

## My year of no spending

### Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

Put these items in order from 1 (the thing you spend least money on each month) to 5 (the thing you spend most money on each month).

- food
- clothes
- technology – phone, computer etc
- going out
- travel

#### 2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers will help you.

groceries

mindless

consumerism

challenge

essentials

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is something that requires a lot of determination to achieve, especially something you have never done before. (para 1)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ are basic things that are needed for life. (para 1)
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ activity does not need any thought or intelligence. (para 1)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the idea that it is good for a country if people buy and use a lot of goods and services. (para 2)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ are food and other goods for the home that you buy regularly. (para 3)

retail therapy

empty-handed

toiletries

adventurous

splurge

6. \_\_\_\_\_ are things such as soap, deodorant and toothpaste that you use to keep yourself clean. (para 4)
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is the activity of shopping in order to make yourself feel happier. (para 5)
8. If you go somewhere \_\_\_\_\_, you don't take a present. (para 7)
9. If you are \_\_\_\_\_, you are keen to try new or exciting things. (para 8)
10. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a situation when you spend a lot of money, especially on something special as a way of making yourself feel good. (para 9)

#### 3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. The author reduced her weekly shopping bill. How much did she spend each week?
2. What did she do on holiday?
3. She says she had bad times. What did she miss?
4. What is her job?
5. When did she start the challenge?
6. Where does she live?

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#### My year of no spending is over – here's how I got through it

Michelle McGagh

26 November, 2016

- 1 Just over 12 months ago, I gave myself a challenge: to stop buying everything except the essentials for a whole year. I started on Friday, 27 November, 2015. It hasn't always been easy but a year later, I am richer and wiser. I have also realized just how much money I've wasted in the pub, in restaurants and on mindless shopping.
- 2 I am a personal finance journalist so people thought I was good with money but I wasn't. I thought that, because I earned a good salary and didn't have any debts, I didn't need to worry about how much money I was spending. I was stuck in a cycle of consumerism – earning money to buy stuff I didn't really need, which wasn't making me happy.
- 3 The aim of giving up spending for a year was to live cheaply and change my spending habits. I could continue to pay my bills, including electricity, broadband, phone bill, life insurance, money to help my family and basic groceries.
- 4 I've learned to shop for food in a better way than I did before – I have planned meals and improved my awful cooking skills a little. My husband agreed to help with the grocery part of the challenge and we reduced our weekly shop (which covered three meals each a day, toiletries and house cleaning products) to £31.60 a week.
- 5 I'm not going to say it was easy, especially in the first few months when I tried to live my old life without money and found it wasn't working. There were plenty of times I wanted to stop the challenge and get some retail therapy, buy a drink in the pub or even just buy a bus ticket instead of getting on my bike again.
- 6 But I realized I just had to find new ways to have fun that didn't include spending money and going to the pub. Living in London, I have a lot of free cultural activities near my home and I've been to more art exhibitions this year than ever before. I even had a free holiday, cycling along the coast and camping on beaches. It's something I'd never done before and now, I can't wait to go again next year.
- 7 There were bad times, such as when I missed concerts and new films. And I've not been able to join friends when they have gone out for a nice meal. There have also been some difficult moments when I've gone to a friend's house for dinner empty-handed because I couldn't buy a bottle of wine as a thank you. I did a lot of washing up at my friends' houses this year as a way of saying "thanks for feeding me".
- 8 Despite the difficult moments and missing concerts and films, this year has encouraged me to try new things. The best thing about the challenge is that I've been willing to say "yes" more and that I've become more adventurous. I have also begun to realize that consumerism keeps us chained to our desks, working to earn money to spend on stuff we think will make our lives better. And when the stuff doesn't make us happy, we go back to work to earn more money to buy something else.
- 9 Many people have said to me, "I bet you can't wait to get down the shops and have a splurge" but I'm not interested in going shopping. I have one more day of no spending and, after that, there are just two things I will buy this weekend: drinks for my friends and family to say thanks for their help and a flight to see my grandad in Ireland. A year of no spending has taught me what things I really need and it really isn't that much.

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#### 4 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings and endings to make statements about the text.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. She found the first few months of the challenge difficult because ... | a. ... she only plans to buy two things.                                       |
| 2. In the cycle of consumerism, people ...                               | b. ... learned to shop for food in a better way.                               |
| 3. Because of the challenge, she ...                                     | c. ... to fly to Ireland to visit her grandad.                                 |
| 4. She went to dinner at a friend's house empty-handed ...               | d. ... she tried to live her old life without money and it didn't work.        |
| 5. When the challenge is over, ...                                       | e. ... because she couldn't buy a bottle of wine as a thank you.               |
| 6. She wants ...   | f. ... earn money to buy stuff they don't need, which doesn't make them happy. |

#### 5 Chunks

Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

- hasn't easy it been always
- spending giving year for up a
- few in the months first
- the moments difficult despite
- money go work back to more to earn
- shopping not in going interested

#### 6 Phrases with prepositions

Complete the phrases from the text using prepositions.

- good \_\_\_\_\_ money
- cycling \_\_\_\_\_ the coast
- chained \_\_\_\_\_ our desks
- interested \_\_\_\_\_ going shopping
- thanks \_\_\_\_\_ their help
- spend \_\_\_\_\_ stuff

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### 7 Word stress

Put these words from the text into two groups according to the word stress.

challenge  
include

finance  
mindless

improve  
reduce

concert  
instead

retail  
product

except  
despite

A o o	B o o

### 8 Discussion

- Would you be able to give up shopping for a year? Why? Why not?