



SMALL BUSINESSES

“Small businesses provide the feeling that a real person is behind it all, someone who cares more about giving us a quality product or service, over just taking our hard-earned dollars.”

Annie Bukhman, American designer and photographer

1. Small Businesses Discussion

1. What is the difference between a small business and a big business?
2. How important are small businesses for the economy?
3. How would you define a small business? Does it depend on the number of employees or the size of its revenue? Is there an official definition from your country? Why is it necessary to define?
4. What is the difference between a small business and a startup? What is the difference between a small business owner and an entrepreneur?
5. How common are family-run businesses in your country? What are some ones?
6. How can small businesses compete with big businesses? What are the main advantages of being a small business? What are some challenges?
7. Is it better to be an employee of a small business or big business? What are some differences?
8. How can governments help small businesses? How much assistance does your government give to small businesses? Is it sufficient?

2. Small Businesses Vocabulary

- **local business/locally owned business** (noun) – *a business that is owned and operated by a member of the community in which the business is located.*
- **independent retailer** (noun) – *a business that is not connected to a large retail chain, usually operating in only one location or up to three.*
- **franchise** (noun) – *a business model where a private individual purchases the rights to operate under the name of a large enterprise.*
- **artisan** (noun) – *a worker in a skilled trade, especially one that involves making products by hand in a traditional way.*
- **small business loan** (noun) – *a loan made available to small businesses either by banks or the government.*
- **to go under** (verb) – *to go out of business.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun)

1. If it had not been for the _____ I was able to apply for, I would never have been able to open my restaurant.
2. The main advantage of opening a _____ is that people already know your name and products.
3. The new out-of-town shopping centre has put a lot of pressure on _____ as people prefer to shop there instead of in the local area.
4. The increase in popularity of online shopping has meant that numerous shops on the high street have _____ in the last few years.
5. There has been a huge increase in demand for _____ products including cheese, meat and beer.
6. While prices might be a little higher in _____, the level of customer service is much higher than you would get with a larger business.

Small Businesses vocabulary comprehension questions

1. What are some important or well-known local businesses where you live?
2. Do you ever shop in independent retailers? Why or why not?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of setting up a franchise instead of an independent company?
4. What kind of artisan businesses or products can you think of? How are they different from the alternatives?
5. Where can you apply for a small business loan? Why might you need one?
6. What are some common reasons small businesses go under?

3. Video: Small Business Big Results

You are going to watch a TEDx Talk by Grant Sobczak called "Small Business Big Results."

Watch the video here: <https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/business-english-conversation-lesson-plan-small-businesses/>

Watch the video and after, discuss the following questions:

1. What kind of threats do big businesses pose to small businesses?
2. How do big businesses attract consumers away from small businesses?
3. Why can't small businesses compete with big businesses on price? Can they compete?
4. What is "localised value"? Why is this important? How can small businesses create this?
5. How do small businesses contribute to the identity of a town or community? What is community engagement? How can small businesses take advantage of this?
6. Are local businesses better for the local economy? Why or why not?

4. Small Businesses Conversation Questions

1. What challenges do small businesses face with finding new customers or clients?
2. How is customer service different between small businesses and big businesses?
3. Has social media marketing and e-commerce made it easier or more difficult for small businesses to compete with big businesses?
4. Why do some franchise owners say they suffer from the "worst of both worlds"?
5. Why might a small business shy away from exporting to the international market?
6. How could a small business take advantage of the international market?
7. Are small businesses more or less socially responsible and sustainable than big businesses? Why?
8. In an ideal world, should the economy be based around small businesses rather than big businesses? Why or why not?

5. Small Businesses Writing Task

Write a briefing note for members of your local chamber of commerce with advice for potential small business owners. Include information on the challenges of operating a small business, how to maintain a competitive advantage with big businesses, and what assistance they can apply for from banks or the government.