

TEACHER'S GUIDE · 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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Teacher's guide

Learning objectives. By the end of the lesson, the student can: understand the main events in a short company history; use the past simple with regular and irregular verbs, including negatives and questions; tell the story of a company or their career.
Total time: approx. 60 minutes — Warm up 6 · Vocabulary 7 · Main input 10 · Comprehension 14 · Speaking 18 · Wrap-up 5. The extension is optional homework.

▶. Main input: about the resource

Resource: *From humble origins to global brand – a brief history of IKEA*, official IKEA website (US site). Free; no login. https://www.ikea.com/us/en/this-is-ikea/about-us/from-humble-origins-to-global-brand-a-brief-history-of-ikea-pubad29a981/

What to read: five short parts: "Our roots", "The IKEA range is born", "The flatpack revolution begins", "Well-fed customers are happy customers" and "Why is IKEA called IKEA?" (about 350 words, 3 minutes). Skip "Low prices and good quality" and "Democratic Design" if time is short.

Copyright: the text is not reproduced in this guide; open it on screen from the official page.

Key information: Ingvar Kamprad founded IKEA in 1943 at 17, selling goods like pens and wallets; he came from Småland, Sweden. His father gave him a small sum of money as a reward for doing well at school. In 1948 he started selling furniture. In 1953 IKEA adopted the flatpack, which solved high transport costs and damage. In June 1960 stores offered only coffee and cold dishes; by the end of the year the restaurant kitchen was fully equipped. Kamprad saw that people left the store at lunchtime and that hungry customers buy less. 1960s: stores in Denmark and Norway; 1970s: Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Singapore and Switzerland. IKEA = Ingvar Kamprad, Elmtaryd (the farm), Agunnaryd (the village). First catalogue 1950; last printed catalogue 2021.

1. Warm up

6 mins.

Show the pictures and elicit words (*store, boxes, build, Sweden*). Ask the questions. Help the student answer with full sentences: "I buy furniture online because it's cheaper."

Possible answers: "They are about IKEA: a big furniture store, flatpack boxes, building furniture at home and Sweden, its country."
Support: give key words on the board. **Challenge:** ask "What do you know about IKEA?"

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2. Vocabulary preparation

7 mins.

The student completes Part A and Part B alone. Check together, say the words aloud and ask the student to repeat the difficult ones.

Part A

1. found
2. furniture
3. customer
4. flatpack
5. price
6. transport

Part B

1. gave 2. sold 3. left 4. began 5. bought 6. had

British and American English: the page is from IKEA's US website: *catalog* (American) = *catalogue* (British); *store* is common in both, but British English also says *shop*. *Found* (start a company) has a regular past: *founded* — don't confuse it with *find – found*.

3. Main input and language focus

10 mins.

Open the page on screen. The student reads "Our roots" for the gist questions, then the other four parts. **Answers:** in 1943; he was 17.

Present the language focus in 1–2 minutes: elicit the rule from the examples, then move to the practice.

Practice

1. founded
2. sold
3. gave
4. didn't sell
5. did ... open

Common mistakes: "He founded" is correct, but students often say "He fund" / "finded"; "He didn't sold" → "He didn't **sell**"; "When IKEA started?" → "When **did** IKEA start?". Pronunciation of -ed: *opened* /d/, *looked* /t/, *founded, started* /ɪd/.

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4. Reading comprehension

14 mins.

The student reads again and works alone. Check together and ask the student to show the sentence in the text.

Part A

1. T 2. F (pens and wallets; furniture from 1948) 3. T 4. F (it solved costly transport problems) 5. T 6. F (hungry customers buy less)

Part B

1943: Ingvar Kamprad founded IKEA (selling pens and wallets) · 1948: he started selling furniture · 1953: IKEA adopted the flatpack · 1960–1969: stores opened in Denmark and Norway

Part C

1. Ingvar Kamprad, Elmtaryd (his family's farm) and Agunnaryd (the village). 2. People left the store at lunchtime to eat, and hungry customers buy less. 3. Open answer, e.g. "Yes, because flatpack and direct delivery from the factory make products cheaper."

Accept: short answers in Part B ("furniture", "flatpack"); any logical opinion with a reason in Part C3. **Support:** do Part B before Part A. **Challenge:** the student retells IKEA's story in five sentences in the past simple without looking.

5. Speaking practice and discussion

18 mins (cue cards 6 · questions 12).

The student chooses two cards and speaks for 1–2 minutes on each. Then ask the five questions one by one. Let the student finish, then ask follow-up questions: "When?", "Why?", "What happened next?"

Model answer (Q2): "My first job was in a bank. I answered the phone and I helped customers. I learnt a lot about money."
Evaluate: correct past forms (regular and irregular); *did* in questions and negatives; time expressions; answers longer than one sentence.
Correction: note mistakes while the student speaks and correct 2–3 of them at the end, so you don't interrupt fluency.

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6. Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

5 mins.

The student completes the sentences and says them aloud. Read the takeaway together and ask: "What problem does your company solve?"

Possible answers: "found, flatpack, customer"; "IKEA adopted the flatpack in 1953."; "My company started in 1998. It opened a second office in 2010."

+. Optional extension / homework

Check: 50–70 words; past simple (regular and irregular); dates with *in*; sequence words. Model: "My company started in 1998 in Bogotá. Two engineers founded it. At first, they sold software to banks. In 2010, they opened an office in Mexico. Then they hired 200 people."

✓. Did the student reach the objectives?

- Can the student say the main events in IKEA's history with dates?
- Does the student use regular and irregular past forms correctly in most sentences?
- Can the student ask and answer *When did...? / Why did...?*
- Can the student tell a short story about their company or career?

✔. Resource verification log

Resource	Institution / URL	Type · length	Checks (21 Oct 2026)	Result
From humble origins to global brand – a brief history of IKEA	IKEA (official company website) https://www.ikea.com/us/en/this-is-ikea/about-us/from-humble-origins-to-global-brand-a-brief-history-of-ikea-pubad29a981/	Web page · five short parts, about 350 words (3 min)	Page loads; content matches the exercises; free, no login; suitable for A2 with support; furniture company, not a language school (no competition conflict)	**Approved**

Photos: credits listed in the references (Unsplash). No image links are included in the worksheet.

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/

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