

1 How often do you feel it is necessary to replace or upgrade the following possessions? Talk to a partner.

- a** cell phone
- b** computer
- c** wardrobe

The simple life

A

In the age of consumerism, many people have more things than they really need and a strong desire for even more! How many possessions do we really need to be happy? How often do we need to upgrade or update our cell phones, computers, and wardrobe?

B

In 2006, a group of ten friends in San Francisco decided to make a special kind of contract. They all agreed that they would live as cheaply as possible for a year. They put this agreement online, and soon thousands of other people across the world joined them.

C

The contract followed two general rules: 1) Don't buy new products of any kind from stores or websites, and 2) either borrow items or buy used goods as much as possible.

D

They allowed for several exceptions to the rules:

- food, drink, and essential medicine;
- essential cleaning products (but not cleaning equipment);
- socks and underwear;
- basic services (plumbers, electricians, veterinarians, etc.);
- magazines and newspapers (but try to do more reading online);
- DVD rentals.

E

Although a few members failed to follow the rules at times, the group generally succeeded and most of them keep up this way of living even today. They found that it wasn't particularly difficult to do, and they saved quite a bit of money (one member saved about \$4,000!).

F

Though living more simply may not solve all of the world's problems, there are certainly many of us who would benefit by spending less on things we don't really need.

G

How about you? Could you survive without buying anything new for a whole year?

2 Complete the sentences so they are true for you. Then talk to a partner.

- a** Following the kind of contract in the reading would be _____ for me to do.
- b** Something I could probably spend less money on is _____.
- c** It would be very difficult for me, however, not to spend money on _____.
- d** One way not to spend much money on _____ is to _____.

3 Match the definitions to words from the text.

- a** the belief that it is good if people buy and use a lot of goods and services (paragraph A) _____
- b** the clothes that someone owns (paragraph A) _____
- c** a written agreement between two or more people (paragraph B) _____
- d** things that are different in some way from other things, and so cannot be included (paragraph D) _____
- e** continue to do something (paragraph E) _____
- f** get help or an advantage from something (paragraph F) _____