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Gender Bender

Ikea is well known for its targeted marketing. Today we will be looking how the store appeals to women. First though let's talk about gender in the English language.

As you know nouns have no gender in English which makes learning our language a lot easier! No agreements, no genders to learn. In fact the only time you have to worry about gender when you speak English is when using personal pronouns.

When we talk about what belongs to whom in English say his, her, their. It's very easy to decide which to use as the choice of personal pronoun depends on the gender of the person who owns the property (as nouns have no gender). This means that someone's Mother can be HIS mother or HER mother depending on whom you are talking about.

Let's practice.



Using possessive pronouns from the list fill the gaps in the sentences below.

My
Your
His
Her/hers
Its
Our
Your
Their

1. I saw a woman at IKEA last week who was there with five children. Two of……. children were crying constantly and the others were running around. It must have been really hard for her.

2. The director of the Lyon store is the youngest man ever to be in that position. ……. name is Jerome Smith.

3. John is a security guard in an IKEA store and ……. wife works there too.

4. Stephanie has been working for IKEA for ten years and …… husband looks after the kids at home.

5. Arthur shops regularly at IKEA and he took ….. daughter their last week to show her how the system works there.

6. Fred thinks he is good at assembling flat pack furniture but …… daughter put up a shelf much faster than him.

7. Sophie always argues about DIY with …….. husband.

8. Samantha is really good at assembling IKEA furniture but …… brother always thinks he can do it better than her.

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Now, on the subject of women and IKEA, listen to the article that your teacher is going to read to you and fill the gaps.

Women are more skilled at DIY

Women are more skilled than men at assembling flat pack furniture, according to a female boss at furniture store Ikea.

By Urmee Khan 09 Dec 2008

The man of the house may be keener to show off ……. "Construction skills" while the fairer sex wins hands-down in the real DIY stakes, …….. to Petra Hesser, head of the Swedish giant's German operation.

"Men …….. look at the directions and have the most problems with construction because they always think they can do that," she said.

"The woman first sorts the parts in an orderly way. Men throw them in a pile and then something goes missing,".

Confirming that women are better at putting together their furniture, she said: "Tests have shown this to be true."

Women make up 70 percent of the chain's ……. base, according to Mrs Hesser.

Psychologist Gladeana McMahon said it was ……. surprise that women confound the stereotypical image that they are poor at DIY.

"Men …… joke about women not being very good at DIY but it is not the case at all. Women are far more patient and look at …….. in a much calmer way than men," she said.

"But women take it more in their stride and, importantly, are not afraid to ask for help. Men won't ask for help often …… they see it as an affront to …….. masculinity," she told the Express.

"Women are good at multi-tasking and use both sides of …… brains, which helps them to work things out, ……. men are much more linear in their approach."

Discussion Points:

Comprehension Questions :

1. Who wants to show off their skills when assembling furniture, men or women?
2. How can it be proved that women are better than men at putting furniture together?
3. According to the psychologist why are women better than men at DIY?
4. Why don’t men ask for help with DIY?
5. What helps women to work out the instructions?

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- Why do you think IKEA published the results of this research?
- How can an article like this in a well-known British article help IKEA to target women?

- **<u>Let's take a look at some other targeted marketing with this amusing advert:</u>**

You tube - Perfect mother

- ***Look at the video on you tube (at home in preparation for your lesson if necessary) and prepare to comment on the following:***

1. Which items of furniture did the woman 'convert' so that she could quickly transform her apartment?
2. Why is she the perfect mother?
3. What details did she forget about until the last minute?

4. This ad. Is also called IKEA for divorced mothers. Do you think she is divorced or not?

5. Do you think that this ad is an effective way of attracting female customers to the stores?