

## Black Friday and Buy Nothing Day

Every year in November, people look for bargains on Black Friday. But did you know that the same day is also Buy Nothing Day?

### Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

### Preparation task

Put the words in the correct group.

|              |             |            |                 |
|--------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|
| a bargain    | a consumer  | a customer | a discount      |
| a shopkeeper | a price cut | a retailer | a special offer |

| An item at a lower price | A person who buys something | A person or company that sells something |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1.                       | 1.                          | 1.                                       |
| 2.                       | 2.                          | 2.                                       |
| 3.                       |                             |  |
| 4.                       |                             |  |

## Black Friday and Buy Nothing Day

### What is Black Friday?

Black Friday is the day after the American holiday of Thanksgiving, which is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. Because it is a holiday in the United States, it has long been a popular day for consumers to start shopping for Christmas. Over the last 20 years big retailers have started to offer discounts and bargains on this day, and it has become more and more popular. Last year, people in the USA spent an estimated \$54.7 billion between Black Friday and Cyber Monday (the Monday after Thanksgiving, when people often buy more online). The idea of Black Friday has also spread around the world. For example, in 2017, people in the UK spent the equivalent of \$10.3 billion, in Germany \$7.6 billion and in France \$6.2 billion.

### Is Black Friday out of control?

Many of us love to get a bargain, but some feel that events like Black Friday encourage people to buy things that they don't really need and can't afford. Many people seem to

completely lose control of both their spending and their tempers. It is easy to find video online of customers physically fighting each other over bargains. It is also argued that Black Friday is bad for small shopkeepers, who cannot afford to offer the kinds of price cuts that the big companies can.

### What's the alternative to Black Friday?

Instead of taking the opportunity to buy as much as possible on Black Friday, you could do the opposite and buy absolutely nothing. Since 1997, Buy Nothing Day has been held on the same day as Black Friday. The rules are simple. Just don't buy anything at all for 24 hours. Many people are surprised how difficult this actually is. The aim is to make people think more about their spending and to make better decisions about what they buy and where they buy it from.

### Ethical spending

As well as spending less and not buying unnecessary items, Buy Nothing Day aims to raise awareness of how to be a more ethical consumer. For example, you can avoid buying 'fast fashion', that is, very cheap clothes that are worn a few times before being thrown away. Or you could decide not to automatically upgrade your mobile at the end of a contract. These kinds of decisions can help to protect the environment as well as saving you money.

### What else can you do on Buy Nothing Day?

Some people carry out protests at shopping centres. Others avoid the shops completely and go for a walk in nature instead. Another alternative, the Buy Nothing Coat Exchange, is an idea which is spreading. People donate winter coats throughout November and anyone who needs one can come and take one on Buy Nothing Day.

## Tasks

### Task 1

Choose the best answer.

1. Black Friday first became popular as a shopping day because
  - a. there have always been special offers on that day.
  - b. many people in the United States don't work or go to school on this day.
  - c. it is the day before Thanksgiving, an important holiday.
2. Why do some people think Black Friday is out of control?
  - a. Small shopkeepers offer discounts too.
  - b. Some people physically fight with the retailers.
  - c. People spend more than they can really afford.
3. To celebrate Buy Nothing Day, the rules are that you
  - a. don't buy anything at all.
  - b. only buy from small shopkeepers.
  - c. think carefully about what you are buying.
4. According to the text, what should an ethical consumer probably not buy?
  - a. cheap clothes
  - b. a mobile phone
  - c. a winter coat

### Task 2

Are the sentences true or false?

|   | <b>Answer</b> |       |
|---|---------------|-------|
| 1. Last year, people in the UK spent more on Black Friday than in some other countries in Europe. | True          | False |
| 2. Some small shopkeepers find Black Friday is bad for their business.                            | True          | False |
| 3. Buy Nothing Day is celebrated the day before Black Friday.                                     | True          | False |
| 4. The only reason to keep your old mobile at the end of a contract is to save money.             | True          | False |
| 5. To celebrate Buy Nothing Day, you shouldn't go near a shopping centre.                         | True          | False |
| 6. The Buy Nothing Coat Exchange is not only for people who are homeless.                         | True          | False |

### Discussion

What will you do on Black Friday and Buy Nothing Day this year? Do you agree that people buy things they don't need and can't afford?

## Answers

**Preparation task**

| <b>An item at a lower price</b>                                       | <b>A person who buys something</b> | <b>A person or company that sells something</b> |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. a bargain<br>2. a discount<br>3. a price cut<br>4. a special offer | 1. a customer<br>2. a consumer     | 1. a retailer<br>2. a shopkeeper                |

**Task 1**

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. a

**Task 2**

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. False
6. True