

BBC Learning English
6 Minute English
The science of shopping
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NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Dan: Hello, I'm Dan.

Alice: And I'm Alice.

Dan: And this is 6 Minute English! Today we're talking about shopping. Alice have you ever gone into a shop to buy one thing and come out with several other things as well?

Alice: Yes, I have. It happens quite often. And I even bring my own bag, and then find I haven't got enough space in it when I leave the shop.

Dan: Because you've just bought so many things. Well, it's quite a common thing, apparently. A lot of people find that they've bought a lot more than they wanted to, and that's often because of the **layout** of the store.

Alice: The **layout** – that's the way that something's arranged. So because the shop is laid out in a certain way, people buy more?

Dan: That's the theory. The layout of a shop has a large impact on what we buy and how much money we spend. Shops, supermarkets and **shopping malls** are designed to give shoppers a pleasant experience while they shop, and they use specific colours, lighting and designs to get us to buy more.

Alice: **Shopping malls** – that's a very American phrase Dan! These are the large buildings with lots of shops and restaurants inside them – what we call in Britain **shopping centres**.

Dan: And today's question is all about shopping centres Alice. The South China Mall in China is the world's largest shopping centre. But how many shops does it have? Is it:

- a) 800
- b) 1,200
- c) 1,500

Alice: Oh, I'll go for the big one. 1,500 shops

Dan: OK, we'll see if you are right at the end of the programme. Now, as I mentioned before, the layout of a shop has a direct influence on how we shop. Apparently if you're in a shopping mall or **department store**, the more **disorienting** it is, the longer you're there, and the more likely you are to spend.

Alice: The more **disorienting** it is - that is, it's very confusing, it's difficult to find things in. And a **department store** is a large shop with lots of different departments – different areas – which sell different types of goods.

Dan: And if the shopper is confused, or disoriented, they're more likely to forget what they came in for, and might start buying more items. It's what's called **retail anthropology**.

Alice: **Retail anthropology**. **Retail** is anything to do with shopping – it means selling goods to the general public. And **anthropology** is the study of humans and human behaviour. So I suppose retail anthropology is the study of how humans go shopping.

Dan: That's exactly it. Professor Alan Penn, from University College London, specialises in designing retail spaces. He says a lot of shops have designed their layouts to encourage us to spend more. Here is a clip of him talking about supermarkets; he says they usually keep essential items, such as milk and bread, as far away from the entrance as possible. Why do you think this is?

Professor Alan Penn, University College London

The milk and the bread are usually at the far end of the supermarket. That's not by chance; that's in order to get people to travel the full distance through the store. On the way through, they'll see other things that they may have forgotten they needed and put them into the trolley.

Dan: So, according to Alan Penn, milk and bread are usually as far away from the entrance as possible, so shoppers have to travel the full length of the store.

Alice: And on their way they'll see other items they might like and put them in their trolley. Very clever! What other techniques do shops use to encourage people to spend more Dan?

Dan: Ah, now, here's an interesting one: most supermarkets have the section for fruit and vegetables near the entrance. Why do you think that is Alice?

Alice: Mm, I don't know. Does it look nice?

Dan: Well, let's have a listen to Alan Penn again and we will see if you're right.

Professor Alan Penn, University College London

Fresh fruits are very interesting aspects of the supermarket. It's often near the front; near the entrance. It provides you with a very positive, healthy feeling, atmosphere as you step in through the door.

Dan: Well, you were part right there, Alice. Apparently the fresh fruit provides a positive, healthy atmosphere as you step into the shop – it's more welcoming. So, Alice, it's time to return to today's question: I asked you about The South China Mall which is the world's largest shopping centre. But how many shops does it have? Is it:

- a) 800
- b) 1,200
- c) 1,500

Alice: And I made the guess of 1,500.

Dan: And you are right, yes. The answer is 1,500 shops. But here is the interesting part; most of these shops are empty! In 2008 over 99 per cent of the shops in the South China Mall were unoccupied which is just bizarre. And there are a few more facts for you about shopping malls. Although the South China Mall is the world's largest shopping mall in terms of shops, the largest mall by area is the Dubai Mall, which over 12 million square feet – around the size of 50 football pitches. It's absolutely huge. Also, eight out of the ten largest shopping malls in the world are in Asia, and there are a lot more 'mega-malls' under construction in China and the United Arab Emirates.

Alice: Well, those are very, very big malls, mega malls.

Dan: Exactly. Alice, before we go, could you just remind us of some of the vocabulary we've heard in today's programme?

Alice: Sure, we had:

Layout

Shopping mall

Shopping centre

Department store

Disorienting

Retail

Anthropology

Dan: Thanks Alice. I hope you've enjoyed today's programme, and you'll join us again for more 6 Minute English next time.

Both: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

Layout	An arrangement or a plan of parts of the area
Shopping mall	Specially built covered area containing shops and restaurants
Shopping centre	A purpose built complex of shops restaurants and other businesses
Department store	A large store selling a variety of goods under one roof and organised into different sections
Disorienting	Loosing sense of direction or position
Retail	The sale of goods to the public
Anthropology	The scientific study of the origin, behaviour and development of humans

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