

A new approach to retail sales and ecommerce

Level: Intermediate to upper intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Business topics: Online sales, testing the market, managing growth, fulfilling orders

Business language focus: Factors associated with retail and sales, such as brand, order fulfilment and ecommerce

Activities: In this lesson, students will:

- read a business article and look at the language necessary to understand and talk about it;
- look at business-specific words and expressions and apply them to their own personal work experience;
- discuss aspects of the article in greater depth;
- research and discuss setting up a new business and selecting a product or products to sell.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

Group size: All of the tasks can be completed in pairs or groups, so that as much communication as possible takes place in the class. However, this lesson plan can also be used in a one-to-one teaching situation.

This lesson is based on an authentic article, republished here with its full, original text.

The article discusses changing approaches to retail sales and the increasing role of ecommerce.

1. Warmer

Students rank the shopping methods according to their own shopping habits. In a group class, they can then compare their ranking with other students and discuss why they like/dislike each method.

2. Key words and expressions

Students search for words and expressions in the text and write them next to the definitions while noticing how the words are used in context. The words can be divided up amongst students so that they search for six words each and then share their answers with students who search for the other six words.

Key:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. <i>retailer</i> | 7. <i>lead time</i> |
| 2. <i>consumer</i> | 8. <i>turnover</i> |
| 3. <i>bricks-and-mortar</i> | 9. <i>warehouse</i> |
| 4. <i>ecommerce</i> | 10. <i>vibrant</i> |
| 5. <i>revenue</i> | 11. <i>inventory</i> |
| 6. <i>niche</i> | 12. <i>minimised</i> |

3. Understanding the article

Students read the statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the article. Then they should rewrite any that are false to make them correct.

Key:

1. *True.*
2. *True.*
3. *False. Boohoo focuses on one niche of customer – 16-to-30-year-olds.*
4. *False. They can have a product on their website in two to four weeks rather than the traditional retail model where you buy six to 12 months in advance.*
5. *True.*
6. *True.*
7. *False. Cloud computing updates a retailer's inventory instantly and minimises errors.*

4. Business language

In part a, students read the business words and phrases in the box and find and underline them in the article, noticing how they were used in context.

In part b, students then use the words and phrases to complete the sentences before, in part c, deciding which of them are likely to be useful for them and writing sentences of their own that contain these words but also reflect their own company's activity or the potential activity of a company they might work for in the future. E.g. a student decides that *growth* and *capital light* are not important for them but that being able to talk about *brand* and *stock* is, so they ignore the financial aspects of the company and concentrate on writing sentences that focus on the product and how to sell it.

Key:

1. *retail outlet*
2. *capital light*
3. *communications director*
4. *growth*
5. *sector*
6. *brand*
7. *order fulfilment*
8. *stock*

5. Discussion

In small groups, students discuss the questions which pick up on and expand on topics and quotes from the article. Hold a short whole-class feedback session and compare and contrast each group's answers and input.

6. Wider business theme

Ask students to work individually and think of a product or products that they think would be successful. Then ask them to work in pairs or small groups to compare their ideas for a product or products and reach agreement about which to go for.

Students can then work as a group to think of ways of promoting their chosen products and decide on where and how to sell them – online, in a retail outlet or via a combination of the two. They could use their group knowledge, or do some internet research to help them.



One-to-one teaching

This business idea task can be adapted so that the student does the above as homework and then reports back to you in the next lesson what they decided. They should also be prepared to present their ideas as a business plan.