

Did you know?

Decimal Day



In February 1971, nearly half a century ago, the United Kingdom and Ireland changed from pounds, shillings and pence and joined the rest of the world's metric currencies.

Do you remember the change from Deutschmarks to the Euro on 1st January 2002 and all the corresponding disruption that took place in the twelve Euroland countries? If so, you'll know how disruptive the whole process can be – but how quickly people get used to the new money. At least

in Europe all the affected currencies were already operating in a decimal system of 100 units. For the poor old Brits and Irish in 1971, it was more challenging: they moved from a system of 12 pennies in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound to 100 new pence in a pound.

While the old system may seem rather complicated, it was useful in that money could easily be factored: halves, thirds, quarters, eighths and tenths could quickly be calculated. And children could recite their twelve times table with ease.

To prepare the population for D-Day on 15 February 1971, there were public information films released by the government, jingles were created to help people remember the exchange rate and popular variety performer Max Bygraves released a song called *Decimalisation* to try to soothe the worries of the older generation who were concerned about this new currency. The Scaffold pop group also released a song with the title *Decimal Five*. Information packs were distributed to every household; children had extra lessons at school and television and radio programmes were full of hints and tips about how to deal with the incoming new currency.

In 1971 the old currency, known as LSD from the Latin *librae, solidi* and *denarii*, was composed of the following coins: a penny, a threepenny piece (known as a thre'penny bit), a sixpenny piece, a shilling, a two-shilling piece; in addition there was a ten-shilling note and a pound note.

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With the introduction of the new decimal coins (½p, 1p, 2p, 10p and 50p) only the shilling and two-shilling coin remained, along with the pound note, as they had an equivalent value. So did the sixpence – it was equal to 2½ new pence - but it was removed from circulation as its silver colour didn't match the new bronze lower value coins. And the ten-shilling note was replaced by a shiny 50p piece.

The majority of the UK population have no memory of using the old LSD currency – but many children's nursery rhymes include references to the old money:

*I have a jolly shilling, a lovely jolly shilling;
Sing a song of sixpence; Hot cross buns! Hot cross buns!
One a penny, two a penny, Hot cross buns!;
Half a pound of tuppenny rice*

(from *Pop goes the weasel*)

While Britain is still working out how to deal with the horrendous negotiations about Brexit, in February 1971, they were getting to grips with those confounded new pence.

If you would like to know more about Decimal Day then click here https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decimal_Day

And if you would like to hear Max Bygraves sing *Decimalisation*, then click here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCiEzQ4EGk4>

And if you would like to use **Money** as a topic in your lessons, then we have provided you with two activities at A2 level; take a look at the **Teacher's notes** and **Worksheets 1 + 2**.

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Teacher's notes

Money, money, money! (level A2 upwards, 15 minutes)

- Make a copy of **Money, money, money!** one for each student.
- On the board write: *Money makes the world go round*. Ask students to discuss the meaning of the proverb. Ask them if they know the German translation. (*Geld regiert die Welt.*)
- Tell students they are going to complete an exercise about money idioms and expressions.
- Hand out the worksheet, one for each student.
- Explain that students should match the English expression with the German translations. Encourage the use of dictionaries.
- Ask students to check their answers with a partner.
- Check answers together in class. **Key:** 1e, 2h, 3a, 4j, 5b, 6i, 7f, 8c, 9d, 10g.
- Ask students which of the expressions are word-for-word translations (2h, 8c, 9d, 10g). Explain that the expression 'to spend a penny' comes from the cost of public toilets which used to cost one penny to use.
- Ask students which expressions they would like to learn and whether they know any other 'money' expressions.

A shopping puzzle (level A2 upwards, 10 minutes)

- If you think your students would like the mathematical challenge, let them have a go at **A shopping puzzle**.
- Make a copy of **A shopping puzzle**, one for each student.
- Ask students if they can think of any price increases in their weekly shopping basket in the last ten or twenty years.
- Explain that puzzle is about the price of food in the UK from 1971. This was the year the UK started using decimal currency.
- Hand out the worksheet, one for each student and ask students to calculate the prices.
- Ask students to check their answers with a partner.
- Check answers together in class. **Key:** 250g of butter - 12p, a kilo of flour - 12p, a loaf of bread - 9p, a litre of milk - 10p, fish and chips - 25p, a pint of beer - 12p.
- Ask students to discuss with a partner whether they know the current UK prices of these goods.
- **Key:** 250g of butter - £1.67, a kilo of flour - £1.00, a loaf of bread - 94p, a litre of milk - 89p, fish and chips - £3.30, a pint of beer - £3.00, a kilo of potatoes - 90p, a lemon - 35p.
- Ask students if they know the equivalent prices today in Germany.

Did you know?

Worksheet 1

Money, money, money!

Match the English expressions with the German expressions.

<i>English expression</i>		<i>German expression</i>	
1	To have money to burn.	a	Geld ist Macht.
2	Money doesn't grow on trees.	b	Ich würde gerne wissen, was du denkst.
3	Money talks.	c	Zeit ist Geld.
4	To throw money down the drain.	d	Geld ist die Wurzel allen Übels.
5	A penny for your thoughts.	e	Geld wie Heu haben.
6	To spend a penny.	f	Geld allein macht nicht glücklich.
7	Money can't buy happiness.	g	Geld ist knapp.
8	Time is money.	h	Geld wächst nicht auf Bäumen.
9	Money is the root of all evil.	i	auf die Toilette gehen
10	Money is tight.	j	Geld zum Fenster hinauswerfen

Which expressions do you like? Which ones would you like to learn? Do you know any other money expressions?

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Worksheet 2

A shopping puzzle

Back in 1971 the prices of goods in the UK were much cheaper. A kilo of potatoes cost only 4p and 250g of butter was three times that price. A kilo of flour was the same price as butter. A loaf of bread was 3 pence cheaper than the flour. A lemon cost 5p, a litre of milk was twice the price of a lemon, and fish and chips were two-and-a-half times the price of a litre of milk. And a pint* of beer was just 2p more than a litre of milk. (* 1 pint = 0,57l)

How much was ...?

250g of butter	_____	a kilo of flour	_____
a loaf of bread?	_____	a litre of milk	_____
fish and chips	_____	a pint of beer	_____

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How much was ...?

250g of butter	_____	a kilo of flour	_____
a loaf of bread?	_____	a litre of milk	_____
fish and chips	_____	a pint of beer	_____