Pokémon fans face queues and resellers

LEVEL A2/B1



Photo: Thimo Pedersen / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. Have you ever queued early to buy something? What was it?
2. Do you collect anything? Why do you like it?
3. Where do you usually buy games or cards: online or in a shop?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

reseller
a person who buys items and sells them again for profit

demand
how much people want to buy a product

supply
how much of a product is available to buy

limit
a rule that sets the maximum you can buy or do

policy
a rule or plan that a company follows

online
using the internet instead of a physical shop

markup
the extra money added to a price when reselling

nostalgia
a warm feeling when you remember the past

III. READING

Pokémon card fever has hit London. Outside Forbidden Planet in central London, a long line formed before opening. Kai, 25, arrived at 3am and said it was “50/50” fans and resellers. He said demand has soared and prices have ballooned. The store tries to keep things fair.

It limits the £49.99 Delta Reign elite trainer box to one per customer and uses a supplier-requested unsealing policy, so buyers may be asked to open boxes. That makes quick resale harder. The set was listed with big markups on eBay.

Even so, people were racing between shops, changing clothes, or paying cash to get around limits. Some retailers sell online only: Argos does this, and Amazon uses an invite-only system to fight bots. Collectors Anthony, Luke and Hiep queued through the night for the elite sets.

Luke linked the rush to nostalgia around Pokémon’s 30th anniversary. Expert Calvin Innes said supply cannot keep up, even though about 10bn cards are made each year.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: “Gotta buy ’em: how Pokémon card collecting...”. Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did the long queue form before opening?
2. How much does the Delta Reign elite trainer box cost?
3. What policy at the store makes quick resale harder?
4. What system does Amazon use to fight bots?
5. What reason did Luke give for the rush?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Are buying limits fair for popular products? Why or why not?
2. Would you wait all night in a queue for a hobby item? Why?
3. Is it better to buy collector items online or in a shop?
4. How can shops stop reselling at big markups without hurting fans?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past continuous

Use was/were + verb-ing for an action in progress at a time in the past. Often with when/while to show what was happening around another past event.

> *"Even so, people* **were racing** *between shops."*
> *"At 3am, fans* **were waiting** *outside the store."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past continuous form.

1. People (stand) ___ in a long line when the store opened. _____
2. While queues grew, some (plan) ___ resales. _____
3. Shoppers (change) ___ clothes while staff checked limits. _____
4. A buyer (pay) ___ cash while security looked on. _____
5. While Amazon (fight) ___ bots, it used invites. _____

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, 10–12 minutes discussion. Combine grammar timing with reading if needed.
- Pre-teach key items from the vocabulary list (reseller, limit, policy, markup, online, nostalgia) and check shop names: Forbidden Planet, Amazon, Argos.
- For reading: set a first skim for who, where, and price; then a second read to find policies and reasons. For discussion: start in pairs, then share with the whole class.
- Differentiation: stronger students write a short advice post for new collectors; others underline sentences that show problems and solutions.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick class vote, then pair students from different sides to swap reasons.
2. Ask for a time limit and a comfort limit (money/hours) to push fuller answers.
3. Have students list two pros and two cons for online and for shops before choosing.
4. Elicit concrete ideas (limits, IDs, unsealing). Ask which idea helps fans most and why.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: Write a 60-word shop notice explaining limits and the unsealing policy clearly.

Role-play: In pairs, act out a buyer and a shop worker discussing an invite-only online sale.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past continuous

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

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did the long queue form before opening?
   Outside Forbidden Planet in central London.
2. How much does the Delta Reign elite trainer box cost?
   £49.99.
3. What policy at the store makes quick resale harder?
   A supplier-requested unsealing policy.
4. What system does Amazon use to fight bots?
   An invite-only system.
5. What reason did Luke give for the rush?
   Nostalgia around Pokémon's 30th anniversary.

V. DISCUSSION

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

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past continuous form.

1. People ___ in a long line when the store opened. **were standing**
2. While queues grew, some ___ resales. **were planning**
3. Shoppers ___ clothes while staff checked limits. **were changing**
4. A buyer ___ cash while security looked on. **was paying**
5. While Amazon ___ bots, it used invites. **was fighting**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use was/were + verb-ing for an action in progress at a time in the past. Often with when/while to show what was happening around another past event. (Example 2 constructed.)

> *"Even so, people* **were racing** *between shops."*
>
> *"At 3am, fans* **were waiting** *outside the store."*