IKEA: Customer Service

Advanced level:

- **Listening Exercises**: IKEA founder, Ingvar Kamprad
- **Grammar**: Articles – definite and indefinite
- **Cultural Awareness Point**: Shopping habits
- **Pronunciation**: /a/ Cat - Car - Care
- **Reading**: Case study: IKEA – the flat pack phenomenon
- **Functional Vocabulary**: Cause and effect
- **Role Play**: The meeting – on-line shopping

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Introduction:
Discuss these questions:
• What is flat-pack furniture? What do you know about IKEA?
• What do these words mean? (You will hear them in the listening exercise):
  Matches - inventory

Listening Exercise 1:

Listen to the spokesperson and answer the questions below.
Note: The questions are not in chronological order

1. How does the 10-minute time management plan work?
2. What was the first thing Ingvar Kamprad bought and sold?
3. What are the origins of the name ‘IKEA’?
4. How much revenue did IKEA generate in 2007?
5. How did the flat-pack furniture style begin?

CULTURAL AWARENESS POINT:
Shopping Habits

In the UK, the shops are open every day, including Sundays, a traditional day of rest. They are also open late (especially in the cities) and do not close for lunch. This creates a lot more opportunities for the public to go shopping, but there is now a lot of competition from on-line retail.

Speaking practice:
• Explain the shopping habits in your nationality or culture.
• How can they be improved?
• Is shopping convenience more important than a day of rest?
Introductory Question:
What is the difference between these two sentences?
I am looking for a $50 sofa. I am looking for the $50 sofa.

GRAMMAR PRACTICE: The Article

A. Definite Article ‘the’:

1. In general
The definite article refers to items that are known, and its use depends on the context.
I am looking for the $50 sofa. There is only one $50 sofa.

2. National groups
Groups as a whole
The Swedish buy more tables than the British.

3. Other groups
If they are clearly plural
The Conservatives, The Beatles

4. Unique objects
The moon, the sun

5. Titles
The CEO – The Queen
Newspapers: The Financial Times, The Economist

6. Geographical names
The following use the:
Rivers: The Thames
Mountain ranges (but not individual mountains): The Alps (NOT the Everest)
Oceans and seas: The Atlantic, the Mediterranean
Areas: The Middle East, the West
Collective countries: The United Kingdom, the Netherlands

Exercise: correct the sentences where necessary.

1. French prefer to buy from the shops and not the on-line
2. The IKEA opened shop in Canary Islands in the 2006
3. When a sales figures were announced manager was in the Russia
4. Financial Times first reported high sales at only IKEA store in the Leeds
B. Indefinite Article ‘a/an’

1. **Introducing a subject**
   A woman entered the room (introduction). The woman was my new boss (previously introduced).

2. **Jobs and professions**
   Frank is a designer.

3. **Measurements**
   Three times a day … thirty kilometres an hour.
   £300,000 a year (per can replace a / an in formal cases).

C. Zero Article

**Used** when generalising: Furniture design is very important in our lives.
Also the zero article is used in these circumstances:

1. **For uncountable nouns**
   Furniture, news, information, advice, research, luggage, progress, knowledge
   E.g. allow me to give you advice on buying a bed.

2. **Some singular countable nouns**
   Home, breakfast, lunch, supper, dinner, school, college, university, church,
   work, class, hospital, prison, bed.
   E.g. He studied at university for three years, but he spent most of his time in bed.

3. **Certain double expressions**
   From top to bottom, on land and sea, word of mouth, face to face

4. **When certain countable nouns have an uncountable sense**
   Cold, country, wine, coffee, tea, taste, death, life, work, cheese, cake
   E.g. He has good taste when it comes to choosing curtains.

**Exercise:** Complete the sentences with a, an, the, or no article.

1. He’s been studying design at ___ college for ___ last two years.
2. This term they did ___ research into ___ design style of IKEA.
3. The manager is busy during ___ daytime, but she is free in ___ evenings, so last week she joined ___ business forum.
4. One evening she was in such ___ rush to get there she had ___ accident, and was run over by ___ car outside ___ work.
Pronunciation Practice: /a/ - Cat – Cart – Care

Practise saying these sentences with your tutor:

- My father’s car is a Jaguar and it is very fast
- A cat climbed down the castle stairs and then sat on the grass
- A helping hand is hard to find when there is a piano to lift

Reading exercise: Read the text and put the, a, an, or zero article in the gaps

**IKEA – The Secrets of Success**

Ingvar Kamprad was a dyslexic farm boy who started work as 1._____enterprising door-to-door salesman of matches and string. He was eight years old, and this small beginning led to 2.______$7 billion business, selling flat-pack furniture in over 300 stores around the world.

At IKEA 3._______idea that flat-pack is responsible for all of its success is dismissed. True, it is revolutionary and the profit margins have been attributed to its cost cutting effect, but there is a lot more to 4.____ IKEA than flat-pack furniture. 5._______IKEA's business idea stems from democratic design, attractive form, inexpensive production, and high functionality. This idea, 6.______combined with what Kamprad calls “7.____ entrepreneur’s obsession with always doing the opposite of what others are doing," pushed him along 8.____ path of constant innovation and experimentation.

The real secret of IKEA’s success? "We are a concept company,” answers Kamprad. IKEA’s concept is articulated in 9.______document drafted by Kamprad in 1976 called: “a furniture dealer’s testament.” It sets down nine commandments including the promotion of 10.______“IKEA spirit” for enthusiasm, thrift, responsibility, humbleness, and simplicity; and “always asking why we are doing this or that and refusing to accept a pattern simply because it is 11.____well established.”

Kamprad is not afraid to make mistakes, and says this is always positive as it is good for 12.____development. Only the dead don’t make mistakes, he says. The key is to learn from your mistakes and show 13.____world that you too are human. Does this include being 14.____member of the Swedish Nazi party when you were a young man? This was a mistake he tried to keep hidden until it was made public in the 1980’s and, as a consequence, it nearly destroyed his 15.____reputation.

**Speaking practice:**
In pairs, discuss mistakes in business. Can you think of any serious mistakes that entrepreneurs have made? What mistakes have you made and what lessons have you learnt?

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Functional vocabulary: Cause and Effect

Here are some ways to describe *cause and effect* and how they are used.

**Example sentences:**
- Increased furniture demand has led to more production.
- Due to a rise in furniture demand IKEA has increased productivity.
- IKEA has raised prices by 1%. As a result there is capital to invest in training.

**How to form the sentences and the uses**

Cause and Effect can be expressed in a number of ways. The diagrams below show the link between the different language forms.

**A. Verbs and verb phrases**

1. _______ linking verb _______

   The recent rise in demand **has led to** an increase in productivity.

2. _______ linking verb _______

   The recent rise in productivity **stems from** an increase in demand.

Other verb/verb phrases with a similar meaning:
1. Lead to – result in – be responsible for – account for – bring about
2. Arise from – stem from – be attributed to – be blamed on – be caused by

**B. Clauses of cause**

A subordinating conjunction links the effect and the cause.

1. _______ _______

   IKEA faces problems **since** the interest rates rose.

Other subordinating clauses include: because - as – since

**C. Phrases of cause**

An adverb phrase introduces the clause.

1. _______ _______

   **Because of** rising interest rates IKEA faces problems.

Expressions with a similar meaning:
*Due to – on account of – as a consequence of – As a result of*
D. **Sentence connectors of cause**

Here a cause is linked to the effect in the following sentence by a connector.

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A (cause)  ⟷  B (effect)
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Interest rates have risen. **Consequently**, there will be less investment.

Other expressions with a similar meaning:
*Therefore* – *so* – *thus* (*formal*) – *hence* (*formal*)

**EXERCISE:** Complete the sentences below with a suitable link from the box

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due to - account for – so – hence - be responsible for - because
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1. The flat-pack furniture style _________ a huge rise in profits.
2. We manage to keep key designers _________ we pay excellent salaries.
3. The team achieved record sales last year _______ they will receive a bonus.
4. _________ low sales, some products will be discontinued.
5. The investment in China _________ most of our budget last year.
6. Results were extremely good last year. _________ the bonus.

Discuss these questions:

- How does IKEA, cut costs?
- What do these words mean? (You will hear them in the listening exercise): Figure out – set an example – dyslexic

**Listening Exercise 2:**

Listen to the recording and answer the questions below.

**Note:** The questions are not in chronological order

1. What car does Kamprad drive?
2. Who is the target market for IKEA?
3. Why are the products given Swedish names?
4. Why doesn’t IKEA pay tax?
5. What is interesting about IKEA’s design strategy?
A MEETING has been arranged between the CEO, Ingvar Kamprad, and the marketing team. They discuss whether or not to create an on-line store that delivers to customers.

INGVAR KAMPRAD:
You are not in favour of a virtual store as one of the major selling points for IKEA is that the customer must come to the store and experience the product range. When they travel around the different departments they buy more. On-line will limit the spontaneous sales and also create a huge delivery problem.

MARKETING TEAM:
You see this as a must. All the competitors have on-line ordering and are gaining market share through this sales strategy. Furthermore, it will increase sales significantly while reducing visits to the store only marginally. Most shoppers see IKEA as a visual experience but you are losing customers who do not have enough time to visit the store.

THE MEETING: You must promote your side of the argument using the vocabulary of cause and effect and the business expressions learnt in this lesson to support your ideas.

Try to come up with a plan that involves some progress in one direction or another.
IKEA – ADVANCED

Audio 1
The founder of IKEA, Ingvar Kamprad, is one of the world's richest people, and his shop generated $30 billion in annual sales in 2007. Kamprad was born on a farm in 1926 in Sweden. His family was poor and from an early age he learnt how to make money. He sold matches door-to-door for a profit. At the age of 17 he founded the shop, IKEA. The name comes from Kamprad's initials (I.K.) plus the first letters of Elmtaryd and Agunnaryd, (E.A.) the farm and village where he grew up. Today IKEA is known around the world for its innovative and stylish furnishings. Almost all IKEA products are designed for flat packaging, which reduces shipping costs, minimizes transport damage, increases store inventory capacity. The flat-pack style was first used when an Ikea employee could not get his table into the back of a car. So he took the legs off the table and then assembled it at the end of the journey. Ingvar Kamprad realized that this simple solution was revolutionary and a global concept was born. The downside of flat-pack is that the customers have to assemble the furniture themselves, but Kamprad does not see this as a negative. He believes that the company exists to improve people's homes and to improve the people as well. Ingvar Kamprad says that success starts with the 10-minute time management plan. "You can do so much in ten minutes," he says. "Ten minutes, once they are gone, are gone for ever. Try to divide your life into 10-minute units, and then use each one to the maximum. Waste as few units as possible. As a consequence you will be much more productive and successful.

Audio 2
One of the most interesting things about IKEA's design strategy is that the company starts with a price that consumer will pay and then it figures out a way to produce it. That is opposite to how other companies operate. To design a desk that costs $1,000 is easy for a furniture designer, but to design a stylish and functional desk which costs $50 can only be done by the very best designers. Our target market is people who enjoy stylish furnishings but have a limited budget. 'If there is such a thing as good leadership,' Kamprad says, 'it is to set a good example. I try to do this, he notes, for all my employees. IKEA people do not drive flashy cars or stay at luxury hotels. My car is a 15 year-old Volvo.' Kamprad is dyslexic, and names his furniture with Scandinavian place names, rather than product code, to make them easier to remember. Because IKEA is owned by the non-profit INGKA Foundation, none of this profit is taxed.

Lesson plan – IKEA - advanced

INTRODUCTION: Start by asking students if they know what flat-pack furniture is, and what they know about IKEA? What is the company image? Teacher (T) - Students (SS) 5 mins

LISTENING EXERCISE 1: Next tell students they are going to hear a consultant talking about IKEA. They need to answer the questions at the end. Play the Listening Exercise and ask students the questions. (T) - (SS) 10 mins

CULTURAL AWARENESS POINT: Read through the text on British shopping habits and discuss the speaking points. Encourage students to practice the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation points of the unit. 10 mins

GRAMMAR: Ask the question. See if anyone knows the difference. Go on through the rules and do the short exercises that follow. Ask students to read the questions and answers out loud. (S) – (T) 15 mins

PRONUNCIATION POINT: Read through the words and sentences that follow. Correct any mistakes and drill. 10 mins

READING: Find out if any of the students know about how IKEA started and then go through reading and ask students to read out loud and fill in the gaps with an appropriate article. Take care to point out the vocabulary of cause and effect. (S) – (T) 10 mins

SPEAKING PRACTICE: Ask students to answer the 'right questions'. (SS) – (SS) 5 mins

FUNCTIONAL VOCABULARY: Write the words 'stem from' and ask if anyone knows what it means. Go to the exercise (T) - (SS) 5 mins

LISTENING EXERCISE 2: Tell students they are going to hear the second part of the Listening Exercise about IKEA. They need to answer the questions at the end. Play the audio (SS) – (T) 10 mins

ROLE PLAY: Split students into groups and get them to read their role cards and prepare to discuss the situation. Make sure they practice the grammar and vocabulary learnt in the lesson and to try and use the case study material in their argument. (SS) - (SS) 10 mins
EXERCISE ANSWERS – IKEA - ADVANCED.

Listening Exercise 1
1. Try to divide your life into 10-minute units, and then use each one to the maximum. SACRIFICE AS FEW UNITS AS POSSIBLE TO MEANINGLESS ACTIVITY. AS A CONSEQUENCE YOU WILL BE MUCH MORE PRODUCTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL.
2. MATCHES
4. $30 billion
5. IT WAS FIRST USED WHEN A FURNITURE DESIGNER WAS UNABLE TO GET HIS TABLE INTO THE BACK OF A CAR. HE TOOK THE LEGS OFF THE TABLE AND THEN ASSEMBLED IT AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY.

Grammar 1
1. The French prefer to buy from shops and not on-line
2. IKEA opened a shop in The Canary Islands in 2006
3. When the sales figures were announced the manager was in Russia
4. The Financial Times reported high sales at the only IKEA store in Leeds.

Grammar 2
1. He’s been studying design at college for the last two years.
2. This term they did research into the design style of IKEA.
3. The manager is busy during the daytime, but she is free in the evenings, so last week she joined a business forum.
4. One evening she was in such a rush to get there she had an accident, and was run over by a car outside work.

Reading
1. an 2. a 3. the 4. - 5. - 6. - 7. the 8. a 9. the 10. the 11. - 12. - 13. the 14. a 15. -

Functional Vocabulary
1. Is responsible for
2. Because
3. So
4. Due to
5. Accounted for
6. Hence

Listening Exercise 2
1. A 15-year-old Volvo
2. People who enjoy stylish furnishings but have a limited budget
3. Because Kamprad is dyslexic
4. Because IKEA is owned by the non-profit INGKA Foundation, none of this profit is taxed.
5. It starts with a price that consumer will pay and then it figures out a way to produce it.