

UNIT 1: CONSUMERISM



Vocabulary list

- consumer
- consumer goods
- to consume
- consumerism
- consumer terrorism
- to shop for
- purchase
- goods
- retail
- retail chain
- wholesale
- irresponsibility
- to frequent
- frequent customer
- frequent traveller
- sale
- discount
- income
- buying capacity
- spending limit
- to spend below one's means
- temptation
- on average
- greed
- anxiety
- guilt
- item
- satisfaction
- contentment
- regret
- remorse
- resentment
- to downshift
- available
- in stock
- online shopping
- overpriced
- bargain
- to deal with
- best deal
- to claim
- to complain
- complaint
- to sue smb.
- to charge one dollar
- tips
- complimentary dinner
- shipment
- bill
- receipt
- recipe
- damaged goods
- faulty item
- reimbursement, refund
- compensation
- membership fees
- tax
- VAT
- home appliance
- rival, competitor
- to dump price
- flea market
- thrift store
- to be obsessed
- impact

Task 01-01

Read the text below and fill the gaps (each word may be used more than once).

Confessions of a shopaholic

(Hi, my name is Emily, and I am a Shopaholic)

I stumbled (1) _____ Sophie Kinsella's Confessions of a Shopaholic when I was 17 years old and fell (2) _____ love with the protagonist, Becky Bloomwood. The book follows Becky's antics [*foolish, outrageous, or amusing behavior*] of shopping the sales around London and rationalizing her purchases (3) _____ considering them necessities or investments. I laughed (4) _____ her attempt to save money (5) _____ cooking at home, by first buying all pots and pans, a fancy cook book, and exotic ingredients. I celebrated (6) _____ her when she finds a beautiful silk scarf on sale and makes the purchase. Being quirky and fussy, Becky is not the greatest role model; she lacks self control, is clearly delusional, and acts irresponsibly, but I saw (7) _____ her faults because I identified (8) _____ her. I understood the thrill (9) _____ being at a mall and the rush of adrenaline (10) _____ the sight of "sale".

I love shopping. In my younger years, I considered it a past time and (11) _____ the mall regularly. My (12) _____ home from school included a stop at the mall (central bus hub) and because the connecting bus came every forty-five minutes, I'd take a quick stroll around the shops until the bus (13) _____. Often, I'd (14) _____ myself going home with a new shirt or accessory.

My shopping wasn't (15) _____ to clothes, especially as my disposable income grew. In university, I (16) _____ my money on books, art and craft supplies. When I started my career and (17) _____ out of my parent's home, I bought house accessories and kitchen tools. When I (18) _____ a love for cooking, I also developed a love for grocery shopping. There is little that I don't like to (19) _____ for.

(20) _____ Becky Bloomwood, fortunately, my shopping didn't create a money issue. I spent below my means, did not acquire (21) _____, and saved much more than the (22) _____ Canadian. Nonetheless, I did have a problem. I spent too much time and money on buying things. In fact, I couldn't stop buying things. I remember while travelling in south east Asia, I was (23) _____ to pick up a scarf from at (24) _____ every country I visited. In the last country of the trip, I couldn't find a scarf I liked. Five countries and seven scarves (I bought more than one scarf in some countries) later, it got (25) _____ to find something different from what I had already purchased. (26) _____ of feeling silly, I felt panic. I had (27) _____ myself that I needed yet another scarf.

It wasn't till much (much) later, that I (28) _____, while standing in a tiny condo closet overflowing with scarves from around the world, I buy a lot of things. And for what purpose was I constantly buying things? (29) _____ for the sake of buying things. That is (30) _____ consumerism. Consumerism becomes excessive when it blurs focus by (31) _____ our dreams. We aim to drive (32) _____ cars and own the latest gadgets instead of living a life of purpose and passion. It eats at our savings, even puts some in debt, and (33) _____ us from financial freedom. It (34) _____ to desire for more – a paradoxical void that grows bigger with more consumption.

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How do we avoid the void?

Here are three ways I am trying to (35) _____ an excessive consumer lifestyle:

1. Be Aware

The key to (36) _____ is self-awareness. Exercising the ability to (37) _____ and acknowledge the issue at hand opens a door for change and leads to a path to improvement.

2. Keep an Eye on the Price

Rather than be bogged down by short-term wants, I am focusing on bigger ambitions. When I find myself wanting to make a (38) _____, I stop and take a moment to ask myself two things: what (39) _____ does the material good bring and would this purchase deter me from achieving my goals of (40) _____ freedom. When it comes down to it, I want freedom, and even \$20 saved here and there will bring me closer to it.

3. Avoid Triggers

I am easily visually stimulated, meaning, if I see something, it triggers a particular (41) _____: when I see something I want, I buy it. To (42) _____ the buying, I steer away from shops and avoid sales. This brings two (43) _____: it prevents me from making unnecessary purchases and frees up time for my hobbies and my family.

Have you ever come to the realization that you're consuming too much?

<http://www.urbandepartures.com/excessive-consumerism>

behaviour

benefits

escape

financial

identify

minimize

purchase

redemption

value

Discussion: *What does that mean to be a shopaholic? Does that bother you or your family and friends?*

Task 01-02

First, match the words and their Russian language equivalents.

anxiety	угрызения совести; раскаяние; сожаление
consumer	сожаление, огорчение
guilt	пункт, позиция (например, списка); предмет
impact	противостоять, противодействовать; противоречить
item	приобретение, покупка
jewellery	потребитель, клиент, заказчик, покупатель
purchase	отказываться (обычно путём формального заявления); отвергать, не признавать
regret	негодование, возмущение; чувство обиды
remorse	испытывать блаженство, быть на седьмом небе
resentment	драгоценности; ювелирные изделия
to be on cloud nine	воздействие; влияние
to counter	вина; чувство вины
to renounce	беспокойство, тревога, боязнь, страх

Now, read the passage about consumer's remorse. You have 45 seconds to read the passage.

Remorse

Emotional expression of personal regret is the state of remorse. This is closely related to guilt and self-directed resentment. People feel remorse when they believe their actions were wrong. Consumers' remorse is the concept of regretting a purchase after buying an item. Buyers may focus on the negative aspects of the product they have just purchased and feel regret about their actions. People in Marketing are fully aware of this concept and have tried to find ways to counter that phenomenon. It is indeed their job to convince consumers to buy a certain product, but it is also true that marketers have to make sure that the consumer is happy with the product and that they won't return it out of regret.

After reading the text get ready to listen to the lecture about consumer's remorse.

Describe consumer's remorse based on the lecture and how the car company dealt with this problem.

TOEFL materials

Task 01-03

Read the text below and answer questions 1-8.

Consumer advice on buying shoes

- 1 If you have problem with shoes you've recently bought, follow this four-step plan.
- 2 **Step 1**
- 3 Go back to the shop with proof of purchase. If you return faulty shoes at once, you have a
- 4 right to insist on a refund. It is also likely that you will get one if you change your mind
- 5 about the shoes and take them back immediately. But, if you delay or you've had some use
- 6 out of the shoes, the shop may not give you all your money back. It depends on the state of
- 7 the shoes and how long you've had them.
- 8 If you are offered a credit note, you don't have to accept it. If you accept it, you will usually
- 9 not be able to exchange it for cash later on. So, you may be left with an unwanted credit
- 10 note, if you cannot find any other shoes you want from the shop.
- 11 The shop may want to send the shoes back to head office for inspection. This is fair and
- 12 could help to sort things out. But don't be put off by the shop which claims that it's the
- 13 manufacturer's responsibility. This isn't true. It's the shop's legal duty to put things right.
- 14 **Step 2**
- 15 If you don't seem to be getting anywhere, you can get help. Free advice is available from a
- 16 Citizens Advice Bureau (get the address from your telephone book), or from a local Trading
- 17 Standards Department. Again, consult the telephone directory under County, Regional or
- 18 Borough Council. All these departments have people who can advise you about faulty goods
- 19 and what to do with them.
- 20 **Step 3**
- 21 Most shops are covered by the Footwear Code of Practice. If the shop you are dealing with
- 22 is covered, you can ask for the shoes to be sent to the Footwear Testing Centre for an
- 23 independent opinion. The shop has to agree with whatever the resulting report says. There is
- 24 a charge of £21. You pay £7 and the shop pays the rest (including postage).

25 **Step 4**

26 As a last resort, you can take your case to court. This is not as difficult as it sounds. The
27 small claims procedure for amounts up to £1,000 (£700 in Scotland) is a cheap, easy and
28 informal way of taking legal action.

29 The relevant forms are available from your nearest County Court or, in Scotland, the Sheriff
30 Court. You can get advice and leaflets from the Citizens Advice Bureau. Alternatively, some
31 bookshops sell advice packs which contain the relevant forms.

*For statements 1-8, answer **True** (if the statement agrees with the information), **False** (if the statement contradicts the information) or **Not Given** (if there is no information on this):*

1. If you return unwanted shoes straightaway, with a receipt, the shop will probably give you a refund.
2. You are advised to accept a credit note if you are offered one.
3. The factory is responsible for replacing unwanted shoes.
4. You can ask any shoe shop to send shoes to the Footwear Testing Centre.
5. Shops prefer to give a credit note rather than change shoes.
6. The customer contributed to the cost of having faulty shoes tested.
7. The procedure for making a legal claim is easier in Scotland.
8. Legal advice and forms can be bought from certain shops.

IELTS materials

Task 01-04

Listen to part of a radio program about the opening of a new local sports shop and answer questions 1-10.

*For questions 1-6, write **one word and/or a number** in each gap.*

SPORTS WORLD

- a new (1)_____ of an international sports goods company
- located in the shopping centre to the (2)_____ of Bradcaster
- has sports (3)_____ and equipment on floors 1-3
- can get you any item within (4)_____ days
- shop specialises in equipment for (5)_____
- has a special section which just sells (6)_____

*For questions 7 and 8, choose the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**.*

7. A champion athlete will be in the shop
A on Saturday morning only.
B all day Saturday.
C for the whole weekend.

8. The first person to answer 20 quiz questions correctly will win
- A gym membership.
 - B a video.
 - C a calendar.

For questions 9 and 10, choose letters, A-E.

- 9-10. Which **two** pieces of information does the speaker give about the fitness test?
- A You need to reserve a place.
 - B It is free to account holders.
 - C You get advice on how to improve your health.
 - D It takes place in a specific clinic.
 - E It is cheaper this month.

IELTS materials

Task 01-05

Read the article below about industry in Brazil. Choose the best option (A, B, C or D) to fill each gap. There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Brazil: Electronic Goods in Trouble

The home appliance and electronic goods industry is in (0) A; the good years are over.

The industry enjoyed sales growth of 30% annually during the country's (1)___ in the nineties, but sales have been (2)___ fast in the last two years, and warehouses are full of unsold stock. The industry's growth (3)___ of 10% now looks far too optimistic.

Consumers had doubled their borrowing to \$24bn in the year to May 2003. They spent much of this money on appliances, often at Brazil's three big retailers, Casas Bahia, Lojas Arapua and Ponto Frio.

Now consumers fear they have (4)___ their spending limits and are simply not buying anything that they don't need (5)___.

Thus a battle for cash buyers is (6)___, and only the most efficient retail operations will handle the inevitable fall in profit (7)___ . Arapua, which has small, specialized stores, is the company most (8)___ to survive the downturn in business. It will also (9)___ from its decision to attack the less competitive markets of the north and northeast, while Casas Bahia and Ponto Frio continue to (10)___ themselves to the major cities.

Suppliers, meanwhile, must (11)___ with warehouses that are full of goods that retailers simply don't want at the moment. Major (12)___ like refrigerators, cookers and washing machines are in (13)___, and the problem is even worse for 'brown goods' (TVs, stereos and VCRs).

Many big-name manufacturers, including Electrolux (Sweden) and Sanyo (Japan), are looking for ways to (14)___ their overheads, for example, by extending holidays and cutting shifts. Their strategy is to bring costs under control, price their goods competitively and in this way to stimulate the market. It looks as if the strategy is (15)___: prices have fallen by 12% this year and, in the case of brown goods, by 44%.

0	A difficulties	B worries	C troubles	D problems
1	A boom	B profit	C increase	D value
2	A going	B dying	C falling	D sinking
3	A guess	B estimate	C forewarning	D insight
4	A expected	B caught	C touched	D reached
5	A eagerly	B urgently	C certainly	D hopefully
6	A expanding	B arriving	C developing	D fighting
7	A amounts	B margins	C deals	D losses
8	A sure	B probable	C expected	D likely
9	A escape	B recover	C emerge	D benefit
10	A restrain	B restrict	C contain	D support
11	A correspond	B compare	C cope	D complete
12	A objects	B pieces	C substances	D items
13	A overload	B overflow	C oversupply	D overrun
14	A reduce	B remove	C adapt	D adjust
15	A happening	B working	C winning	D occurring

BEC materials

Task 01-06

You will hear a college lecturer talking to a class of business students about a supermarket chain. As you listen, for questions 1-12, complete the notes, using up to three words or a number. You will hear the recording twice.

WILLIAMS SUPERMARKET CHAIN

1. Initially, Sharon Tucker was Williams's _____.
2. The company's programme of _____ its outlets was unsuccessful.
3. Last six months: 10% increase in _____.
4. Tucker decided against policy of _____ used by rivals.
5. The high-low strategy that Tucker introduced is usually called "_____".
6. Williams calls its special offers the company's "_____".
7. The company delivers _____ to homes in the area of the stores.
8. Example of special offer: _____ for half normal price.
9. Difficult to ensure that _____ are adequate to cope with demand.
10. Success of sales strategy is due to planning and the fact that _____ is not centralised.
11. Williams is now concentrating on selling _____.
12. Williams is planning to extend _____ of stores.

BEC materials

Discussion: *Based on this conversation, explain the marketing strategies the retail chain used to increase sales and attract new customers. After that, try to remember other ways retailers make their business successful.*

Task 01-07

Read an essay about consumerism. If while reading you come across a difficult word or phrase, do not hesitate to ask your teacher for help.

Questions for discussion:

1. Based on the text, make up your own definition of "consumerism".
2. Do you agree that what the author wrote here is about you? Why? Why not?
3. Which examples of consumerism, similar to those in India, do you see in your life, in your local community, in your country?

"Consumerism"

by Anjana Aravind

*Co-Winner, High School Category, Student/Teacher Essay Contest,
"Ethics for a Connected World," 2012*

Anjana Aravind. "I'm 18 years old and I will be graduating from high school in April this year. I study at The Village International School, Kerala, India and I love painting, reading and playing the piano. I'm also a bit of a nerd when it comes to gadgets."

Essay Topic: In your opinion, what is the greatest ethical challenge or dilemma facing the planet?

Consumerism

"Out with the old and in with the new." Consumerism is one of the biggest challenges the world faces today. It may seem like a way of life to many but the consequences of this culture are innumerable. Social customs put pressure on people to keep up with the latest trends. Do what your neighbours do, buy cars, have babies, dump your garbage somewhere no one's looking, then go to church and pray for your sins. It is ingrained in our minds that what everyone thinks is right must be right, but an entire society may actually be unethical, like Nazi Germany. Consumerist societies are unethical. Fuel hikes, pollution, food shortages are all consequences of consumerist mentalities. Americans throw away around 2.5 million plastic bottles every hour and people in developing countries like mine are aping that culture without thinking about the consequences. No one cares. "Our waste is the government's problem," is the popular thinking.

I live in a small town in India. People have a notion that consumerism is a "first-world" problem but it is not. Wherever you come from, people measure wealth by how big your cars are and how many things you own. The richer you are, the more waste you generate. But in countries like mine, recycling is a term that is rarely used because there is no infrastructure for that. Environmental concerns come secondary to economic development but the means to achieve economic development require destruction of forests, crops, rivers and other assets we take for granted. The River Ganga, once famous for its purity, is now one of the most polluted rivers in the world. Around 2 billion litres of human and industrial wastes are dumped into it each day. That is the custom and it is not going to change even if the people know it is unethical behaviour because that is what their society prompts them to do. The lingering question of ethics continues.

Nobody worries about the consequences of their actions but just about the momentary satisfaction they get. Multinational corporations upgrade their products, wrap them up in more plastic and create advertisements to make the people think that they couldn't live without them. When it comes to unnecessary products, the supply-demand cycle is like riding the tiger. The average educated person could come up with several reasons how the 'use and throw' system is destroying the earth but they themselves are prey to this culture. It is not because people are unaware but because their definition of what is ethical has changed. Take my society for example—people here think it is immoral for women to wear western clothes but flaunt their wealth and status by buying all the western products they can lay their hands on and burning as much petrol as their gas guzzlers can handle. There are garbage dumps in the middle of housing colonies. Cars in all sizes stop in front of them and people haul bags full of waste into the stinking open pile. Is it ethical to dictate the right to someone else's freedom but consciously damage the environment for one's own pleasures? I think not. It is undermining our very existence.

There are news reports every day of forest fires, land mafia, toxic rivers, and children born mutated due to consumption of supposedly banned pesticides. Farmers would not be forced to use toxic pesticides if people were willing to pay as much for their food as they do for their fashion. Consumerism has made us believe that it is normal to pay less for basic necessities such as food, water and fuel than the amount we pay for materialistic objects. Our 'ethics' have turned us into magpies. We collect shiny objects and display them in our 'nests.'

People have unethical justifications for all their actions, be it terrorism, warfare, environmental destruction et cetera. "The end justifies the means" has become a mantra for many. But they think only of the immediate end and how it affects them personally and not about the effect it has on their surroundings or society. Consequentialism* has no role. As a result of this we are witnessing one of the most disastrous events that our civilization has caused – climate change. The fact that no species that ever existed on the earth for billions of years have caused as much destruction as the human race has, seems almost like a feat for those with a sense of humour. The root cause of climate change is the fact that majority of the people around us turn a blind eye to the problem they know they are causing. The gulf countries export oil, a gallon of which costs only as much as a gallon of milk. Cows can breed. Fossil fuel can't. Any Tom, Dick and Harry would know this but nobody is willing to pay more for fuel. Finding alternate fuel sources is always someone else's problem, not something people would concern themselves with.

Mahatma Gandhi once said "You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the whole ocean does not become dirty." The voyage of Plastiki** has shown us how dirty our oceans have become. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch and a similar one in the Atlantic and several smaller ones have accumulated on the ocean floors. Garbage is irrespective of countries or cultures. Where should we dump the garbage? It can be used to make reclaimed land but these sites will be more prone to natural disasters and flooding as was evident from the effect of Hurricane Sandy on Lower Manhattan. It should begin with changing people's attitudes and mindsets. Being a good citizen or having a good reputation should not just stand for being morally right and showing respect to fellow humans; it should stand for respecting our environment as well. How can a society call itself ethical and civilised when its people dump their waste in water bodies? Obviously this requires efforts from policy makers and the media. Instead of holding annual

conferences where ministers turn up in private jets for 'the sake of the environment,' why not build recycling plants, water purifying systems and technology to provide renewable energy?

If those who just preach turned their attention to practice, we would not be asking ourselves these questions. The power of interconnectedness can, and should, be used to humanity's advantage by helping to spread awareness of these issues in more parts of the world. Organisations should look at long-term benefits and not at short-term profits. Business ethics should focus on making profits sustainably. MNCs that manufacture consumer goods should try to find solutions for the disposal of their items. After all, as the world gets polluted they would have to suffer too. They could build centres where people would throw the plastic packaging or bottles and the packaging could be cleaned and reused instead of manufacturing new plastic. Let us envision a future where plastic is not a synonym for disposable.

Our way of thinking must be changed to focus more on the environmental and societal consequences of our actions rather than on instant pleasure. This has to be done gradually through ways that influence people the most like digital media and social networking. Quoting the Mahatma, "**There is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.**"

http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/0146

* *Consequentialism is a philosophic doctrine that the morality of an action is to be judged solely by its consequences.*

** *In 2010 the Plastiki, a 60-foot catamaran made of 12,500 reclaimed plastic bottles and other recycled plastic and waste products, sailed from San Francisco to Sydney, Australia, to raise awareness of plastic in the ocean. For more information, go to <http://theplastiki.com/>.*

Task 01-08

First, match the words and their Russian language equivalents.

confession	блётка на платье
confidence	блошиный рынок, барахолка
flea market	воздействие; влияние
impact	магазин поношенной одежды (бывших в употреблении вещей)
obsessed	одежда и обувь; снаряжение
outfit	охота за сокровищами
overrated	переоцененный, завышенный
sequin	помешанный (на чем-л.)
thrift store	признание; исповедь
treasure hunt	уверенность

Watch the video "Ted Talks: Wearing Nothing New". Speaker: Jessi Arrington

http://www.ted.com/talks/jessi_arrington_wearing_nothing_new

While watching, write down the main statements and get ready to present and discuss these statements.

Task 01-09

Read the article below about people who buy clothes as an investment. For each question (1-10), write one word. There is an example at the beginning, (0).

The Rag Trade

There is one kind of clothes shopper (0) whose selections never leave the bag they come in. They know exactly what they want and they go in and get it, often buying in bulk, and often with little regard for (1) this latest fashion even fits them. These are the fashion investors, and they are out to make money. Once, the only way to profit from fashion as a collectable item was to buy rare, vintage or antique garments (2) mint condition – an expensive business and still (3) which offers relatively risky returns. The modern way has collectors buying more mainstream fashion items that are in shops now, in (4) knowledge that they will appreciate considerably over just a (5) years. The returns on fashion investments are not always massive, although estimates of a four hundred per cent return are (6) uncommon. Certainly they are considerably better than the return offered by a high interest savings account and, (7) those who are experts, better than the stock market. The knowledge necessary for fashion investing means investors invariably work in the fashion industry. They often know (8) is going to catch on before the fashion press does and they know where and through whom products can be bought. They can spot what is disposable high fashion now but will (9) on to become a classic of its time in years to come, worth far more than they laid (10) for it originally.

BEC materials

Task 01-10

Get ready for discussion about consumer terrorism. One student is to assume the role of a consumer terrorist, another student should act as a shop owner concerned with the issues of consumer terrorism. Each student should make a presentation (7-10 minutes) introducing the problem and stating their arguments. Use online materials (text and video) to prepare for the presentation. Invite other students in discussion and persuade other students to take your side.

Task 01-11

Read the text below and fill in the missing subtitles.

- A. Greater ability to see through empty claims**
- B. Greater realization that this world is not just material**
- C. Less debt**
- D. Less desire to upscale lifestyle norms**
- E. Less environmental impact**
- F. Less life caring for possessions**
- G. Less need to keep up with evolving trends**
- H. Less pressure to impress with material possessions**
- I. More contentment**
- J. More generosity**

10 Reasons to Escape Excessive Consumerism

written by Joshua Becker

I am trying to live a minimalist life. But that doesn't mean I still don't own stuff.

My family of four still owns three beds, three dressers, two couches, one table with chairs, one desk, eight plates, eight bowls, eight glasses... My kids own toys and books. My wife sews. I read, play sports, and care for the house. We may be seeking to live a minimalist life, but we are still consumers. After all, to live is to consume.

But we have worked hard to escape excessive consumerism. Consumerism becomes excessive when it extends beyond what is needed. When we begin consuming more than is needed, boundaries are removed. Personal credit allows us to make purchases beyond our income-level. Advertisements subtly reshape our desires around material possessions. And the consumption culture that surrounds us begins to make excessive consumption appear natural and normal.

Excessive consumption leads to bigger houses, faster cars, trendier clothes, fancier technology, and overfilled drawers. It promises happiness, but never delivers. Instead, it results in a desire for more... a desire which is promoted by the world around us. And it slowly begins robbing us of life. It redirects our God-given passions to things that can never fulfill. It consumes our limited resources.

And it is time that we escape the vicious cycle.

It is time to take a step back and realize that excessive consumption is not delivering on its promise to provide happiness and fulfillment. Consumption is necessary, but excessive consumption is not. And life can be better lived (and more enjoyed) by intentionally rejecting it.

Consider this list of ten practical benefits of escaping excessive consumerism in your life:

1. _____

The average American owns 3.5 credit cards and \$15,799 in credit card debt... totaling consumer debt of \$2.43 trillion in the USA alone. This debt causes stress in our lives and forces us to work jobs that we don't enjoy. We have sought life in department stores and gambled our future on the empty promises of their advertisements. We have lost.

2. _____

The never-ending need to care for the things we own is draining our time and energy. Whether we are maintaining property, fixing vehicles, replacing goods, or cleaning things made of plastic, metal, or glass, our life is being emotionally and physically drained by the care of things that we don't need—and in most cases, don't enjoy either. We are far better off owning less.

3. _____

The television and the Internet has brought lifestyle envy into our lives at a level never before experienced in human history. Prior to the advent of the digital age, we were left envying the Jones' family living next to us—but at least we had a few things in common (such as living in the same neighborhood). But today's media age has caused us to envy (and expect) lifestyle norms well

beyond our incomes by promoting the lifestyles of the rich and famous as superior and enviable. Only an intentional rejection of excessive consumerism can quietly silence the desire to constantly upscale lifestyle norms.

4. _____

Our earth produces enough resources to meet all of our needs, but it does not produce enough resources to meet all of our wants. And whether you consider yourself an environmentalist or not, it is tough to argue with the fact that consuming more resources than the earth can replenish is not a healthy trend—especially when it is completely unnecessary.

5. _____

Henry David Thoreau once said, “Every generation laughs at the old fashions, but religiously follows the new.” Recently, I have been struck by the wisdom and practical applicability of that thought whether relating to fashion, decoration, or design. A culture built on consumption must produce an ever-changing target to keep its participants spending money. And our culture has nearly perfected that practice. As a result, nearly every year, a new line of fashion is released as the newest trend. And the only way to keep up is to purchase the latest fashions and trends when they are released... or remove yourself from the pursuit altogether.

6. _____

Social scientist Thorstein Veblen coined the phrase “conspicuous consumption” to describe the lavish spending on goods and services acquired mainly for the purpose of displaying income or wealth. In his 1899 book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, this term was used to describe the behavior of a limited social class. And although the behavior has been around since the beginning of time, today’s credit has allowed it to permeate nearly every social class in today’s society. As a result, no human being (in consumption cultures) is exempt from its temptation.

7. _____

Rejecting excessive consumerism always frees up energy, time, and finances. Those resources can then be brought back into alignment with our deepest heart values. When we begin rejecting the temptation to spend all of our limited resources on ourselves, our hearts are opened to the joy and fulfillment found in giving our personal resources to others. Generosity finds space in our life (and in our checkbooks) to emerge.

8. _____

Many people believe if they find (or achieve) contentment in their lives, their desire for excessive consumption will wane. But we have found the opposite to be true. We have found that the intentional rejection of excessive consumption opens the door for contentment to take root in our lives. We began pursuing minimalism as a means to realign our life around our greatest passions, not as a means to find contentment. But somehow, minimalism resulted in a far-greater contentment with life than we ever enjoyed prior.

9. _____

Fulfillment is not on sale at your local department store—neither is happiness. It never has been. And never will be. We all know this to be true. We all know that more things won’t make us

happier. It's just that we've bought into the subtle message of millions upon millions of advertisements that have told us otherwise. Intentionally stepping back for an extended period of time helps us get a broader view of their empty claims.

10._____

True life is found in the invisible things of life: love, hope, and faith. Again, we all know there are things in this world that are far more important than what we own. But if one were to research our actions, intentions, and receipts, would they reach the same conclusion? Or have we been too busy seeking happiness in all the wrong places?

Escaping excessive consumption is not an easy battle. If it were, it would be done more often... myself included. But it is a battle worth fighting because it robs us of life far more than we realize.

Excessive consumption promises happiness, but never delivers. True life must be found somewhere else.

<http://www.becomingminimalist.com/escaping-excessive-consumerism/>

Discussion: Try to find any points in the text you may disagree on. Present them and offer your counterarguments.

Task 01-12

Watch the documentary film "Surplus: Terrorized Into Being Consumers" (52 min.) and get ready for discussion.