

Teaching activities: Buy Nothing Day

Level: B2 and above

Skills: Speaking/Use of English

Interaction: Pairs/small groups and individual

Time: 60-80'

This month's activities are based around the topic of Buy Nothing Day which takes place on the last Friday of November. The activities are suitable for B2 level learners and above. You can do the activities in order or pick the ones which you think are most suitable for your learners.

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Lead in

A. Discuss these questions

- Do you like looking for bargains in the sales? Why/why not?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of sale shopping a) in shops? b) online?
- Black Friday is a day of sales that takes place on the last Friday of November each year, the day after the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States. Have you or anyone you know bought something in a Black Friday sale? What?

Use of English Part 3

B. Activity 1: Read the text (ignoring the gaps) and choose the best title

1. The biggest sales event of the year
2. Environmental campaign promotes eco-friendly products
3. A protest against consumer culture

Buy Nothing Day started in 1992 as a reaction to Black Friday, when shops (0) _____ have sales and (1) _____.	TYPICAL / PROMOTE
On a day when shoppers are (2) _____ queueing to take advantage of sales, Buy Nothing Day protesters organise free winter coat swaps, push empty shopping trolleys around shops and cut up credit cards. The movement is a (3) _____ to increasing consumerism , which has a negative effect on the environment, and a protest against the constant need to have more things.	EAGER REACT
Although critics have said that Buy Nothing Day is (4) _____ to the economy, supporters feel it is essential in dealing with over-consumption , reducing waste and even tackling (5) _____.	HARM POOR
This day of protest has led to other initiatives such as the Buy Nothing Project where people exchange goods with others in their (6) _____. The project started as an online community where people could post requests for things they needed such as clothes, toys or furniture or post offers of (7) _____ items.	NEIGHBOUR WANT
Since then, many groups have appeared all over the world, often on social media platforms and have become an alternative place for re-using and recycling. Some of the more (8) _____ items offered for free include some rocks, broken eggshells and chicken droppings. You never know what someone might find useful!	CONVENTION



Activity 2: Match the words in bold in the text above to the definitions below.

1. Items that are made to be sold	
2. Plans or activities that are done to solve a problem or improve a situation	
3. Buying and selling things, especially when this is an important part of a society's activities	
4. Buying or using products faster than they can be replaced. This often has a negative effect on natural resources.	
5. A group of people with the same beliefs who work together to achieve something	

C. Use the word given in capitals at the end of some of the lines to form a word that fits in the gap in the same line. The first one (0) is an example:

0) TYPICALLY

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

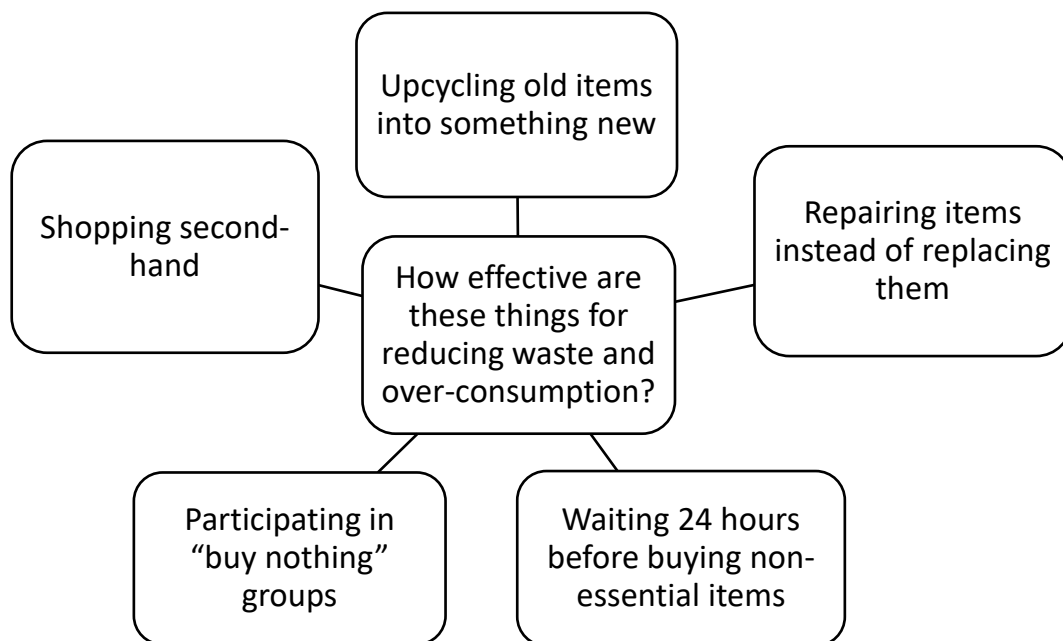
8) _____

D. Reflection: Discuss these questions

1. What did you find easy about this activity? What did you find more challenging?
2. Did you read the whole sentence first before choosing the word form? If not, in which sentences?
3. What clues in the sentences helped you to choose the word form?
4. What will you do differently next time?

Speaking Part 3

- E. Here are some ideas for things people can do to reduce waste and over-consumption. **Talk to your partner** about how effective it is for people to do these things in order to reduce waste and over-consumption.



Now decide which two ideas are most effective.

Discussion

F. Discuss with your partner

- Why do you think some people choose to participate in Buy Nothing Day?
- Some people say special offers and discounts make you more likely to buy things you don't need. Do you agree? Why/why not?
- What are some examples of unnecessary things people often buy? How could reducing unnecessary purchases impact the environment?
- The Buy Nothing Project encourages people to offer and ask for items from people in their local community instead of buying new things. What are some benefits and challenges of this kind of system?
- People say many products from clothes to furniture to electronics are not designed to last these days. What should be done about this?
- What are you planning to do on Buy Nothing Day?

Teacher's notes and answer key

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Activity	Time required	Notes	Answer key	Additional reading
A – lead-in	10'	In pairs, threes or groups (depending on class size), learners discuss the questions. Ask one or two learners to share their ideas in open class feedback. Ensure they understand what Black Friday is before reading the article.		
B (activity 1) – reading	10'	Learners read the text quickly to get the general idea and choose the most suitable title. Allow them to compare in pairs before asking for feedback	3. A protest against consumer culture	
B (activity 2) – optional vocabulary support	10'	Ask learners to match the words in bold in the text to the definitions. Clarify with examples as necessary.	1. goods 2. initiatives 3. consumerism 4. over-consumption 5. movement	



C – reading	15'	<p>This activity is similar to Part 3 of the Reading and Use of English paper. Learners need to form a word from the stem given. Remind learners that the word could be a plural or a negative. They should read the text around the gap carefully before deciding on their answer. Allow learners to compare in pairs before feedback.</p>	<p>1) PROMOTIONS 2) EAGERLY 3) REACTION 4) HARMFUL 5) POVERTY 6) NEIGHBOURHOOD 7) UNWANTED 8) UNCONVENTIONAL</p>	<p>Word formation game</p> <p>Word formation exercises and activities</p> <p>Sample Reading and Use of English Paper</p>
	5'	<p>Optional stretch: Ask fast finishers to select a couple of words or phrases from the text and write definitions for the rest of the class. After checking and clarifying answers to C, learners read out their definitions for the class to guess.</p>		
D – reflection	5-10'	<p>In pairs or small groups, learners discuss the questions. Monitor carefully and share any useful or interesting comments about strategy or ideas to help learners approach the task better next time.</p>		



E – speaking	10-20'	This task is similar to Part 3 in the Speaking test. Spend some time ensuring learners understand each of the options by eliciting examples. Option 1 Exam-style task: learners discuss the options for two minutes then have one minute to choose the two most effective options. Option 2 Discussion: in small groups learners discuss the options and try to come to a conclusion on which idea is most effective, then each group has to present to the class their choice with reasons.		Sample Speaking test video
F – speaking	10'	In pairs, learners discuss the questions. Monitor carefully and ask a few learners to share any interesting points with the class.		

You can explore further lesson plans for both Reading and Use of English Part 3 and Speaking Part 3 [on our website](#).