

# Maths

**Buy cheap, buy twice**

RecyCOOL Lessons

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# Buy cheap, buy twice

## Description of the lesson

Our first step is a thinking exercise on why a cheap buy is not always a bargain. Next, the Cost per Wear is introduced to students and explained through examples. After that, students receive tips to imagine how many times they could wear that specific piece of clothing at the point when they are deciding whether or not to buy the item. Then it is explained how we can recognise whether or not the piece is good quality manufacture, or not.

After that, we discuss tips with the learners on how we can reduce the cost per wear of pieces that we already own. We will look at how luxury brands are not always the best, sustainable choices. Then the students will try to count 'Cost per wear' in two different tasks.

## Objective

Objective of this lesson is to be able to explain and calculate cost per wear. Based on this, we will be able to decide which garments are more cost effective

## After this lesson you will be able to

- explain and count cost per wear of the pieces you want to buy, or pieces that you already own
- make a better decision about your purchases using the 'cost per wear' evaluation method

## Tools and materials

pen, paper, internet access

## COST PER WEAR:

The Cost Per Wear (CPW) is a formula that tells you how much it costs to wear an item of clothing, based on the price of the item and the number of times you wore it. The more you wear something, the lower its Cost Per Wear is going to be. If you wear something only once, its CPW is the full price of the item.



Do you think you'll save money if you buy cheap clothes? What's the most you're willing to pay for a t-shirt – and why? Write it down.

Heard the old saying, "buy cheap, buy twice"?

Poorly made clothes are more likely to shrink in wash, lose their shape and fall apart quickly, leaving you having to purchase a replacement item sooner than you'd bargained for. Spending more on a well-made garment will ensure it sticks around longer.

It may cost more at the outset, but when you work out your 'cost per wear', it's a long-term investment piece that's the real bargain. Turn it inside out, look at the label and inspect the seams for quality, as always the devil is in the detail.

The **Cost Per Wear** (CPW) is a formula that tells you how much it costs to wear an item of clothing based on the price of the item and the number of times you wore it. The more you wear something, the lower its Cost Per Wear is going to be. If you wear something only once, its CPW is the full price of the item. **Working out an item's Cost per Wear, can reduce your impulsive buys.**

$$\text{CPW} = \frac{\text{Cost of Item} + (\text{Tailoring Costs}) + (\text{Maintenance Costs})}{\text{Number of Times Worn (or Planned to be Worn)}}$$

Photo credit: [The pretty planeteer](#)

## For example

Andrea bought a pair of jeans for 12 EUR last year in a sale. They were discounted from 36 EUR, so of course she had to have them. The fact was that they didn't really fit her, the light colour didn't suit her well and she didn't really have anything to wear them with. But for the price, they are such a bargain! She has worn the jeans twice since then. The CPW of these jeans is:  $12:2 = 6$  EUR.

In addition, Andrea also bought a pair of jeans that week that she has liked for a long time. They were made of good quality material, they fit her nicely and the darker colour was flattering.

They cost 81 EUR, but it was simply an exclusive model. So, after some thought, she bought them and has worn them twenty-five times since. The CPW of the jeans so far works out as follows:  $81:25 = 3,24$  EUR.

## **Tips which help you to find a number of the possible amount of wear of the garment when you are just deciding to buy.**

Can you think of at least three different outfits you can wear it with, with the pieces of your wardrobe you already have?

Do you feel like you will wear that piece in two years?

How is it made? Is it a good quality product? How long will it last?

Does that piece match your style and your personality?

Do you feel really good in that piece?

What about the material – does it make you feel comfortable in it?

## **How to tell if clothes are low quality or well-made?**

The quickest and easiest way to tell if the garment is good or bad quality is by looking at the seams. **Turn it inside out and take a good look at where it's been visibly sewn together. The seams should look smooth and lay flat with no puckering or snags.**

They should look neat and tidy, not higgledy piggledy. **The closer the stitches are together, the more durable and better quality it is.** You can tell by counting the stitches– a high number is a good sign.

French seams are the sign of true high quality. Flat felled and bound seams are the sturdiest and won't fray easily. Unfinished edges are a sign of bad quality (but it might be its style). Serged edges are better. **Learn a bit about seams, so you'll know when you're looking at a well made piece.**

**If we start to prioritise quality over quantity and invest in more expensive pieces that will last longer, we can contribute to reducing overproduction by reducing our consumption.**

**Don't forget make it last and learn how to love them.**

Like all the best relationships, your fashion love stories take a bit of work. No matter how careful we are with things, wear and tear happens. But this should not be the end of your favourite frock.

Learn the little things like sewing buttons back on, how to fight moths effectively, what temperature and how often to wash things and how to store your winter and summer wardrobes out of season to ensure things remain in great condition. Your clothes will thank you for it. And if you want to stay ahead of the game, shop for a brand that offers free lifetime repair service.

**Expensive clothes brands are not always ethical!**

Speaking of claims, many luxury companies apply "token sustainability" contentions through promises of "life-long" products. However, in the dominant mindset of 'fast-fashion, life-long is a claim that is often not met due to ever-changing designs and new trends. The fast fashion industry itself has received endless criticism for their environmental and social costs, for example, due to water usage and human rights concerns.

Despite the higher luxury prices, studies show that the environmental impact of luxury brands is actually just as damaging as that of fast fashion companies. This is mainly due to the vast scale and "extra effort" that luxury good production entails compared to fast-fashion items.



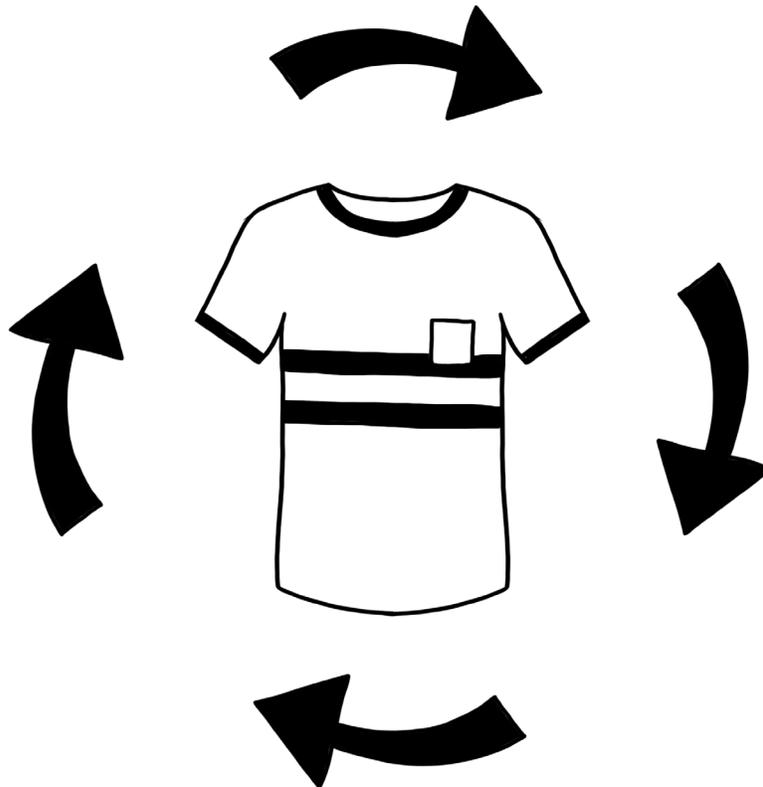
# Task 1

On the internet, find clothes that you really like but can't afford and divide the number of its cost, to the number of times you would wear it. Write down the finished number.

Do you still think you can't afford it? Say why you can't afford it. Is it always the case that the more costly the clothing the better for the environment they are ?

# Task 2

Find out the 'cost per wear' of three pieces from your outfit today. Write it down. Compare it. Have you spent your money on fashion wisely or not?



# Reflection

Do you understand the importance of cost per wear?

Are you going to consider this calculation when shopping next?

## Will you really wear it?

There is nothing like a good old wardrobe edit to throw into focus what we do and don't need. So before you hit the shops, take a good look at your wardrobe. If you find yourself with 5 pairs of jeans or 6 floral dresses, chances are you don't need another. If you really must have it, be your own stylist and ask yourself how versatile is this item? Do I have at least 3 things already that I can wear it with? And can I wash and care for it easily?

If you honestly don't think you'll get at least 30 wears out of it, then you don't need to take it home. **The most sustainable garment is the one already in your wardrobe!**

Do you wonder how effective you were in investing your money into your wardrobe? You can find it easily by using apps counting cost per wear for you, for example an app called Alpaka.



# Resources

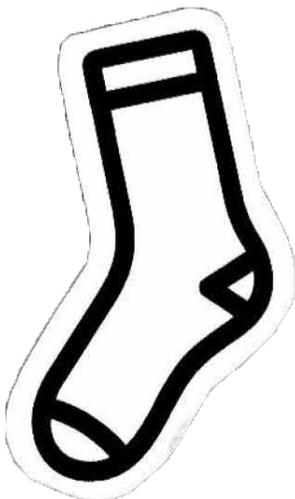
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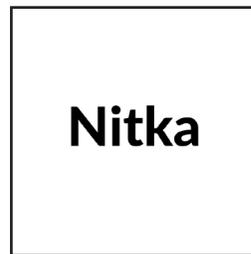
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