
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Circular economy



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello. This is 6 Minute English with me, Neil.

Sam

And me, Sam.

Neil

Today, we're talking rubbish.

Sam

Ooh, that's a bit harsh – I thought it was going to be interesting.

Neil

I mean our topic is *about* rubbish, not that *we* are rubbish.

Sam

I see. Do go on.

Neil

Thank you. So the amount of waste we produce around the world is huge and it's a growing problem.

Sam

But, there are some things that we can do, like recycling. Where I live, I can recycle a lot, and I'm always very careful to **separate** - to split my rubbish into paper, metal, food, plastic and so on.

Neil

But is that enough, even if we all do it? We'll look a little more at this topic shortly, but first, as always, a question. Which country recycles the highest percentage of its waste? Is it:

A: Sweden
B: Germany
C: New Zealand

What do you think, Sam?

Sam

I'm not sure, but I think it could be Germany so I'm going to go with that - Germany.

Neil

OK. We'll see if you're right a little bit later on. The BBC radio programme, Business Daily, recently tackled this topic. They spoke to Alexandre Lemille, an expert in this area. Does he think recycling is the answer? Let's hear what he said.

Alexandre Lemille

Recycling is not the answer to waste from an efficient point of view because we are not able to get all the waste **separated** properly and therefore treated in the background. The main objective of our model is to hide waste so we don't see as urban citizens, or rural citizens, we don't see the waste, it is **out of sight** and therefore **out of mind**.

Neil

What's his view of recycling?

Sam

I was a bit surprised, because he said recycling wasn't the answer. One reason is that it's not always possible to **separate** waste you can recycle from waste you can't recycle, and that makes **treating** it very difficult. **Treating** means handling it and using different processes, so it can be used again.

Neil

And the result is a lot of waste, including waste that could be recycled but which is just hidden. And as long as we don't see it, we don't think about it.

Sam

And he uses a good phrase to describe this – **out of sight, out of mind**. And that's true, at least for me. My rubbish and recycling is collected and I don't really think about what happens to it after that. Is as much of it recycled as I think, or is it just buried, burned or even sent to other countries? It's not in front of my house, so I don't really think about it – **out of sight, out of mind**.

Neil

Let's listen again

Alexandre Lemille

Recycling is not the answer to waste from an efficient point of view because we are not able to get all the waste **separated** properly and therefore treated in the background. The main objective of our model is to hide waste so we don't see as urban citizens, or rural citizens, we don't see the waste, it is **out of sight** and therefore **out of mind**.

Neil

One possible solution to this problem is to develop what is called a circular economy. Here's the presenter of Business Daily, Manuela Saragosa, explaining what that means.

Manuela Saragosa

The idea then at the core of a circular economic and business model is that a product, like say a washing machine or even a broom, can always be returned to the **manufacturer** to be reused or repaired before then sold on again. The point is the manufacturer retains responsibility for the **lifecycle** of the product it produces rather than the **consumer** assuming that responsibility when he or she buys it.

Neil

So it seems like a simple idea – though maybe very difficult to do.

Sam

Yes, the idea is that the company that makes a product, the **manufacturer**, is responsible for the product, not the person who bought it, the **consumer**.

Neil

So, if the product breaks or reaches the end of its useful life, its **lifecycle**, then the **manufacturer** has to take it back and fix, refurbish or have it recycled.

Sam

I guess this would make manufacturers try to make their products last longer!

Neil

It certainly would. Let's listen again.

Manuela Saragosa

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is the manufacturer retains responsibility for the **lifecycle** of the product it produces rather than the **consumer** assuming that responsibility when he or she buys it.

Neil

That's just about all we have time for in this programme. Before we recycle the vocabulary ...

Sam

Oh very good Neil!

Neil

Before we - thank you Sam - before we recycle the vocabulary, we need to get the answer to today's question. Which country recycles the highest percentage of its waste? Is it:

A: Sweden

B: Germany

C: New Zealand

Sam, what did you say?

Sam

I think it's Germany.

Neil

Well I would like to offer you congratulations because Germany is the correct answer. Now let's go over the vocabulary.

Sam

Of course. To **separate** means to divide or split different things, for example, **separate** your plastic from your paper for recycling.

Neil

Treating is the word for dealing with, for example, recycled waste.

Sam

The phrase **out of sight, out of mind**, means ignoring something or a situation you can't see.

Neil

A **manufacturer** is the person or company that makes something and the **consumer** is the person who buys that thing.

Sam

And the length of time you can expect a product to work for is known as its **lifecycle**.

Neil

Well the **lifecycle** of this programme is 6 minutes, and as we are there, or thereabouts, it's time for us to head off. Thanks for your company and hope you can join us again soon. Until then, there is plenty more to enjoy from BBC Learning English online, on social media and on our app. Bye for now.

Sam

Bye!

VOCABULARY

to separate

to divide or split different things into different categories or groups

to treat

to process or deal with, for example, recycled waste

out of sight, out of mind

a phrase that means we ignore or don't think about what we don't see

manufacturer

the person or company that makes a product

consumer

a person that buy a product

lifecycle

the length of time a product is designed to work for