

Lesson 48: Cram school

Hi! How are you today?

Today's lesson is about "**Cram school**".

Have fun learning English!

Warm-up | Useful Expressions

Directions: Listen and repeat.

Vocabulary

- **cram school** - a school especially in Japan that prepares its students for university entrance examinations
- **overpriced** - expensive or having a higher price than it is supposed to have
- **distinctively** - individually or having a special quality, style, etc.
- **cramming** - to study hard or to study a large amount of material in a short period of time (informal)
- **adverse** - harmful
- **accusation** - complaint, an act of accusing someone or something

Expressions

- **One-on-one session** - To study with a teacher individually.
- **An arm and a leg** - An excessively high price.
- **Language drill** - A language learning activity conducted by repeating something over and over.
- **I would rather** - I would prefer
- **Rather well** - used when one does not want to boast about something a lot but has a meaning of „very well“.

Activity 1 | Dialogue

Directions: Read the dialogue aloud with your teacher.

James and Harry are talking about cram school they have to attend.

James: Hey Harry, are you going to **cram school** today?

Harry: Oh yes. I **would rather** play computer games than attend cram school. But my parents have already paid for the upcoming month. Besides, I believe that cram schools are way **overpriced**.

James: Well, they do require **an arm and a leg** but I think it is worth it. Many people can actually pass their exams **rather well** due to attending cram school. But, all that **cramming**... I am not sure but I believe that to stuff that much information in a short period of time might be quite **adverse**.

Harry: I think cram school is simply a waste of time. I could learn the same studying **distinctively**. In cram school you usually have crowded classes. How is the teacher supposed to pay attention to you individually?

James: For people who want individual attention there are always these **one-on-one sessions**. It is way more efficient than studying alone. If you have questions you can always ask and check if you understand everything. If you study by yourself, you might just think you understand, but there is no one to check. It's very easy to fool yourself but you might be upset if you fail to enter university and then go back to cram school to prepare for the second year. It would be quite ironic, wouldn't it?

Harry : I suppose. But what about the methods used to teach? For example, grammar **drills**? Are they supposed to provide some deeper understanding of subjects? They just teach structures so we would be able to use them but we don't even understand why these structures exist and why they are in such forms. I mean, they teach us how to get into university, they do not teach us subjects. And the most important one – they do not teach us how to learn. It is like always being unable to become independent because you don't know how. Have trouble at school? Go to cram school. Entered university? Go to cram school...

James : I don't think the target of this **accusation** is only the cram school but rather the whole education system. Therefore, cram school is only a small part of it. It is difficult to make every student interested in all possible subjects so they would also read about it after school. I mean, look at our classmates! All they care about at this age are girls, parties and getting into universities, so there would be more girls and parties.

Harry: It hurts to admit but you are probably right. Something is very wrong with this system and it is very difficult to get out of it once you've got into it already. I guess it depends on each and every one of us to change the system.

Check your understanding: Answer the following questions.

1. What do Harry and James think about the price of cram schools?
2. How do Harry and James' opinions differ about the necessity of cram schools?
3. What does Harry mean when he says it is difficult to get out of that system?
4. What did James have to say about Harry's last argument?

Activity 2 | Dialogue 2

Directions: Complete the dialogue by using the expressions listed below.

James : Hey, how's your day? Got any plans? If not, how about joining me in the cram school?

Harry : Geez, James, that's _____ to pay. Although, I might consider this. I have some troubles with Math.

James : Well, a friend of mine has been studying Math in a cram school for a while now and finally he is doing _____.

Harry : But all that _____! I am not sure it is the best technique to actually learn something.

James : I know, I know. But sometimes some _____ are just what you need. Combining different techniques is the way to go.

Harry : I guess you are right and cram schools are not that _____. Maybe I should go with you.

James : Good to hear! And after that I can do a _____ session with you at my place, if you still need help.

an arm and a leg	one-on-one
Cramming	rather well
Adverse	drills

Activity 3 | Free Conversation

Directions: Take turns with your teacher in answering the questions.

1. Have you or your friends ever tried cram school? Share your impressions about it.
2. Do you think cramming is a good technique to learn a subject? Why or why not?
3. What are the strong and weak points of the education system in your country?
4. Would you ever recommend cram school to your friends? On what occasion?
5. Do you think the only time to revise and cram seriously is before exams? Why or why not?