



## Buy Nothing Day Assembly

### Summary information

**Age range:** 8-16

**Curriculum links:** Citizenship

**Time needed:** 15-20 minutes

**Group size:** Year group or whole school

**Setting:** School assembly hall

### This assembly will help your students to:

- understand that some of the pressures to buy promote consumption that is non-sustainable;
- know that non-sustainable consumption is damaging to the environment and sometimes to the welfare of people who help to produce or harvest the goods that we buy;
- know that they can make a huge positive impact by joining with others to take simple actions to buy less and buy differently

### Preparation

Teachers will need to plan ahead to include Buy Nothing Day in the school calendar. Instead of just focusing on pupils buying nothing for one day, use the day to encourage them to think carefully before they buy in their everyday lives and so live more sustainably.

### Resources needed:

- Access to background information in the Consumption topic box and [www.ibuydifferent.org](http://www.ibuydifferent.org). Flipchart and pen or interactive white board



## Procedure

- Tell pupils we are going to look at the impact we make when we shop.
- Ask pupils why they think they buy things. Obviously we buy some things because we really need them, such as food and clothes. But do we sometimes buy things for other reasons? Here are some ideas they may have:
  - All their friends have them. Or maybe they buy some things because they don't want to look like everyone else;
  - They think the item makes them look more attractive or cooler;
  - They want something new to wear this spring/autumn/Christmas that is different to what they wore last year;
  - Adverts on TV and in magazines make them want to buy things.
  - They enjoy shopping. Looking round the shops and buying things with friends is fun.
  - Fashion trends make them want to buy the latest fashions.
- Write brief notes summarising their reasons for buying things on a flipchart or interactive white board.
- Tell pupils the problem is that we buy too many things. If everyone consumed as much as the average person in the UK, we would need three planets to support us. Inform older pupils that as much as 80% of the world's resources are used by 30% of the population that live in the rich countries like the UK.
- Today, more than ever before each of us has to think about what we can do to protect the Earth's natural resources and tackle threats to the environment. Unless we do so we will use up the Earth's resources so there will not be enough for future generations. We need to live using only the resources that only one planet can provide, not three. If we do this we will be living sustainably.
- Problems like this may seem so big that they are overwhelming and we can't do anything about them. But if many of us take simple actions by buying less and buying differently we can make a huge difference. This is already happening with some products. For example as more people want to buy environmentally friendly products suppliers have had to produce more of these to meet the demand.



- Nowadays children and young people are shoppers who have a great deal of influence.
- Tell older pupils that according to a recent survey the spending power of children and young people in the UK is £70 million a year. Young people can also have a huge influence on their parents' spending by persuading them to buy things!

### Reflection

- Tell pupils when we go shopping that by thinking carefully about how much we buy and what we buy we can help to reduce the amount of resources that are consumed. In this way we can begin to live more sustainably. Here are some questions to think about before buying something. You may wish to cut down the list for younger pupils.
  - Do you really need what you are buying?
  - If you do need one, could you borrow, rent or share one, instead of buying a new one?
  - Could you buy one secondhand?
  - Could you recycle materials and make one yourself? Could you make your own Christmas cards, for instance?
  - Where has it come from? Has it travelled a long way to reach the shop or could you have found one locally? Buying locally produced goods means savings in cost, resources used and pollution caused by the journey.
  - What has been used to make it? Is it harmful to the environment?
  - Do the people that make what you want to buy get paid a fair wage?
- Now brainstorm with pupils some ideas on how they can change the way they choose what they buy. When shopping on Buy Nothing Day ask pupils to try putting these ideas into practice! If they continue to take these simple actions in their everyday lives in the future they will be living in a more sustainable way. When added to the actions of many others, they can make a huge impact to help the environment.
  - Only buy what you really need.
  - Buy recycled or secondhand products whenever you can.
  - Buy locally produced goods when they are available and encourage your family to do the same.
  - Avoid buying goods with lots of packaging. Encourage your family to buy loose, not pre-packaged fruit and vegetables.



- Choose products in containers that you can re-use where possible.
- Try to avoid plastic bags.
- Try to persuade your family to buy organic food as these are produced in ways that are less harmful to the environment. Buying locally produced organic food is much more environmentally friendly than buying imports.



- Try to persuade your family to buy fruit and vegetables that are in season.
- Buy goods with the FAIRTRADE mark when you can. This guarantees that farmers receive a fair price for their products.
- Encourage your family to buy energy efficient light bulbs and other energy efficient goods.
- Write down summaries of the above suggestions on a flipchart or interactive white board.

You may wish to cut down on this list for some pupils to focus on actions they can do themselves rather than their encouraging action by their parents.