App-only passes push up school fares

LEVEL A2/B1



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I. WARM-UP

1. How do you usually travel to school or work?
2. Do you use any apps to buy tickets or pay for things?
3. Should children have smartphones? Why or why not?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

smartphone
A mobile phone that can use the internet and apps.

discount
A lower price than the normal price.

fare
The money you pay to travel by bus, train, or taxi.

digitise
To change something into a digital or app-only system.

register
To enter your details to set up and use a service.

council
The local government for a town, city, or area.

campaign
Organised actions to try to change something.

pledge
A serious promise to do something.

III. READING

In parts of England, some schoolchildren are paying more for the bus because cheaper passes are being digitised. In Derbyshire, Adele Kightley says her 11-year-old daughter will pay £546 extra a year. The council's b_line card can cap single fares on trentbarton buses at £1.50.

However, users must register the card through an app on a smartphone. Trentbarton says its machines cannot read the council cards. It is working on a new physical card. A regional authority says it is considering how young people access discounts.

The campaign group Smartphone Free Childhood says app-only tickets penalise poorer families. More than 200,000 parents have joined its pledge to delay smartphones until at least 14. A new law bans phones in English schools. However, the government says travel is not covered, and discounts are up to bus operators.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Schoolchildren without smartphones...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where does Adele Kightley live?
2. How much extra could the 11-year-old pay in a year?
3. What price can the council card cap a single fare at?
4. Why do some children without smartphones miss the discount?
5. What does the government say about travel and phone rules?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Is it fair to give the best prices only through an app? Why?
2. What other ways could companies give discounts to children?
3. Who should decide when a child gets a smartphone? Why?
4. Would this be a problem in your town? Explain.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Present continuous

Use the present continuous for actions happening now or temporary actions. Form: am/is/are + verb-ing (e.g. are paying). Use time words like now, today or at the moment.

"In parts of England, some schoolchildren **are paying** *more for the bus."*

"It **is working** *on a new physical card."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete the sentences with the present continuous form of the verb in brackets.

1. Many children (wait) ___ at the bus stop right now. _____
2. My brother (look) ___ for his bus pass at the moment. _____
3. This year many passes (move) ___ onto phone apps. _____
4. Parents (register) ___ the cards on apps today. _____
5. A regional authority (consider) ___ how young people access discounts this week. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.



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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8-10 minutes warm-up, 8-10 minutes vocabulary, 10-12 minutes reading, 8 minutes comprehension, 8-10 minutes discussion (grammar can share the reading/comprehension block).
- Pre-teach the local pass name b-line and the bus company trentbarton; highlight key figures (£546, £1.50, 200,000) and the words register, discount, fare.
- Run reading in pairs: Student A marks prices and rules; Student B marks people and organisations. Swap notes, then answer together. The topic involves family rules and money, so open the discussion in pairs and say students may speak about the news rather than their own finances.
- Differentiate: let developing learners use the vocabulary box while answering; fast finishers list two pros and two cons of app-only tickets from the text.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick show of hands, then pair students with different views to give one reason each.
2. Elicit concrete ideas (paper cards, cash fares, photo IDs) and ask how each would work.
3. Have students first write one sentence with their view, then compare in pairs before sharing.
4. Map local transport options on the board and prompt for one example and one concern.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Survey: In groups, design and run a 4-question class survey on bus pass use and share a 60-second summary.

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word email to a bus company asking for a non-app way to get the discount.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Present continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where does Adele Kightley live?
   Derbyshire.
2. How much extra could the 11-year-old pay in a year?
   £546 a year.
3. What price can the council card cap a single fare at?
   £1.50.
4. Why do some children without smartphones miss the discount?
   The card must be registered through a smartphone app.
5. What does the government say about travel and phone rules?
   Travel is not covered and discounts are up to operators.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use the present continuous for actions happening now or temporary actions. Form: am/is/are + verb-ing (e.g. are paying). Use time words like now, today or at the moment.

> *"In parts of England, some schoolchildren* **are paying** *more for the bus."*
>
> *"It* **is working** *on a new physical card."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete the sentences with the present continuous form of the verb in brackets.

1. Many children ___ at the bus stop right now. **are waiting**
2. My brother ___ for his bus pass at the moment. **is looking**
3. This year many passes ___ onto phone apps. **are moving**
4. Parents ___ the cards on apps today. **are registering**
5. A regional authority ___ how young people access discounts this week. **is considering**