The Repair Revolution

Broken phone. Favourite hoodie. Fix it or replace it?

Pick a side

1. Which is worse: a broken phone, lost headphones or a ruined favourite top?
2. Name something you keep although it is old.
3. Would you rather learn to sew, fix a bicycle or cook five meals?

Get the story

Your headphones stop working before a trip. Your favourite hoodie has a broken zip. Your phone works, but its battery does not last until lunchtime. Replacing everything sounds easy until you see the cost. Repairing sounds sensible until you discover you have neither the tools nor a nearby repair shop. These everyday decisions connect teenagers to a much bigger debate.

Imagine that your favourite jeans have a small hole. Would you repair them, ask someone for help or buy another pair? Many people choose the last option, even when the jeans could last much longer.

Repairing things used to be a normal part of daily life for many families. People mended clothes, maintained bicycles and kept basic tools at home. However, we should not imagine that every old product was better. We remember the strong items that survived and often forget the ones that broke.

Some American schools helped students learn practical skills. In traditional Home Economics classes, students might cook, sew or manage a household budget. In Shop classes, they learned to use tools or work with wood and metal. These classes were not identical in every school, and related courses still exist today under other names. Spain has Technology and vocational courses, but not an exact national equivalent of traditional US Home Ec.

Get the story / continued

Why repair less now? New products can be surprisingly inexpensive, while paying a skilled worker takes money. Some modern objects are also hard to open or need special parts. Even a simple repair can be frustrating when nobody at home knows how to do it.

A growing number of Repair Cafés offer another approach. Volunteers help visitors examine broken objects and sometimes teach them a skill. A successful repair saves an item from the bin. Even an unsuccessful one can help someone understand how a product works.

Perhaps schools should teach more life skills again. But which lessons should students lose to make time? And should it be a school's job to teach every practical skill? The answer may depend on what families, local businesses and community groups can already offer.

You can change repair culture without becoming an electronics expert. A school could run a clothes swap or invite someone to teach a safe sewing repair. Nobody should open batteries or electrical devices without suitable knowledge and supervision. Sometimes the useful skill is knowing when to ask for help. Before buying something new, what could you check about spare parts, durability and repair costs?

Word power

mend - repair clothes or other fabric

household - connected with the people and things in a home

budget - a plan for how money will be spent

workshop - a place where people build or repair things

replace - put a new thing in the place of an old one

spare part - an extra part used to repair a product

skilled - having the training or ability to do something well

volunteer - someone who works without being paid

practical - useful for doing things in real life

survive - continue to exist or work

Prove it

1. What is one reason repairs can be expensive?

A. Skilled labour costs money

B. Tools are always free

C. Every product lasts forever

2. What did traditional Shop classes often teach?

A. Only foreign languages

B. Tool use and practical construction

C. Only football

3. Does the article say these subjects have completely disappeared?

A. Yes, everywhere

B. No; related courses still exist

C. Only in Spain

4. What might a Repair Café offer besides a fixed object?

A. A free new product

B. A useful skill

C. A new school certificate

Quick mission: Repair triage

A jacket zip breaks, a phone battery fails and a bicycle tyre goes flat. Rank which you would repair first. Explain costs, safety and who could help.

This or that?

Choose a side. Give a reason. Respond to a different view. Opinions earn points for reasons, not agreement.

1. Repair for 40 euros or replace for 60?
2. Used premium phone or new basic phone?
3. Clothes swap or shopping trip?
4. Learn the repair or pay an expert?
5. One durable item or three cheap ones?
6. Keep your old style or follow a trend?

Watch / notice / question

Use the optional short video linked on your student page, or use the article as a report. Identify a main claim, supporting evidence and an unanswered question.

Student page: https://bilingually-curious.pages.dev/student/teens/repair-revolution/

Have something to say

1. When is replacement the sensible choice?
2. Would you buy a repaired phone? What would you check?
3. Who taught you a practical skill?
4. Should schools teach more repair skills?
5. How do trends encourage replacement?
6. Can cheap clothes be good value?
7. What makes a brand worth more?
8. Should repair prices be shown before purchase?
9. Who should pay when a product breaks unusually early?
10. Could sharing tools work locally?
11. How could repairing become fashionable?
12. What would persuade you to keep a phone another year?

Make your case

Your school has a fictional 200-euro budget for a repair event. Choose three activities, identify equipment or expert help, and include students without money or tools.

Plot twist: Your favourite activity involves electrical devices, but no qualified repairer is available. Find a safe alternative.

Final outcome: Pitch three activities, a budget, a safety rule and a way to measure waste avoided.

Useful language

I would choose ... because ...

One advantage is ..., but ...

I see your point. However, ...

What evidence supports that?

Could we agree on ...?

I used to think ..., but now ...

One more idea

Make a repair label for a fictional product: expected life, spare parts, repair costs and one honest limitation.

Exit ticket: one useful word, one idea you questioned and one question you still have.

Source links, optional media and the interactive game: https://bilingually-curious.pages.dev/student/teens/repair-revolution/

TEACHER GUIDE

The Repair Revolution

Language guidance: approximately B1. Student pages and worksheets do not display a level.

Compare options, give advice and pitch a practical repair idea.

Flexible route / 60 minutes

1. Pick a side: 5 minutes. Think, pair, share; fictional views welcome.
2. Reading: 12 minutes. Find a benefit, concern and claim to challenge.
3. Word power: 8 minutes. Explain, check, then use a word in a new sentence.
4. Comprehension and optional short media: 8 minutes. Require evidence.
5. Game board and selected discussion: 12 minutes. Award points for supported answers.
6. Make your case and exit ticket: 15 minutes. Add the twist after the first plan.

For 90 minutes, add 10 minutes of discussion, 10 minutes for the creative task and 10 minutes for a second game or peer feedback.

Support and stretch

Support: silent thinking time, pairs before whole-class talk, six useful phrases and a choice of questions.
Stretch: respond to a counterargument, identify an assumption or revise after hearing evidence.

Keep demonstrations safe and supervised. Do not shame cheap purchases: cost, time, disability and access affect choices. The budget is fictional.

Answer guidance

1. Skilled labour costs money. The reading contrasts cheap new products with paying a skilled worker.
2. Tool use and practical construction. The cultural explanation identifies tools, wood and metal.
3. No; related courses still exist. It explicitly notes that related courses remain under other names.
4. A useful skill. Volunteers can teach visitors.

Source notes

Original research and policy sources retained from the published lesson. Classroom scenarios are fictional.

European Commission: right-to-repair rules (31 July 2026)

Council of the EU: what the right to repair covers

European Commission: durability, green claims and consumer rights

European Commission: smartphone repairability and software rules

US education statistics: historical Home Economics & Industrial Arts courses

Spain's Ministry of Education: secondary curriculum

Game board answer guide

1. Explain "mend" without using the word.

repair clothes or other fabric Accept an accurate paraphrase.

2. Explain "household" without using the word.

connected with the people and things in a home Accept an accurate paraphrase.

3. Explain "budget" without using the word.

a plan for how money will be spent Accept an accurate paraphrase.

4. Explain "workshop" without using the word.

a place where people build or repair things Accept an accurate paraphrase.

5. Explain "replace" without using the word.

put a new thing in the place of an old one Accept an accurate paraphrase.

6. Explain "spare part" without using the word.

an extra part used to repair a product Accept an accurate paraphrase.

7. What is one reason repairs can be expensive?

Skilled labour costs money. The reading contrasts cheap new products with paying a skilled worker.

8. What did traditional Shop classes often teach?

Tool use and practical construction. The cultural explanation identifies tools, wood and metal.

9. Does the article say these subjects have completely disappeared?

No; related courses still exist. It explicitly notes that related courses remain under other names.

10. What might a Repair Café offer besides a fixed object?

A useful skill. Volunteers can teach visitors.

11. Repair for 40 euros or replace for 60? Give a reason and respond to another view.

Any supported choice. Award points for a clear reason and a relevant response, not for a particular opinion.

12. Used premium phone or new basic phone? Give a reason and respond to another view.

Any supported choice. Award points for a clear reason and a relevant response, not for a particular opinion.