

Less is more?

LEVEL:	B1+
TIME:	90 MINS



Activity 1: Warm-up

How many things do you possess?

How many of them do you use on a regular basis?

Do you sort your stuff and throw away things you don't need?

Do you like collecting things?

Activity 2: Reading

My stuff - A one-year human experiment about what truly matters



After a split with his long-time girlfriend Petri Luukkainen found himself buying more and more things with his credit card. Deciding **enough is enough**, he starts a new experiment. Everything he owns will be put into **storage** (literally everything: Luukkainen begins the film completely naked in a totally empty flat) and he will allow himself to pick one **item** per day while **forbidding** himself from buying anything new. As he **retrieves** one item at a time, Luukkainen begins to **appreciate** the difference between what he wants and what he needs. But when a new girl enters his life, the experiment proves a little more difficult to keep going.

This is an often surprising documentary that shows Western culture's relationship with the things that it owns. Luukkainen starts with the things that he needs (unsurprisingly, the first item he retrieves is a long coat) and it leads to some wonderful moments when he rediscovers the **joy** of something he's denied himself: the warmth of a **duvet** or the softness of a pillow. But as his basic needs are slowly taken care, it becomes interesting to see how unnecessary many of his **belongings** seem and how easy it can be to live without them

The concept of the film: Take all of your stuff into a storage, and bring back only one item per day. The result? An everyday adventure driving him deeper and deeper into the empty spot in his heart. You're right: this would be borderline insane even without his decision of constantly filming himself.

Author of the article: Laurence Boyce

Source: <http://www.screendaily.com/reviews/the-latest/-my-stuff/5051968.article>

2A: What is the film about? Summarise its plot in two sentences.

Before writing your summary: Work in pairs and find different expressions and phrases used to describe the plot of a film/book.

The film deals with ...
The film tells the story of ...
The film is about ...
The film tackles ...
The film focuses on ...
The film concerns

Example: *The film tells the story of a man who used to indulge himself in buying and used to have a lot of stuff. One day, overwhelmed by his belongings, he decided to put everything into a storage unit and retrieve only one item a day in order to discover what truly matters in life.*

2B: Vocabulary: Match the words (1-9) with their definitions (A-I).

1.	enough is enough	I	used for saying that something must stop
2.	storage	G	space available for storing something, in particular allocated space in a warehouse
3.	item	E	an individual thing, usually one of several things in a group or on a list an individual subject that you are discussing or dealing with an article in a newspaper or magazine
4.	to retrieve	A	to get or bring (something) back from somewhere
5.	to forbid	C	to refuse to allow (something) to order (someone) not to do something
6.	to appreciate	D	to recognize the full worth of to be grateful for (something)
7.	joy	H	a feeling of great pleasure and happiness
8.	duvet	B	a warm cover for your bed, consisting of a large cloth bag filled with feathers or a soft material
9.	belongings	F	the things you own

Definitions A, C, D, G, H: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>

Definitions B, E, F, I: <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/>

2C: Fill the gaps with the words from the activity 2B. Put them into the correct form where necessary.

1. Please remember to take all your **belongings** with you when leaving the train.
2. Petri **retrieves** one item a day.
3. It is **forbidden** to smoke here.
4. I love lazy Sunday mornings spent under a warm **duvet**.
5. I would **appreciate** your help.
6. We saw the tears of **joy** on her face.
7. I rented a **storage** for my belongings.
8. How many new gadgets does she need, before **enough is enough**.
9. No more than 6 **items** allowed in changing room.

2D: Find synonyms.

1.	duvet (BrE)	C	comforter (AmE)
2.	to forbid	D	to ban
3.	joy	E	happiness
4.	to retrieve	A	to get back
5.	to appreciate	B	to be grateful

Activity 3: Watch the trailer of the film “My stuff” and answer the questions:



To watch the video scan the QR code or go to http://bit.ly/AT_LessIsMore

1. What rules did Petri set?
 - ① **One year human experiment**
 - ② **All stuff to storage**
 - ③ **One item back per day**
 - ④ **No buying – any stuff**
2. What do you think of the experiment? Give three adjectives to describe it.
 - ①
 - ②
 - ③
3. Would you do such an experiment on yourself? Yes/no? Why?

4. Imagine you are going to do such an experiment – prepare a list of 5 things which you would retrieve first.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Activity 4: Find synonyms for the underlined expressions in the text from the activity 2.

Source: <http://www.finnishfilmaffair.fi/page/films/my-stuff/userid//email/>

My stuff

When twentysomething Petri gets dumped by his girlfriend, he tries to get over it by pushing his credit card limit. He buys stuff - lots of stuff. But it doesn't make him happy. Petri is in the middle of an existential crisis when he decides to start an experiment on himself: He puts all his belongings in a storage container. For one year, Petri allows himself to retrieve only one item per day and he is not allowed to buy anything new. New life begins naked next to a radiator. Little by little Petri learns how to live again with less for himself.

Petri gets dumped by his girlfriend	a split with his long-time girlfriend
pushing his credit card limit	buying more and more things with his credit card
stuff	things, belongings
an experiment on himself	human experiment
belongings	things, stuff
retrieve	pick, bring back
is not allowed to	forbidding himself from buying anything new

Activity 5: Watching

5A: Before watching:

1. How big is your flat/house? How many rooms are there in your flat/house? Is it enough for you?
2. Do you feel comfortable at your place? What can you change in your flat/house so that you can feel even better at home?



5B: Watch the speech and summarise Graham Hill's message. What are his three approaches?

To watch the speech scan the QR code or go to http://bit.ly/AT_LessIsMore

Summary:

We should live little – get rid of the stuff we don't need and make the most out of the space we have. We should think before we buy so that we buy stuff which truly makes us happy and we will love it for years.

3 approaches:

- ① *Edit ruthlessly.*
- ② *Think small – small is sexy.*
- ③ *Make multifunctional spaces and housewares.*

5C: Watch the speech again (00:58 – 5:05) and fill the gaps with words or chunks:

1. So we've got **triple** the space, but we've become such good shoppers that we need even more space.
2. So where does this lead? Lots of **credit card debt**, huge **environmental footprints**, and perhaps not coincidentally, our happiness levels **flat-lined** over the same 50 years.
3. Well I'm here to suggest there's a better way, that less might actually **equal** more.
4. I bet most of us have experienced at some point the **joys** of less: college - in your dorm, traveling - in a hotel room, camping - rig up basically nothing, maybe a boat.
5. So I started a project called Life Edited at lifeedited.org to **further** this **conversation** and to find some great solutions in this area.
6. First up: **crowd-sourcing** my 420 sq. ft. apartment in Manhattan with partners Mutopo and Jovoto.com.
7. It's time for me to **let it go**.
8. **By all means**, we should buy and own some great stuff.
9. [...] a little side table stretches out to **seat** 10.
10. Most of us, maybe all of us, are here pretty happily for a **bunch of days** with a couple of bags, maybe a small space, a hotel room.

5D: After watching: Discussion

What do you think of the idea of editing our lives?

Would you like to put Graham's ideas into practice?