#98 Money & Shopping

How we spend, save, and splurge LEVEL 4 | FREE TALK

PALLO!

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

1. **Online or in a store: where do you prefer to shop, and why?**
2. **What's the best thing you've bought recently?**

FREE TALK

1. Nobel Prize–winning economist Richard Thaler found that we keep separate “mental accounts” in our heads, so the same person might **agonize over** a ₩3,000 delivery fee yet happily **splurge on** a concert ticket. **What do you or people you know happily splurge on, and where do you cut back?**
2. Many of us check star ratings or YouTube reviews before buying. But some are paid ads in disguise, so savvy shoppers learn to **see through them**, and Koreans tag honest ones “내돈내산” (“I bought it with my own money”). **Do you usually check reviews before you buy something? Which do you trust most: star ratings, YouTubers, or friends?**
3. Secondhand shopping used to feel a little embarrassing, but apps like Karrot (당근) have made it an everyday habit that saves money and cuts waste. Regular users often **have an eye for** great deals others would miss. **Do you enjoy secondhand shopping? If so, what do you usually buy, and do you have any tips? If not, what would you never buy used?**
4. Every culture has its own rules about who pays: friends “go Dutch,” someone says “It's on me!” on a birthday, or people take turns buying rounds. In Korea, the older person or whoever invited often **picks up the tab**. **Who usually pays when you eat out with friends, coworkers, or family? Do your rules change depending on who you're with?**
5. ₩10,000 used to cover lunch and a coffee; now it often won't cover lunch. In September 2026, bibimbap in Seoul averaged ₩12,000, and jajangmyeon was close to ₩8,000. People call it “lunchflation”: our money **doesn't go as far** as it used to. **If lunch hit ₩15,000, what would change first: where people eat, what they bring, or how often they go out?**

KEY EXPRESSIONS

Slip a couple of these into your answers.

agonize over worry a lot before making a decision	**splurge on** spend a lot on a treat	**see through something** recognize a trick or lie for what it is
have an eye for notice what's good or valuable	**pick up the tab** pay the bill for everyone	**(money) not go as far** not buy as much as it used to

SAY IT BETTER

The professional line isn't a direct replacement for the everyday one; it's the same idea in a semi-formal, business style.

EVERYDAY		PROFESSIONAL
It just wasn’t worth the money.	→	It **failed to justify the cost**. ***Nuance:*** *Formal; fits reviews and budget meetings, not chats with friends.*
I always check if a product is reliable.	→	I always **do my due diligence** before buying. ***Nuance:*** *Due diligence = careful checks; common in business and big buys.*
It’s cheaper and better for the planet.	→	It’s **cost-effective** and more **sustainable**. ***Nuance:*** *Standard in reports and proposals; a bit stiff in casual chat.*
I’ll send you my share later.	→	I’ll **settle up** with you later. ***Nuance:*** *Settle up = pay what you owe; natural with coworkers and friends.*
Everything is so expensive now.	→	Rising costs are **putting a squeeze on** my budget. ***Nuance:*** *Squeeze = money pressure; common in news and budget talks.*

DEBATE: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Fixed prices, or prices that move with demand?

1 WARM UP · No sides yet. Share your own story first.

1. Have you ever paid more for a taxi, flight, or ticket because demand was high? **How did it feel?**
2. Have you ever grabbed a last-minute discount on bread or sushi just before closing? **Was it a good deal?**

2 SITUATION · Read aloud, one sentence each.

Paper price tags are disappearing: Walmart expects digital shelf labels in all its US stores by the end of 2026, and supermarkets in Australia and New Zealand are following suit. These screens can be updated in seconds, making **dynamic pricing**, where prices rise and fall with demand or even the weather, far easier in physical stores. Supporters note that we already accept it in happy hours, off-peak airfares, and end-of-season sales, and that it can cut prices as well as raise them. One study found that pricing perishable food this way cut food waste by **21%**. Critics, however, fear **surveillance pricing**, in which stores use your location, shopping history, or income to guess the most you would pay. In April, Maryland was poised to become the first US state to ban supermarkets from setting prices based on shoppers' personal data. Walmart promises to "price the product, not the person," while a former head of Australia's competition watchdog warns that charging different people different prices for the same item "seems unfair." **Fixed prices, or prices that move with demand?**

3 TWO SIDES · Everyone picks one. No need for equal sides!

A KEEP PRICES FIXED

votes ☐

"Same item, same price, for everyone."

Shoppers deserve to know what they'll pay before they walk in. Prices that shift with demand or personal data keep customers guessing and give stores the upper hand.

B LET PRICES MOVE

votes ☐

"Flexible prices mean more bargains."

Happy hours, off-peak fares, and late-night markdowns are all forms of dynamic pricing. They reward flexible shoppers, cut food waste, and keep stores competitive.

Everyone speaks once before anyone speaks twice · Answer the last person **first**, then add your point.

4 FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS · Ask one that could make the other side rethink.

ASK SIDE A

- If dynamic pricing cut food waste by 21%, isn't keeping prices fixed a waste in itself?
- Hotels and flights have changed prices with demand for years. Why is a supermarket any different?
- Isn't it a store's basic right to set flexible prices to stay in business?

ASK SIDE B

- If even grocery shopping means hunting for the best moment to buy, won't daily life get exhausting?
- If prices change every hour, would you still trust a "SALE" sign?
- Isn't charging more when people urgently need something just price gouging?

USEFUL LINE "That may be true, but…" *That may be true, but a bargain isn't fair if only some people get it.*

5 FINAL ROUND · Don't skip this part!

FINAL POSITION	"In the end, I'd **keep prices fixed / let prices move**, because…" Did anyone switch sides? Why?
BEST POINT	"As the other side **rightly said**…" Name the best point you heard today.

KEY EXPRESSIONS

follow suit do the same as others have just done	**off-peak** at a less busy, usually cheaper time	**a markdown** a cut in the price of an item
keep someone guessing leave someone unsure what will happen	**give someone the upper hand** give someone an advantage or control	**price gouging** charging unfairly high prices in a crisis

Data: ABC News Australia (Mar 4, 2026), NPR (Apr 23, 2026), CNBC (Oct 1, 2026), CNN (Oct 19, 2026).

PALLO!