

Pret: are you ready to tackle food waste?

Pret (formerly Pret a Manger) is a chain of take-away food outlets, which sells hot drinks and a range of food, that is 'ready to eat' in a translation of the French phrase that gives it its name. It started in 1986 and now has over 590 outlets.

Pret says:

*"Since opening our first shop in 1986, Pret's mission has been simple. To serve freshly made food and good organic coffee, whilst also trying to do the right thing. **That's why our food is handmade in our shop kitchens throughout the day and anything we don't sell, goes to charity.** That's also why our coffee is organic (and always will be) and our Coffee Fund is supporting the next generation of farmers. It's (partly) what we think makes Pret special."*

<https://www.pret.co.uk/en-GB/about-pret>

Food at Pret is only ever offered for sale on the day when they are first made. At the end of each day, any food that hasn't been sold is donated to local homeless charities, drop-in centres and via food sharing apps.

(You may wish to use [this short video interview](#) as a resource while teaching this unit, although please note that it was filmed in 2013.)

Food waste is a major issue for all companies. Trade waste disposal is a significant expense, and litter in many city centres can be traced back to fast food outlets.

During this activity, students will be cast in the role of logistics consultants, who have been brought in to consider the following key questions:

- How does the store know how many sandwiches to make, and what quantity of fresh ingredients to order in, so that the waste is reduced to a minimum?
- How can the distribution of the waste food be co-ordinated so as to reduce costs to the company?

Starter

Have the '[Endless High Street](#)' video playing, with the sound turned down low as students enter the classroom. It provides an 'endless High Street' and shows scenes from a range of Pret restaurants.

Write the following question on the whiteboard, or handed out on slips of paper as students enter, as a prompt for discussion:

- Croissants made for sale and sold in packaging have a use-by-date on them, but those sold in Pret don't. Why not?

Discuss the statement

Explain the background to the activity, and why Pret croissants don't have a date on them. Explain that a croissant would be an example of a perishable product. This is one that has a limited life span, or whose value is significantly reduced (perhaps to zero) if it is not sold within a particular period of time. The actual period of time involved is variable. These are also time-sensitive products.

Ask students to suggest some examples of perishable products that must be used on the day they are produced if they are to have their maximum value.

Here are some suggestions:

- Fish
- Newspapers
- Concert tickets
- Train tickets for specific journeys
- French bread
- Sandwiches

These products require additional efforts to ensure they are delivered promptly to maximise the potential for sales. This adds additional logistical pressure, with time-sensitive and temperature-sensitive products.

Food products are subject to additional legislation regarding hygiene and storage.

Main activity

What decisions are made within a company to reduce food waste?

Students are asked to produce a piece of writing for the journal of the [British Sandwich and Food To Go Association](#) on the theme above.

Students could be given the [Sandwich writing frame](#) (PPT) to help them construct their writing. This is based on the popular burger essay writing diagram.

They should consider the importance of logistics in this piece of writing. How do the decisions on the ordering of ingredients, positioning of restaurants (both in terms of which towns to locate in, and whereabouts within the town)

Download:

- [Sandwich writing frame](#) (PPT)
- [Sandwich Information sheet](#) (PDF)

What happens to waste food that is generated by your school's dining hall? Why not speak to your school's catering manager. When and from where is the food delivered that they use? How many local food suppliers do they use?

Can you develop some ideas for how to (further) reduce the food waste that is generated, and ensure that it is disposed of in an (even more) environmentally friendly way?

Plenary

Students should be given a copy of the Sandwich net (PDF) – ideally this should be printed onto thin card so that when it is cut out the final product is a little more robust

Download: [Sandwich net](#) (PDF)

Their challenge is to produce a sandwich box with contents, which explains the important decisions which need to be made each day.

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This activity is based on the idea of the landscape in a box, which has been adapted by many teachers. It was produced by Alan Parkinson.

Download: [Landscape in a Box – Teaching Geography article from 2009](#) (PDF)

Identify the location of your nearest Pret shop [here](#).

Explore what is meant by the term 'freeganism'. What options are there for this in the town where you live?

Goat city centre plans are available from Experian UK. They show the layout of each retail location and provide further information. They are available as a hard copy, PDF, or suitable for opening up within a GIS package such as ArcGIS Online. A list of the available plans and more information is available [here](#).