

H&M goes ethical

This text is about H&M becoming a more ethical company. Different ways of saying 'about' and useful language are both highlighted and explained below. Don't forget to do the quiz and answer the discussion questions.

H&M is the world's second largest clothing retailer and their shops are **a common sight** on **roughly** every British high street. The company sells **around** 550 million **garments** every single year. Their **net quarterly profits** are **in the region of** \$410m

Along with Zara, H&M was a founder of '**fast fashion**' which refers to the quick speed that latest fashions move from **the catwalk** to the stores. This is on account of a **rapid-response production** system which has made H&M and Zara so profitable. They offer reasonably priced versions of **just about** every **high-end label**. Their chairman, Stefan Persson, is still impressed with how popular the shops have become. You can find H&M in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and North America. H&M is **more or less** everywhere.

Low prices mean low wages and H&M is accused of exploiting workers in undeveloped countries. In fact, it **is pretty much** the main target in the clothes retailing world for this criticism. It's not surprising when you realise that some clothes only cost 1p to produce in a **third world sweat shop** yet retail at **something like** £30 on the high street.

To improve their image, H&M are having a serious **makeover**. They want to reposition themselves as an **ethical retailer** in the eyes of their customers. Helena Helmersson, head of **sustainability** at H&M, promises that the company is trying its best to improve and be a responsible producer.

It seems that H&M is doing **just about** everything it can. Last year, they created 'good **working conditions**' contracts and increased use of **recycled** and **organic materials**. By 2020, they hope to have **almost** 100% **sustainably sourced** cotton. While later this year, customers will be able to buy new Conscious Collection created from **eco-fibres**.

Different ways to say 'about'

When you don't know a precise number or amount you can use these phrases as alternatives to just saying 'about':

roughly
around
in the region of
just about
more or less
is pretty much
something like
just about
almost

Useful language

A common sight	Can be seen in many places
Garments	Clothes
Net quarterly profits	How much a company has earned/lost over 3 months
Fast fashion	New fashions which quickly become available in shops
The catwalk	A long stage where models show the new designer clothes they are wearing
Rapid-response production	Where new clothes are made quickly when needed
High-end label	A famous and expensive brand
Third world sweat shop	A factory in an undeveloped country where people, often children, are paid very poorly and made to work hard and long hours
Makeover	An improvement
Sustainability	Being able to be used again and again without running out
Working conditions	Everything about a job such as the hours and amount of work
Recycled	Used again
Organic materials	Fabrics made from natural substances
Ethical retailer	Shops which care about doing the right things
Sustainably sourced	Bought or taken in a way which will have no or little affect on the environment
Eco-fibres	Thread used for making clothes which is environmentally friendly

Quiz

Do you care about buying clothes from an ethical retailer?

Yes, I would pay more if I knew it didn't damage the environment or people's lives

No, I don't care. I just want cheap clothes

Discussion questions

- 1) Why do you think H&M wants to reposition itself as an ethical retailer?
- 2) Will they make more money?
- 3) Are eco-clothes better than normal ones?