Berlin supermarket sells rooftop-grown lettuce

LEVEL A2/B1


Photo: Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. Where do you usually buy fresh vegetables?
2. Have you ever grown herbs or salad at home?
3. What is the freshest food you ate this week?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

rooftop
the flat top of a building

greenhouse
a glass or plastic building for growing plants

hydroponic
a way to grow plants in water with nutrients, without soil

rainwater
water that comes from rain

solar
using energy from the sun

emissions
gases released into the air, often from transport or energy use

package
to put a product into a bag or box for sale

tour
a short visit to see a place and learn about it

III. READING

At a REWE supermarket in Lankwitz, Berlin, shoppers can buy lettuce grown on the store's own rooftop. The 2,760 sq metre greenhouse is managed by Berlin firm ECF and is billed as Germany's largest rooftop farm. Skylights let customers see plants above.

The farm uses hydroponic methods, so the lettuce grows in water, without soil. It runs year-round. Waste heat from the fridges warms the greenhouse, and rainwater helps to water the crops. Some power comes from solar panels. The greens grow in a little over three weeks.

Staff cut and package them upstairs, then sell them downstairs and in other stores in the region. One customer even travelled more than 50km to try a bag. REWE offers a tour from outside the facility, but production rooms stay closed. Growing so close to shoppers can cut transport emissions and keep the salad very fresh.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "'Fresh from the roof': the supermarket...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is this REWE supermarket?
2. How big is the rooftop greenhouse?
3. Which company manages the greenhouse?
4. How long does the lettuce take to grow?
5. What helps to heat the greenhouse?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Would you buy food grown on a rooftop? Why or why not?
2. What local foods are popular in your area?
3. How can shops reduce packaging or waste?
4. Should stores offer tours of their facilities? Why?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Imperative forms

Use the base verb to give instructions, commands or requests (affirmative). For negative commands, use do not / don't + base verb (negative).

*"**Take** a tour outside the rooftop farm."*
*"**Don't touch** the plants in the greenhouse."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the correct imperative form of the verb in brackets.

1. At the entrance, (try) ___ a sample of the salad. _____
2. On the tour, (not / enter) ___ the production rooms. _____
3. Visitors, please (keep) ___ a safe distance from the crops. _____
4. After the tour, (not / forget) ___ to buy a bag downstairs. _____
5. When you finish, (return) ___ any aprons to the staff. _____

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, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach rooftop, greenhouse, hydroponic, and solar with quick visuals or a board sketch.
- Run a first silent read for gist, then a second read to find numbers, names, and times (place, size, company, growth time). Pair-check answers before whole-class feedback.
- For discussion, keep the focus on food and shopping habits. If students prefer not to share personal choices, allow them to answer about shops in their city in general.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick show of hands, then ask pairs to give one reason for or against.
2. Elicit two examples first, then have groups add local details from their own towns.
3. Board ideas like refill stations or reusable bags and ask for one action per student.
4. Start with pairs to share experiences, then open to class, comparing different shops.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 60-word shop sign inviting customers to try the rooftop lettuce.

Presentation: In groups, design a simple 1-minute pitch to explain how the rooftop farm works.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Imperative forms

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

Answer Key

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These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is this REWE supermarket?
   In Lankwitz, Berlin.
2. How big is the rooftop greenhouse?
   2,760 square metres.
3. Which company manages the greenhouse?
   ECF, a Berlin firm.
4. How long does the lettuce take to grow?
   A little over three weeks.
5. What helps to heat the greenhouse?
   Waste heat from the fridges.

V. DISCUSSION

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

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the correct imperative form of the verb in brackets.

1. At the entrance, ___ a sample of the salad. **try**
2. On the tour, ___ the production rooms. **do not enter / don't enter**
3. Visitors, please ___ a safe distance from the crops. **keep**
4. After the tour, ___ to buy a bag downstairs. **do not forget / don't forget**
5. When you finish, ___ any aprons to the staff. **return**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use the base verb to give instructions, commands or requests (affirmative). For negative commands, use do not / don't + base verb (negative). (Examples constructed.)

*"**Take** a tour outside the rooftop farm."*
*"**Don't touch** the plants in the greenhouse."*