

Buying time

Level: Intermediate +

Time: 90 minutes +

Summary: This lesson is about the amount of time we spend on household chores and DIY jobs around the house. It asks students to consider whether we could buy ourselves more time and happiness if we outsourced these tasks. In this lesson, students:

1. study an article on buying yourself extra time by outsourcing household tasks and chores;
2. match verbs to household chores and discuss which of them they (dis)like doing;
3. discuss their experience of and views on outsourcing tasks.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

Group size: Any

Note: This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 1/2018.

Warmer

Students discuss their answers to the warmer questions in small groups, then share their answers with the whole group.

Key words

Students write the key words next to the definitions, then find the words in the article to read them in context.

Key:

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. flaking; | 2. gutter | 9. lack; | 10. manual labour |
| 3. handle; | 4. overdue | 11. compromised | |
| 5. satisfaction; | 6. put off | 12. outsourcing | |
| 7. chores; | 8. DIY | 13. claw back; | 14. precious |

Understanding the article

Students choose the best answer to each question according to the information in the article. This task is very similar to comprehension tasks found in many Business English exams.

Key:

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. c | 4. b |
| 2. b | 5. c |
| 3. c | |

Verbs and tasks

Students match the verb or verbs to the tasks. Sometimes, more than one answer is possible.

Key:

- | | |
|------------------|-------|
| 1. a; d | 6. a |
| 2. k | 7. g |
| 3. i | 8. h |
| 4. b; h; j; k | 9. l |
| 5. a; c; d; e; f | 10. f |

Household chores

Students read the infographic, then discuss the questions. They should also refer back to the chores from the previous task, using the correct verbs. Two example sentences are provided below for reference.

- *I'm always happy to do the cooking but I really dislike doing the ironing.*
- *I often offer to take care of my grandchildren. That's not really a chore at all!*

Discussion

Students discuss the questions related to the article.

Related topics on onestopenglish

This set of news lessons is about how more and more couples are using apps like Trello and Wunderlist to dish out and manage tasks and chores.

www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/weekly-topical-news-lessons/2017-weekly-news-lessons-archive/31st-august-2017-how-list-making-apps-could-save-your-relationship/556221.article

The following lesson looks at vocabulary related to outsourcing, in a business rather than a household context.

www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-skills-bank/pdf-content/business-skills-bank-outsourcing-lesson-plan/155008.article

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1 Warmer

- Do you plan to do any work on, or repairs to, your house or garden this year, such as painting the walls, cutting back an overgrown tree, fixing a leaking tap, for example?
- Will you do this work yourself or pay someone else to do it? Why?

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions below. Then, find them in the article to read them in context.

chores flaking gutter handle overdue put off satisfaction

1. coming off a surface in small flat pieces _____ (para 1)
2. an open piece of pipe that is attached to the edge of a roof to carry rain water away _____ (para 1)
3. take action in order to deal with a difficult situation _____ (para 1)
4. if something is _____, it should have been done before now (para 1)
5. the feeling of pleasure that you get when you achieve or obtain something that you want _____ (para 2)
6. delay doing something, especially because you do not want to do it _____ (para 3)
7. ordinary jobs that must be done regularly _____ (para 3)

claw back compromised DIY lack manual labour outsourcing precious

8. do-it-yourself: the activity of making or repairing things for your home instead of paying someone to do them for you _____ (para 4)
9. a situation in which you do not have any, or enough, of something that you need or want _____ (para 5)
10. work involving the use of your hands _____ (para 6)
11. solved a problem or ended an argument by accepting that you cannot have everything that you want _____ (para 7)
12. an arrangement in which work is done by people from outside your company, or home, by a company, or person, that is expert in that type of work _____ (para 7)
13. get something again that you had lost such as time or power, especially gradually and with difficulty _____ (para 10)
14. valuable; not to be wasted _____ (para 10)

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by Julian Earwaker



It's a wonderful feeling when all the jobs in the house and garden are finally completed. But because time is precious, in the end, you might feel better if you pay other people to do annoying everyday tasks for you.

- 1 One of the most common New Year's resolutions is to learn a new skill or try a new hobby. But what does that mean for that long list of jobs around the house and garden? Dripping tap, flaking paint, broken loo seat, blocked gutter, overgrown hedge ... It's tempting to think that you can handle all these simple DIY jobs yourself. But in a world where time is short, research suggests that it is often better to pay someone to do those overdue tasks for you.
- 2 Scientists from Harvard Business School have found that spending money on time-saving services increases happiness and life satisfaction. The research looked at households in the US, Canada, Denmark and the Netherlands. It concluded that it is better to spend money on getting jobs done than on new material possessions. Interestingly, a study of millionaires showed that almost half spend no money on outsourcing disliked tasks.
- 3 According to the *Daily Mirror*, nine out of ten UK adults regularly put off doing chores around the house. Cleaning the oven, cleaning the loo, ironing and weeding the garden topped the "most hated" lists. One in 20 householders admit that they will never even start some of the jobs on their to-do list.
- 4 Household chores were once divided largely by gender: DIY was seen as male, while cleaning, cooking and childcare were the woman's job. Thankfully, that situation has changed but while women and men often swap chores, the list of unfinished and unpopular household jobs keeps on growing.
- 5 There are always more jobs than time to do them but a lack of DIY ability and confidence is a major factor. The growth of the rental sector has been blamed for the lack of DIY skills among the younger generation.
- 6 Writing in *The Telegraph* online, Alison Winfield-Chislett, owner of DIY club The Goodlife Centre, provides another explanation for the DIY decline: "It used to be that there were many more people in manual labour. ... In a rush to find employment, we stopped learning practical skills. And that

has led people, especially men, to become frightened that they don't know things that their parents and grandparents learned at a young age." The article reveals that 71 per cent of UK men don't even own a toolbox, let alone know how to use one.

Writing for *CafeMom.com*, Sasha Brown-Worsham has a simpler explanation for the failure to get household chores completed: "Soon after marrying my husband, it became abundantly clear that there are two types of people in this world: those who hire help and those who don't." After "huge fights", the writer and her husband finally compromised by outsourcing a number of their most disliked jobs. Number one on their list? Cleaning.

For those of you challenged by time or the lack of a toolbox or motivation, here's the good news: help is at hand. Outsourcing time-consuming household jobs has never been easier. Whether it's cleaning, online shopping, gardening or pest control, there are an increasing number of services available at times and prices to suit modern-day working and home life.

Forbes links the growth of these services directly to the success of on-demand marketplaces like eBay, as well as transport innovators such as Uber. Household service models following the example of these giants meet three key customer demands: flexibility, personalization and responsiveness. Technology provides the means by which to find the right service and to place your order.

"Living in the digital age allows ... access to a multitude of services instantaneously, helping us to claw back some precious time and trust our own decisions," says Nick Heath of Make It Cheaper, a cost-saving service for businesses. While the organization's research surprisingly suggests that women are more likely than men to clean their car, research by independent car supplier OSV shows that three quarters of women and a third of men have never hand-washed their car, preferring to take it to a car wash. As the saying goes, the job that takes the longest is the one you haven't yet started. So perhaps when looking at household chores and DIY, it's really just a question of being realistic. If a job still hasn't been started after six months, it's clearly time to get some expert help. And if you're still thinking about New Year's resolutions, why not include one to buy yourself some time?

JULIAN EARWAKER is a freelance journalist, prison writer-in-residence and book author.

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3 Understanding the article

Choose the best answer to each question according to the information in the article.

1. If you pay people to do jobs in your house and garden, you will ...
 - a. ... support your local economy.
 - b. ... lose the satisfaction of doing it yourself.
 - c. ... be happier and more satisfied with your life.

2. Ten per cent of adults in the UK ...
 - a. ... pay someone to clean their house.
 - b. ... delay doing household chores.
 - c. ... never even start the jobs on their to-do lists.

3. The reason why we do not have many DIY skills is that ...
 - a. ... we have no time to earn them.
 - b. ... most of us do not own a toolbox.
 - c. ... we have stopped learning how to do manual work.

4. Outsourcing household tasks has become easier because ...
 - a. ... more and more manual workers do not have full-time employment.
 - b. ... modern technology allows us to find the right services to suit our needs.
 - c. ... people advertise their household services on eBay.

5. If you haven't started a job on your to-do list within six months, ...
 - a. ... you never will.
 - b. ... you should leave it till the following new year.
 - c. ... you should pay someone else to do it.

4 Verbs and tasks

Match the verb(s) to the tasks. More than one answer may be possible.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. clean | a. the car |
| 2. cook | b. the ironing |
| 3. cut | c. the dripping tap |
| 4. do | d. the oven |
| 5. fix | e. the broken loo seat |
| 6. wash | f. the gutter |
| 7. weed | g. the garden |
| 8. hang out | h. the washing |
| 9. take care of | i. the overgrown hedge |
| 10. unblock | j. the cleaning |
| | k. the dinner |
| | l. the children |

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5 Household chores

THE TASKS WE HATE

Britain's most disliked household chores

51% decorating

47% cleaning

42% DIY

41% gardening

40% ironing

Source: Aol.com; Make It Cheaper (www.makeitcheaper.com)

Talk about these and the other chores from task 4.

- Which chores do you like doing?
- Which do you most dislike?

6 Discussion

- Would you ever pay, or have you ever paid, anyone to do your household chores, carry out repairs, do your gardening, etc? Why? Why not?
- Which chores or tasks do you always do yourself?
- Do you own a toolbox? When did you last use it and what for?
- Do you think people in previous generations were better at DIY?
- What chores or tasks could you outsource in the future to buy yourself more time?