
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Making old things last longer



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Rob.

Sam

And I'm Sam.

Rob

So, how are you today, Sam?

Sam

Don't ask, Rob! Today's been a nightmare! This morning I ripped my jeans and later my computer stopped working! Then, when I tried taking it to a repair shop, my car wouldn't start!

Rob

Oh no, that's terrible! And the really bad news is that in today's consumer culture, when something breaks we usually throw it away and buy a new one, instead of trying to repair it.

Sam

In this programme, we'll learn all about repairing broken things by asking what would happen if we stopped junking and got better at fixing.

Rob

The world generates over two billion tonnes of rubbish every year.

Sam

So we're visiting companies in Sweden making it easier to mend things when they break instead of replacing them – whether that's clothes, bikes or washing machines.

Rob

And my quiz question is about one of those companies - Fixi, a repair service that collects broken bikes from your door and brings them back fixed. The company was started by Rafi Mohammad, a student of Industrial Innovation at the University of Stockholm. But what was the inspiration behind Rafi's idea? Was it:

- a) he wanted to impress his girlfriend?,
- b) he was sick of breathing in the city's car fumes?, or
- c) he was late for his lecture because of a flat tyre?

Sam

I'll say, a) he wanted to impress his girlfriend.

Rob

OK, Sam, we'll find out about Rafi and his love life later on. But whatever the inspiration behind it, Rafi's idea was a success – Fixi took more than six hundred orders in its first six months.

Sam

Rafi's isn't the only Swedish company helping people fix things instead of buying new. Denim company, Nudie Jeans, was started with a focus on ethics and sustainability.

Rob

At 150 dollars a pair, Nudie jeans aren't cheap but they do promise free repairs for life, from ripped knees to torn pockets.

Sam

BBC World Service programme, People Fixing the World, asked students Felix and Fabia Morgen, why they bought the jeans, despite the high price tag.

Felix Morgan

It's just been **a given** that when your jeans break, you throw them away, so when I heard that you can repair them easily without any cost then it was a bit of a **no-brainer** for me.

Fabia Morgan

I really liked the way they looked, so for me it's worth it to buy more expensive but **stuff** that I really like.

Rob

Felix says that throwing out old jeans is **a given** - something that is just assumed to happen.

Sam

For him, buying Nudie jeans is a **no-brainer** - a decision that's very easy to make.

Rob

And Fabia agrees. She doesn't mind paying more for **stuff** she really likes. Here, **stuff** is an informal way to say personal objects and possessions.

Sam

Even though they're good at recycling, people in wealthy Sweden still buy lots of new stuff and they have a big carbon footprint for a country of just 10 million.

Rob

But it's interesting that all the innovators behind these companies say that in their grandparents' day, it was normal to repair, fix and mend broken stuff.

Sam

Jessika Richter is a researcher at Lund University. She thinks repairing is an endangered activity that we used to do more of, both individually and as a society.

Rob

Here she is talking to BBC World Service's, People Fixing the World programme, about the need to get back in touch with older ways of doing things:

Jessika Richter

It really is a **peer effect** and a culture that we're trying to **foster** here - changing a culture of consumption. The more people that are repairing and the more people that are choosing to buy repair services or more repairable products, the more we will see this **going mainstream** - and it used to **be mainstream**, so that's what makes me positive too, that it is in some ways a return to what we used to be able as a society to do more of.

Sam

Stories about Sweden's repair shops spread between friends and Jessika thinks this creates a **peer effect** - the positive or negative influence friends have on the way you behave.

Rob

She hopes this will **foster** - or encourage to grow - a new culture of sustainable consumption...

Sam

...so that fixing broken stuff will **be mainstream**, or be considered normal, once again.

Rob

Yes, that's a big part of the problem – repairing was something we all used to do, but seem to have forgotten.

Sam

Hopefully, we'll all be inspired to start fixing things again, or at least pay someone else to! And speaking of inspiration, what was the answer to your quiz question, Rob?

Rob

Ah yes, I asked about the inspiration behind Rafi Mohammad's company, Fixi.

Sam

I think he started the bike repair service to a) impress his girlfriend. Was I right?

Rob

Ah Sam, that's very romantic ... but the correct answer was c) he was late for his lecture because of a flat tyre.

Sam

Well, I'm sure if he had a broken heart, he'd be able to mend it.

Rob

Indeed. Well, in this programme, we've been hearing about repairing broken **stuff** – things, or personal possessions.

Sam

That people would fix something broken used to be **a given** - assumed to be true or certain to happen.

Rob

Repairing things used to be a **no-brainer** – the obvious choice.

Sam

A **peer effect** is influence of peers and friends on someone's behaviour.

Rob

Some Swedish companies are trying to **foster** – or encourage the development of
- a new culture of consumption.

Sam

So that once again, fixing things **is mainstream** - accepted as normal or common practice.

Rob

That's all from us. Bye for now!

Sam

Bye bye!

VOCABULARY

a given

something that is assumed to be true or certain to happen

no-brainer

a decision that is very easy to make; an obvious choice

stuff

things, objects and personal possessions (informal)

peer effect

the positive or negative influence of peers and friends on the way you behave

foster

encourage the development and growth of ideas or feelings

be mainstream

be accepted as normal by most people