

## Consumer Power

### Topic

Ethical shopping and consumerism

### Learning outcomes

- Use vocabulary related to shopping and consumerism
- Identify and summarise information from a short text about consumer power
- Participate in discussions about ethical shopping and give opinions

### Age and level

13-17, Adults (B2)

### Time

45-50 minutes + optional 15+ minute activity

### Materials

- Presentation OR
- Student worksheet
- Reading texts (1 copy x 3 learners)
- Quandary cards

### Introduction

If there is one thing that people from all countries have in common, it is shopping. Like it or hate it, we are all to some extent consumers, so this is a subject that learners of all ages and nationalities should be able to identify with.

Task 1 is to get learners involved in the topic and asks them to check out the labels on their clothes and study materials to see where they're from. Task 2 asks learners to think about the most important factors when shopping for different items. Task 3 is a reading task which looks at the trend of ethical shopping and consumerism. The next task gives learners some moral shopping dilemmas to discuss. Task 5 looks at how the cost of a typical pair of trainers is divided amongst all the people involved in producing and selling them.

Teachers can copy the student worksheet, reading texts and quandary cards or can use a presentation for a no printing option.

## Procedure

<p><b>Task 1: Look at your labels</b> (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a warmer to get learners thinking about where their clothes and study materials come from.</li> <li>• Refer learners to <b>slide 2</b> of the presentation or to <b>Task 1</b> in the student worksheet. If you are using the presentation, ask them to copy the table into their notebooks.</li> <li>• Ask them to have a look at the labels on their things and to fill in the table. They should note an item and where it comes from. Give them a few examples of your own clothes or things before you start.</li> <li>• After five minutes, ask the class: Have the items travelled a long way to get to your country?</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> If you have a class of excitable teenagers make clear that it's not acceptable to start stripping off their clothes! In fact, it's probably best to keep this activity to small groups that you can trust to be sensible.</p>
<p><b>Task 2: Consumer criteria</b> (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer learners to <b>slide 3</b> of the presentation or to <b>Task 2</b> in the student worksheet. If you are using the presentation, ask them to copy the table into their notebooks.</li> <li>• Before you start, complete the fourth column of the chart with an item that is popular with most of your learners, or ask them to decide. If necessary, choose one of the items and complete one column of the table as a demonstration.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Then get learners to think about the four items and decide which are the most important factors for them.</li> <li>• It isn't necessary to get feedback from the class, but you may like to ask learners to compare their tables.</li> <li>• Ask learners to say if they would consider other criteria, and to say what they are e.g. origin of the item; what reviewers say; return and cancellation policy etc.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Task 3:</b> <b>Reading</b> <b>(15-20 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell learners that they are going to read an article called 'Consumer Power'. Ask them to say what they think the article will be about, and what words they think may appear.</li> <li>• <b>Option 1 (using the Reading texts sheet):</b> Divide the class into 3 groups: A, B and C. Give all the learners in group A a copy of the text for Student A; group B a copy of the Student B; all the learners in group C a copy of the text for Student C.</li> <li>• Give the learners time to read their texts and help each other out with unknown vocabulary. They can use dictionaries if they need to, and you can walk around the room and help.</li> <li>• When they all have a good understanding of the text, re-group the learners by giving all the learners in each A, B, C group a number (1 to however many in the group).</li> <li>• Then ask all number 1s to sit together, all number 2s etc. There will be one Student A, one Student B and Student C in each newly formed group. If your class doesn't divide by 3 put the extras into groups so some will have 4 learners.</li> <li>• Ask learners to tell their new group members about their part of the text.</li> <li>• <b>Option 2 (using the presentation):</b> Show <b>slide 4</b> of the presentation. Give learners time to read the text, then tell them to share what they understand about the text in pairs. Ask a pair to say what they have learned and help with vocabulary if necessary. Repeat with <b>slide 5</b> and <b>slide 6</b>.</li> <li>• Round up the activity with some follow-up questions. Choose questions which are appropriate to the age and level of your learners.:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How important are ethics to you when you shop? Did you include it as one of your criteria in Task 2?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are there ethical labels in the stores you use? Do you buy products with ethical labels?</li> <li>○ Do you know of any websites that you can use to look for ethical products? Do you think you would use one?</li> <li>○ Can you use green energy and internet service providers where you live? Are there banks with ethical policies?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If learners are interested, they could research local websites, providers etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Task 4: Consumer quandary cards (optional)</b></p> <p><b>(15 mins +)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Write the word 'quandary' on the board. Explain to your learners that a quandary is like a dilemma or a problem.</li> <li>● Put learners into groups of three or four. Tell them that they will discuss some consumer quandaries in their groups. Either give learners to the cut-up quandary cards to discuss or show <b>slides 7-9</b> of the presentation. If you show the slides, give learners time to read and discuss each quandary.</li> <li>● Walk around the room as groups discuss and help where necessary. If you like, you could make notes of language use to review at the end of the activity or class.</li> <li>● When they have discussed the quandaries, ask the groups to share their opinions with the rest of the class.</li> <li>● If you have time, you could ask each group to write another consumer quandary on the blank card or a piece of paper. Groups add their names to the card / paper. Collect the cards / pieces of paper, then distribute them around the groups. Make sure that groups don't end up with their own quandary.</li> <li>● Groups discuss the new quandary. They could write their responses on the card / paper and return it to the original group, or they could read out the quandaries to the rest of the class and share their responses. Alternatively, groups could read out the new consumer quandaries for the whole class to discuss together.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Task 5: Clean clothes campaign</b></p> <p><b>(10 mins)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The language in this activity is for higher levels but it could be easily simplified for lower levels.</li> <li>● The information for this activity has come from an organisation called Clean Clothes Campaign: <a href="http://www.cleanclothes.org/">http://www.cleanclothes.org/</a>. The organisation aims to</li> </ul>

	<p>improve the conditions of the billions of workers in the clothing and shoe industry. Check out their website for more information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show <b>slide 10</b> of the presentation or refer learners to <b>Task 5</b> in the student worksheet.</li> <li>• Check that learners understand the items in the list. Then ask them to look at the breakdown of the cost of a pair of trainers and to guess how much is spent on each part of the process.</li> <li>• Review the <b>answers</b> with the class:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Material – €8.50</li> <li>○ Production costs - €1.50</li> <li>○ Labour cost of the worker (paying the person who makes the shoe) – €0.50!</li> <li>○ Profit subcontractor – €3</li> <li>○ Transport and tax – €5</li> <li>○ Labour cost of the retailer (paying the person who sells the shoe) – €18</li> <li>○ Publicity for the retailer – €2.50</li> <li>○ Rent of the retailer – €12</li> <li>○ Profit for the brand name – €13</li> <li>○ Research – €11</li> <li>○ Publicity for the brand name – €8</li> <li>○ VAT - €17</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In groups or as a whole class, learners discuss these questions. Encourage them to reflect on what they have learned in this lesson (e.g. they could research where they can buy ethical trainers). If they discuss in groups, invite some to share their answers with the rest of the class:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are you surprised by any of this information?</li> <li>○ Do you think the situation will change in the future? If so, how?</li> <li>○ Is there anything you can do to help improve this situation?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Homework / Extension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time banks are a very pure example of fair trade. If you don't know much about time banks, check out this site to give you a bit of background information: <a href="http://www.timebanking.org/">http://www.timebanking.org/</a></li> <li>• A time bank is an organisation that arranges for people to swap their time so that all parties benefit. For example, a teacher could offer English classes and</li> </ul>

get a 'credit' for each hour taught. She could then exchange the credits she earns to get another service from another 'time banker', such as a massage, computer tuition, a home-made cake etc. etc.

- This task introduces learners to the idea of time banks. There may well be similar schemes where you're working so ask if anyone's familiar with the idea.
- Ask these questions with the whole group. When you get to the last one make sure you give a clear and simple explanation of the concept of time banking.
  - Can you imagine a world without money?
  - How did people manage in the past without money?
  - Do you think money has become too important in our society?
  - What is more important to you, time or money?
  - What do you know about time banks?
- Then, ask the learners to think about what they could offer to a time bank. Ask them to make notes. Give some examples of what learners could offer such as helping each other with their maths homework, making bracelets, helping to mend computers, football training, making sandwiches etc. They could do this for homework.
- Then (or next lesson) ask them to speak to each other and see if they could exchange their time so that both learners benefit.

**Adapted from a lesson contributed by**

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