each of the following questions/statements about the text.

1. Taking a job where you work less and are paid less is called:
 - a. consumerism
 - b. downshifting
 - c. conservation

2. If you are a conserver, you:
 - a. throw your things away so you have less
 - b. look after your things well and keep them for a long time
 - c. only eat vegetables you grow yourself

3. When we buy something, we can usually choose:
 - a. the size and colour
 - b. where it comes from
 - c. where it is made

4. We can tell that the people who made a product were not paid well when:
 - a. the product is not made well
 - b. they forget to put the label on
 - c. the product is unbelievably cheap

5. Most perfumes and creams are made from:
 - a. plastic
 - b. alcohol and petroleum
 - c. plants

6. If we don't use something very often we should:
 - a. put it in a safe place
 - b. buy a cheaper one
 - c. borrow one from somebody else or lend our own to others

7. The working day could be:
 - a. reduced to 6 hours
 - b. from 6-8 hours
 - c. reduced to 8 hours

Answers:**Exercise 1**

1. *unemployed*; 2. *rewarding*; 3. *choose*; 4. *choice*; 5. *wrapping*; 6. *influenced*; 7. *probably*

Exercise 2

1. *b*; 2. *b*; 3. *a*; 4. *c*; 5. *b*; 6. *c*; 7. *a*