

'I can't afford what I used to': how the cost of living has changed viewing habits

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. Which of these things would you give up to save money? Put them in order from 1–6: 1 is the thing you would be most likely to give up and 6 is the least likely. Give reasons for your choice.
- mobile phone
 - TV services and apps
 - internet service
 - washing machine
 - car
 - air conditioning

2 Key words

- a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

cancel

cut back

disability

inflation

subscriber

1. _____ is when prices increase so that money becomes less valuable.
2. A _____ is someone who pays money to receive a product or service regularly.
3. If you _____ a streaming service, you stop paying for it.
4. If you have a _____, you cannot use a part of your body or your brain correctly.
5. If you _____, you reduce the amount of money you spend.

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extend

outgoings

pension

reassess

retired

6. Your _____ are the amounts of money you have to spend regularly, for example on your rent or fuel bills.
7. If a person is _____, they are no longer working because they are too old.
8. Your _____ is the money you receive regularly after you have stopped working because of your age.
9. If you _____ your home, you make it bigger.
10. If you _____ something, you check it carefully again.

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- 1 The UK inflation rate is about 10% and could increase to 12% by October, 2022. The cost-of-living crisis means many people are trying to reduce their expenses.
- 2 One area includes streaming services. Netflix lost one million subscribers in the second quarter of 2022.
- 3 We spoke to four people about how the rising cost of living has changed their TV habits.

'I haven't watched it in ages'

- 4 Kate says she has cancelled Netflix. "I haven't watched it for ages so what am I paying for?"
- 5 Kate says she decided to give up the streaming services partly because of the cost. "I've been trying to reduce my weekly spending. There's no point if you're not using the service."
- 6 She adds that she might go back to Netflix in the autumn, "if they have some interesting shows."

'I've had to cut back on the things that previously weren't luxuries'

- 7 Jess has a disability and is unable to work. "I've had to cut back on the things that weren't luxuries before but *are* now – streaming services, for example."
- 8 Jess's monthly bills have increased – "and that's during summer; I don't know what's going to happen in winter," she says. She was paying £40 a month for her streaming services.

'My pension is not going up'

- 9 The cost of living crisis has made 72-year-old Ted Cardwell check his monthly outgoings. Cardwell, who is retired, has decided to cancel Netflix and Amazon Prime to save money but would return if they offered a discount rate for pensioners.
- 10 Ted says the reason is financial and not because services are getting worse.
- 11 "The cost of living is going up and my pension is not going up with it."

'We decided to rationalize our outgoings'

- 12 "My wife and I are extending our home and the building costs have rocketed," says John, 41, an engineer.
- 13 "We decided to increase our savings and reassess our finances."
- 14 John now only joins and leaves services when there is a particular show he wants to watch.
- 15 "We cancelled Netflix but recently re-joined to watch a series and cancelled again after two months. We joined Disney+ to watch the *Star Wars* films, but I'm thinking of cancelling it too."
- 16 John and his wife were not using their subscriptions enough and they were costing nearly £50 a month. "We have work and two young kids, so there's no time to watch much TV."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What will the UK inflation rate probably be in October, 2022?
2. How many subscribers did Netflix lose in the second quarter of 2022?
3. Why has Kate cancelled Netflix?
4. Why might she go back to Netflix in the autumn?
5. Why is Jess unable to work?
6. How much was Jess paying for her streaming services?
7. Why would Ted return to Netflix and Amazon Prime?
8. Why has he cancelled his streaming services?
9. What has happened to the costs of extending John's home?
10. Why did he join Disney+?

4 Key language

a. Match the words from the text with their meanings

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. luxury | a. before the present time |
| 2. habit | b. suddenly increase a lot |
| 3. previously | c. make something more efficient |
| 4. discount | d. something expensive that you enjoy but do not really need |
| 5. rocket | e. a reduction in the price of something |
| 6. rationalize | f. something you do often or regularly |

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5 Discussion

- a. Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not?
- "I couldn't live without streaming services."

6 In your own words

- a. Inflation is happening in a lot of countries around the world. How could people reduce their expenses? Which things do people pay for that they do not really need? Search online to find ways people could save money.
- b. Share your ideas with the class.