



Minimalism

The Art of Living With Less

Why millions of people are choosing to own less — and feeling richer than ever

■ B1 Reading ■ 30 min ■ Everyday Life

Level	B1 (Intermediate)
Skill	Reading
Topic	Everyday Life
Duration	30 minutes
Age Group	Teens & Adults

Learning Objectives

- ◆ Read and understand a text about the minimalism movement
- ◆ Learn 15 key vocabulary items related to lifestyle and consumption
- ◆ Understand the psychological effects of owning too much
- ◆ Discuss personal attitudes towards material possessions
- ◆ Write a reflective paragraph about personal values

1 Before You Read — How Much Is Enough?

Think about your relationship with material things:

1. Look around your room. How many of the things you own do you actually use regularly?
2. Have you ever bought something you thought would make you happy but did not? What was it?
3. Do you think having more things makes people happier? Why or why not?

2 Reading: Less Is More

Less Is More: Why People Are Choosing Simplicity

Open your wardrobe. How many of those clothes do you actually wear? Now look at your phone — how many of those 80 apps have you used this month? Walk through your home and count the objects you have not touched in a year. If you are like most people in developed countries, the answer to all of these questions is: far fewer than you own. We live in a world of **excess**, surrounded by things we do not need, do not use, and often do not even remember buying. And yet, despite all this abundance, rates of stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction continue to rise.

This **paradox** — more stuff but less happiness — is at the heart of a growing movement called **minimalism**. Minimalists believe that by intentionally reducing the number of things we own, we can create more space, more time, and more freedom to focus on what truly matters.

What Is Minimalism?

Minimalism is not about living in an empty white room with no furniture. It is not about deprivation or poverty. At its core, minimalism is about **intentionality** — being deliberate about what you allow into your life. It means keeping the things that add value and removing the things that do not. A minimalist might own a beautiful guitar they play every day but choose not to have a television they rarely watch. The goal is not to own nothing — it is to own only what **matters**.

The movement has grown rapidly in recent years, **fuelled** by bestselling books, popular documentaries, and social media accounts with millions of followers. People from all backgrounds and income levels are discovering that reducing their possessions can lead to surprising improvements in their mental health, finances, and relationships.

The Psychology of Too Much

Why does owning too much stuff make us unhappy? Psychologists point to several explanations. First, every object you own requires a small amount of mental energy — deciding where to put it, cleaning it, maintaining it, worrying about losing it. This invisible **burden** adds up. A cluttered home leads to a cluttered mind, making it harder to concentrate, relax, and make decisions.

Second, **consumer** culture constantly tells us that the next purchase will make us happy — a new phone, new shoes, a better car. But as research on hedonic adaptation shows, the excitement of new purchases fades quickly, leaving us wanting more. Minimalists call this the "more trap" — the belief that happiness is always one purchase away. Breaking free from this cycle is one of the most **liberating** experiences people describe when they adopt a simpler lifestyle.

Digital Minimalism

Minimalism is not just about physical objects. **Digital minimalism** — the practice of reducing your online footprint — has become equally important. The average person receives over 60 notifications per day, checks their phone 96 times, and spends more than two hours on social media. This constant digital noise drains our attention and leaves us feeling overwhelmed.

Digital minimalists might unsubscribe from unnecessary email lists, delete social media apps they do not genuinely enjoy, turn off non-essential notifications, and set strict time limits on screen use. The goal is not to reject technology entirely but to use it **purposefully** — as a tool that serves you, rather than a master that controls you.

Getting Started

If you want to try minimalism, experts recommend starting small. Pick one drawer, one shelf, or one category of items — like clothes — and ask yourself three questions about each object: Do I use this regularly? Does it bring me joy? Would I buy it again today? If the answer to all three is no, it is probably time to let it go — donate it, recycle it, or give it to someone who will actually use it.

The result, according to those who have made the change, is not a feeling of loss but a surprising sense of **freedom**. With fewer things to manage, clean, and worry about, you gain something far more valuable: time, space, and the clarity to focus on the people, experiences, and activities that genuinely make your life **meaningful**.

3 Key Vocabulary

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example Sentence
excess	more than is necessary or reasonable; too much	We live in a world of excess, surrounded by things we do not need.
paradox	a situation that seems contradictory but may be true	The paradox of modern life: more stuff but less happiness.
minimalism	a lifestyle of intentionally living with fewer possessions	Minimalism is about keeping only what adds real value to your life.
intentionality	the quality of being deliberate and purposeful in your actions	Minimalism is about intentionality — choosing what you allow into your life.
matters	is important; has significance	The goal is to own only what truly matters to you.
fuelled	powered or driven by something	The movement has been fuelled by books, films, and social media.
burden	a heavy load or responsibility that causes stress	Every object you own carries a small mental burden.
consumer	relating to buying goods and services	Consumer culture tells us the next purchase will make us happy.
liberating	making you feel free from restrictions or worry	Breaking free from the 'more trap' is an incredibly liberating experience.
digital minimalism	reducing your online activity and digital distractions	Digital minimalism means using technology purposefully.

Word / Phrase	Definition	Example Sentence
purposefully	in a deliberate and intentional way; with a clear aim	Use your phone purposefully — as a tool, not a habit.
freedom	the state of being free from restrictions or excess	Owning less gives you freedom to focus on what matters.
meaningful	having importance, purpose, or real value	A meaningful life is about experiences, not possessions.
cluttered	filled with too many things in a messy way	A cluttered home leads to a cluttered, distracted mind.
donate	to give something to a charity or person in need	Donate items you no longer use to someone who needs them.

4 Useful Collocations

material possessions · consumer culture · simple life · mental health · living space · digital detox · time management · quality over quantity · financial freedom · second-hand · let go of · clear out · make space · add value · personal growth · conscious choice

5 Reading Comprehension

1. What is the 'paradox' described at the beginning of the text?

- a) People want less but buy more
- b) People have more possessions but feel less happy ✓**
- c) Minimalists spend more money than others
- d) Technology makes life simpler but less fun

2. What is minimalism NOT about, according to the text?

- a) Being intentional about what you own
- b) Focusing on what truly matters
- c) Living in an empty room with no furniture ✓**
- d) Reducing unnecessary possessions

3. Why does owning too many things make us unhappy?

- a) Because all objects break eventually
- b) Because every object requires mental energy to manage ✓**
- c) Because other people are jealous of our things
- d) Because shops are too crowded

4. What is 'digital minimalism'?

- a) Buying only digital products instead of physical ones
- b) Reducing online activity and digital distractions ✓**
- c) Using only one social media platform
- d) Working in the technology industry

5. How many times does the average person check their phone daily?

- a) About 30 times
- b) About 50 times
- c) About 96 times ✓**
- d) About 150 times

6. What three questions should you ask about each object?

- a) Is it expensive? Is it new? Is it fashionable?
- b) Do I use it? Does it bring joy? Would I buy it again? ✓**
- c) Can I sell it? Can I recycle it? Can I hide it?
- d) Is it mine? Is it clean? Is it beautiful?

6 Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blanks

Complete the sentences with the correct word from the box:

excess · burden · intentionality · liberating · cluttered · purposefully · consumer · donate

1. We live in a world of _____, surrounded by things we do not need.
2. Every object carries a small mental _____ — cleaning, storing, worrying about it.
3. Minimalism is about _____ — being deliberate about what you allow into your life.
4. People who simplify their lives describe the experience as incredibly _____.
5. A _____ home makes it harder to concentrate, relax, and think clearly.
6. Digital minimalists use technology _____ — as a tool, not a habit.

7. _____ culture constantly tells us that buying more will make us happy.
8. If you no longer use something, _____ it to someone who needs it.

7 Answer Key

■ Vocabulary Exercise Answers

1. excess
2. burden
3. intentionality
4. liberating
5. cluttered
6. purposefully
7. Consumer
8. donate

8 Speaking & Writing Tasks

■ Speaking Task: Discussion

Discuss these questions with a partner or your teacher:

- Do you consider yourself a minimalist or a maximalist? Why?
- What is one thing you own that you could easily live without?
- Do you think social media encourages people to buy more things? How?
- Could you live with only 100 personal possessions? What would you keep?

■ Useful Phrases for Expressing Opinions About Lifestyle

- **I think the key to happiness is** focusing on experiences rather than things.
- **What I have realised is that** most of the things I buy, I do not actually need.
- **I would find it difficult to** give up my books, but I could easily live without most of my clothes.
- **In my opinion,** we should teach children about conscious consumption from a young age.
- **The thing that surprised me most is** how much mental energy our possessions require.

 **Writing Task: What I Would Keep**

Write a paragraph (120–160 words) about this topic:

"Imagine you could only keep 10 personal belongings. What would you choose and why? What do your choices reveal about what is most important to you?"

Use vocabulary from this lesson. Explain your choices and reflect on what you learned about yourself.