

TEACHER'S GUIDE · BUSINESS ENGLISH

Is Halloween big business?

LEVEL
B2 · Upper-Intermediate

TIME
60 min

SKILLS
Reading · Speaking · Grammar · Vocabulary

Learning objectives

In this lesson, you can:

- understand a press release with consumer survey data
- describe numbers, shares and changes accurately
- compare data with previous years
- discuss how retailers and consumers approach a seasonal event

Key vocabulary

survey · affordability · retailer · promotion · repurpose · margin of error · spending priority · comparative shop · early shopper · on par with

Materials

- this worksheet
- press release: *NRF Halloween Survey Shows Consumer Spending Expected to Reach $13.5 Billion* (National Retail Federation)

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 · Halloween decorations outside a shop window



PICTURE B · a carved pumpkin

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1. Is Halloween celebrated where you live? How has that changed in recent years?
2. When do shops in your city start selling Halloween products?
3. Why do you think companies invest so much in seasonal events like Halloween?

2 Vocabulary preparation

VOCABULARY

Part A: Match the words with the definitions.

promotion (n) | margin of error (n) | survey (n) | repurpose (v) | affordability (n) | retailer (n)

1. _____ a set of questions asked to many people to find out their opinions or plans
2. _____ how cheap or expensive something is for the people who want to buy it
3. _____ a business that sells products directly to the public
4. _____ a special offer, for example a discount, to increase sales
5. _____ to use something again for a different purpose
6. _____ the amount by which a survey result may be different from the real figure

Part B: Collocations. Complete the phrases with the words in the box. Use the correct form.

look forward to | pass up | carve | spread out | stretch | hand out

1. _____ candy to people who knock on your door
2. _____ pumpkins and put them outside the house
3. _____ your budget over several weeks
4. prices that are too good to _____
5. Halloween has _____ from a single day into a whole season
6. _____ the autumn months (American English: *fall*)

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3 Main input: read and learn

READING · GRAMMAR

Every year, the National Retail Federation (NRF), the largest retail trade association in the United States, asks thousands of consumers about their Halloween plans. Read its 2026 press release from the beginning to the paragraph about AI tools.

PRESS RELEASE

NRF Halloween Survey Shows Consumer Spending Expected to Reach $13.5 Billion

National Retail Federation · 22 September 2026 · about 650 words to read (3–4 minutes) · free
https://nrf.com/media-center/press-releases/nrf-halloween-survey-shows-consumer-spending-expected-to-reach-13-5-billion

Read the first two paragraphs. Answer: How much do consumers expect to spend on Halloween this year? What was last year's record?

Language focus: describing data: approximation, comparison and change

Business reports rarely give numbers alone. They round them, compare them and describe how they change. Look at these examples from the press release.

Function	Example
Approximation: about / nearly / almost + fraction	About half of consumers (49%)... · nearly one-third (31%)
Similar result: on par with / in line with	74% plan to celebrate, on par with 73% last year.
Change: rise from X to Y · increase to Y from X	The percentage has grown, rising from 34% in 2016.
Multiples: almost double / twice as many	13% of consumers, almost double 7% a decade ago
Share of a total: account for	96% plan to buy candy, accounting for $4.1 billion.

Remember: *rise / fall* ***from*** *X* ***to*** *Y*, *rise / fall* ***by*** *5 points* (the difference).

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Practice: Complete the sentences with the expressions in the box.

on par with | double | account for | nearly | rose

1. _____ half of consumers (47%) are using AI tools for their Halloween shopping.
2. Costumes are expected to _____ $4.4 billion of spending.
3. This year's 74% participation rate is _____ last year's 73%.
4. The share of early shoppers _____ from 34% in 2016 to 49% this year.
5. 13% of consumers plan to buy from local businesses — almost _____ the 7% of 2016.

4 Reading comprehension

READING

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

1. The expected total for this year is higher than last year's record. T / F
2. Fewer people plan to celebrate Halloween now than in 2019. T / F
3. The average consumer expects to spend about $115. T / F
4. Decorations are the most popular Halloween purchase. T / F
5. Online stores are the top destination for Halloween shopping. T / F
6. Almost half of consumers are using AI tools for their Halloween shopping. T / F

Part B: Choose the correct answer.

1. Why did 23% of early shoppers buy items before October?
   (a) To spread out their budgets. (b) Because shops close in October.
   (c) Because costumes are only sold online.
2. Which category has the highest expected spending?
   (a) Candy. (b) Decorations. (c) Costumes.
3. What will 31% of consumers do if prices are higher than expected?
   (a) Stop celebrating Halloween. (b) Comparative shop. (c) Buy only greeting cards.
4. Who conducted the survey for the NRF?
   (a) The US government. (b) Allison Zeller. (c) Prosper Insights & Analytics.

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Part C: Think and answer.

1. Allison Zeller says shoppers are “thoughtful and strategic”. Which data in the text support this idea? Give two examples.

2. Why do you think more people now shop for Halloween in September or earlier?

3. How reliable are these figures? Think about the number of people surveyed and the margin of error.

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: Seasonal marketing

- A campaign I remember
- Why it worked
- Risks for a brand

Cue card 2: Halloween at work

- Office events
- Costumes at work?
- Team building

Cue card 3: Smart shopping

- Comparing prices
- Coupons and sales
- Reusing items

Cue card 4: AI and shopping

- How I use it
- Benefits
- Concerns

Cue card 5: Local vs global

- Local businesses
- Discount chains
- Online stores

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

1. Why do you think Halloween has become so important for retailers?
2. Should companies organise Halloween events for their employees? Why? / Why not?
3. Would AI tools change the way you shop for a celebration? How?
4. Halloween is spreading to many countries. Is that an opportunity for local businesses or a threat to local traditions?
5. If you managed a shop, how would you prepare for the Halloween season?

6 Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

REVIEW

Complete the sentences. Then tell your teacher.

1. Three useful expressions from today: _____
2. The most surprising figure in the press release: _____
3. Compared with last year, Halloween spending is _____
4. One idea from today that a business could use: _____

Takeaway: Halloween is a major retail season in the US: consumers expect to spend $13.5 billion, but they plan carefully. Good data descriptions round, compare and explain numbers clearly.

+ Optional extension / homework

WRITING

Write a short report (150–180 words) for a retail manager summarising the main results of the NRF Halloween survey. Use at least five expressions for describing data.

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Alternative activity:

Prepare a two-minute presentation: “Halloween in numbers: what retailers should know”. Present it to your teacher in the next class.

References

National Retail Federation. (2026, September 22). *NRF Halloween survey shows consumer spending expected to reach $13.5 billion* [Press release]. https://nrf.com/media-center/press-releases/nrf-halloween-survey-shows-consumer-spending-expected-to-reach-13-5-billion

Original materials: vocabulary, language examples and exercises were written for NATeacher for B2 learners.

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Teacher's guide

Learning objectives. By the end of the lesson, the student can: understand the key figures in a consumer survey press release; describe numbers with approximation, comparison and change; evaluate the reliability of survey data; discuss seasonal retail strategies.
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: *NRF Halloween Survey Shows Consumer Spending Expected to Reach $13.5 Billion*, National Retail Federation press release (22 September 2026). Free; no login. https://nrf.com/media-center/press-releases/nrf-halloween-survey-shows-consumer-spending-expected-to-reach-13-5-billion

What to read: from the beginning to the paragraph about AI tools (about 650 words, 3–4 minutes). The costume rankings and the "About NRF" section are optional.

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

Key information: Expected spending: $13.5 billion (record last year: $13.1 billion); survey by Prosper Insights & Analytics. 49% start shopping in September or earlier (34% in 2016); early shoppers: 42% look forward to fall, 34% Halloween is a favourite holiday, 23% spread out budgets, 21% prices and promotions too good to pass up. 74% plan to celebrate (73% last year; 68% in 2019). Top activities: handing out candy 61%, costumes 50%, decorating 42%, carving pumpkins 42%, scary movies 42%. Average $115.14 per person ($114.45 in 2025). If prices are higher: 31% comparative shop, 26% coupons or sales; 34% look for reusable items. Candy 96% / $4.1 billion; decorations 78% / $4.3 billion; costumes 71% / $4.4 billion; greeting cards 42% (38% in 2025) / $0.8 billion. Discount stores 39%, specialty Halloween/costume stores 32%, online 27%, local and small businesses 13% (7% in 2016). AI tools: 47%. Online searches 32% for costume inspiration (37% last year). Survey: 7,889 consumers, 1–9 September, margin of error ±1.1 points. Quote: Allison Zeller (NRF); Phil Rist (Prosper).

1. Warm up

6 mins.

Show the pictures. Ask the questions and push for developed answers with reasons and examples from the student's country.

Possible answers: "The pictures show Halloween decorations and a carved pumpkin — the topic is Halloween as a business."
Support: give phrases: *In my country..., These days..., Shops usually start...* **Challenge:** ask "Who benefits most from Halloween: retailers, consumers or employers?"

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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. survey
2. affordability
3. retailer
4. promotion
5. repurpose
6. margin of error

Part B

1. hand out 2. carve 3. spread out 4. pass up 5. stretched 6. look forward to

American and British English: American *candy*, *fall*, *yard*; British *sweets*, *autumn*, *garden*. *Comparative shop* = compare prices in different shops before buying. *Too good to pass up* = too attractive to miss.

3. Main input and language focus

10 mins.

Open the press release on screen. The student reads the first two paragraphs for the gist questions, then continues to the paragraph about AI tools. **Answers:** $13.5 billion; $13.1 billion.

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

Practice

1. Nearly
2. account for
3. on par with
4. rose
5. double

Common mistakes: "The share rose of 34% to 49%" → "rose **from** 34% **to** 49%"; "Candy accounts $4.1 billion" → "accounts **for**"; "nearly the half" → "nearly half"; "on par to last year" → "on par **with**". American *candy* = British *sweets*; American *fall* = British *autumn*.

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4. Reading comprehension

14 mins.

The student reads again and works alone. Check together and ask the student to quote the exact figure from the text for each answer.

Part A

1. T ($13.5 billion vs $13.1 billion) 2. F (74% now; 68% in 2019) 3. T ($115.14) 4. F (candy: 96%) 5. F (discount stores, 39%) 6. T (47%)

Part B

1. a 2. c ($4.4 billion) 3. b 4. c

Part C

1. e.g. 31% will comparative shop; 26% will look for coupons or sales; 34% will buy items they can reuse or repurpose; 23% of early shoppers spread out their budgets. 2. Open answer, e.g. enthusiasm for the season, good promotions, spreading costs. 3. 7,889 consumers, margin of error ±1.1 percentage points — a large sample; but these are plans, not real spending.

Accept: answers with the correct figure or a correct paraphrase; in Part C, any well-supported opinion. **Support:** before reading, write the key numbers on screen (13.5, 74%, 115.14, 96%, 39%, 47%) and ask what each one refers to. **Challenge:** the student summarises the press release in one minute using at least four data expressions.

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: “What figure supports that?”, “How does that compare with your country?”, “What would you do as a retailer?”

Model answer (Q5): “I’d start selling Halloween products in September, because about half of consumers shop that early. I’d offer items at different price points and some reusable decorations, since nearly a third of shoppers compare prices.”
Evaluate: accurate use of data expressions (nearly, on par with, account for, rise from…to); use of evidence from the text; range of business vocabulary; fluency and extended answers.
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. Ask: "Which expression for describing data will you use in your next report?"

Possible answers: "on par with, account for, nearly half"; "47% use AI tools for Halloween shopping."; "Compared with last year, Halloween spending is slightly higher — $13.5 billion vs $13.1 billion."

+. Optional extension / homework

Check: 150–180 words; clear structure (introduction, key figures, consumer behaviour, recommendation); accurate data from the press release; expressions of approximation, comparison and change; neutral, professional register.

✓. Did the student reach the objectives?

- Can the student identify and explain the key figures in the press release?
- Does the student use expressions of approximation, comparison and change correctly?
- Can the student comment on the reliability of survey data?
- Can the student give reasoned business recommendations for a seasonal event?

✓. Resource verification log

Resource	Institution / URL	Type · length	Checks (28 Oct 2026)	Result
NRF Halloween Survey Shows Consumer Spending Expected to Reach $13.5 Billion	National Retail Federation (retail trade association) https://nrf.com/media-center/press-releases/nrf-halloween-survey-shows-consumer-spending-expected-to-reach-13-5-billion	Press release · about 650 words to read (3–4 min)	Page loads; title, date and data match the exercises; free, no login; suitable for B2; trade association, not a language school	**Approved**

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

References

National Retail Federation. (2026, September 22). *NRF Halloween survey shows consumer spending expected to reach $13.5 billion* [Press release]. https://nrf.com/media-center/press-releases/nrf-halloween-survey-shows-consumer-spending-expected-to-reach-13-5-billion

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