

STUDENT'S WORKSHEET · EVERYDAY ENGLISH

How did IKEA start?
The story of a global brand

LEVEL
A2 · Elementary

TIME
60 min

SKILLS
Reading · Speaking · Grammar · Vocabulary

Learning objectives

In this lesson, you can:

- understand a short company history
- use the past simple (regular and irregular verbs)
- ask and answer *When did…? Why did…?*
- tell the story of your company or career

Key vocabulary

found · furniture · customer · price · quality · flatpack · store · catalogue · expand · transport

Materials

- this worksheet
- web page: *From humble origins to global brand – a brief history of IKEA* (IKEA)

1 Warm up

SPEAKING

Look at the pictures. What can you see? How are they connected to the topic? Then answer the questions with your teacher.



PICTURE A · a furniture store



PICTURE B · flatpack boxes



PICTURE C · tools for building furniture



PICTURE D · Sweden

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1. Where do you buy furniture? Why?
2. Do you know any Swedish companies? Which ones?
3. Who started your company? When?

2 Vocabulary preparation

VOCABULARY

Part A: Match the words with the definitions.

customer (n) · flatpack (n) · found (v) · price (n) · furniture (n) · transport (n)

1. _____ to start a company or an organisation
2. _____ tables, chairs, beds and sofas
3. _____ a person who buys things from a shop or company
4. _____ furniture in a flat box that you build at home
5. _____ how much money something costs
6. _____ moving things or people from one place to another

Part B: Irregular verbs. Write the past simple form.

Example: go → *went*

1. give → _____
2. sell → _____
3. leave → _____
4. begin → _____
5. buy → _____
6. have → _____

3 Main input: read and learn

READING · GRAMMAR

IKEA is one of the biggest furniture companies in the world. Read its official history. Read these parts: “Our roots”, “The IKEA range is born”, “The flatpack revolution begins”, “Well-fed customers are happy customers” and “Why is IKEA called IKEA?”.

READING

From humble origins to global brand – a brief history of IKEA

IKEA (official company website) · company history · five short parts (about 3 minutes) · free

https://www.ikea.com/us/en/this-is-ikea/about-us/from-humble-origins-to-global-brand-a-brief-history-of-ikea-pubad29a981/

Read “Our roots”. Answer: When did Ingvar Kamprad found IKEA? How old was he?

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Language focus: the past simple

Look at these sentences about IKEA's history.

	Regular verbs (-ed)	Irregular verbs
+	Ingvar Kamprad founded IKEA in 1943. Stores opened in Denmark and Norway.	His father gave him some money. People left the store at lunchtime.
–	IKEA didn't sell furniture in 1943. (did not + verb)	
?	When did IKEA start selling furniture? – In 1948. Did he sell pens? – Yes, he did.	

Note: history texts sometimes use the present to tell a story ("In 1948 he *starts* selling furniture"). When we tell the story, we use the past: "In 1948 he *started* selling furniture."

Practice: Complete the sentences with the past simple of the verbs.

1. Ingvar Kamprad _____ (found) IKEA in 1943.
2. At first, he _____ (sell) pens and wallets.
3. His father _____ (give) him a small sum of money.
4. IKEA _____ (not / sell) furniture in 1943.
5. When _____ the first stores in Denmark and Norway _____ (open)?

4 Reading comprehension

READING

Part A: Read again. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)? Circle.

1. Ingvar Kamprad was 17 when he founded IKEA. T / F
2. He started the company by selling furniture. T / F
3. IKEA adopted flatpack furniture in 1953. T / F
4. Flatpack made transport more expensive. T / F
5. In June 1960, IKEA stores only offered coffee and cold dishes. T / F
6. Kamprad thought hungry customers buy more. T / F

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Part B: Complete the timeline. What happened?

Year	What happened?
1943	
1948	
1953	
1960–1969	

Part C: Think and answer.

1. What do the letters I-K-E-A mean?

2. Why did IKEA open restaurants in its stores?

3. Are low prices and good quality possible together? Why? / Why not?

5 Speaking practice and discussion

SPEAKING

Part A: Choose TWO cue cards. Talk about each card with your teacher for 1–2 minutes.

Cue card 1: My company's story

- When did it start?
- Who started it?
- One big change

Cue card 2: A brand from my country

- What does it sell?
- When did it start?
- Why is it famous?

Cue card 3: Furniture at home

- My favourite piece
- Where did I buy it?
- Did I build it?

Cue card 4: Shopping

- Online or in a store?
- My last big purchase
- Low price or good quality?

Cue card 5: My first job

- Where was it?
- What did I do?
- What did I learn?

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Part B: Answer the questions with your teacher. Give reasons and examples.

1. When did your company start, and who started it?
2. What was your first job? What did you do?
3. Which famous brand from your country do you like? Why?
4. Do you prefer to buy furniture online or in a store? Why?
5. Why do you think IKEA became popular all over the world?

6 Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

REVIEW

Complete the sentences. Then tell your teacher.

1. Three new words from today: _____
2. One fact about IKEA's history: _____
3. My company started in _____ . It _____
4. Last year at work, I _____

Takeaway: IKEA grew because it solved customers' problems: expensive transport, low prices with good quality, and hungry shoppers. Good business ideas often start with a simple problem.

+ Optional extension / homework

WRITING

Write 50–70 words with the title "The story of my company" (or a company you like). Use the past simple and time words: *In 1998... / Then... / Later... / In 2020...*

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Alternative activity:

Make a timeline of your career: five years and five sentences in the past simple. Present it to your teacher in the next class.

References

IKEA. (n.d.). *From humble origins to global brand – a brief history of IKEA*. https://www.ikea.com/us/en/this-is-ikea/about-us/from-humble-origins-to-global-brand-a-brief-history-of-ikea-pubad29a981/

Original materials: vocabulary, language examples and exercises were written for NATeacher for A2 learners.

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