BBC LEARNING ENGLISH
Take Away English 随身英语
Algorithms and online shopping
算法对网购体验的影响

词汇: online shopping 网购

For many of us, online shopping has made the process of purchasing goods a far simpler and more **fluid** process. No longer do we have to **head to** the shops to **browse** and **peruse** various objects, **wandering round** endless **aisles**, before finally **settling for** the first thing we saw. These days, we find the item we want or need online, **click on** it, and check out its **description** and **user reviews**. If it **fits the bill**, we send it to our **basket** and pay. There seems to be **a wealth of options at our fingertips**. But how do we know the options that **pop up** in front of us really are the best deals. And how might **algorithms** help or **hinder** us?

Algorithms, simply put, are mathematical instructions which tell the computer how to solve problems. When shopping is involved, what is the problem they solve? Well, the algorithms instruct the computer which **adverts** to show and which products a user is most likely to **splash the cash** on. By analysing things we've previously bought or looked at, the algorithm can predict what **goods** we're most likely to be **enticed** by. For some people, the idea of something guessing your preferences could sound a bit intimidating. But first, let's look at the positives.

Time is an important thing – something we don't want to waste too much of. By telling the computer to show us adverts for things we are interested in, it can save us a lot of time **sifting through** things or services that don't match our criteria. They can also help us find the best deals.

However, there are some people who have concerns about the impact of algorithms on our shopping experience. It is possible that algorithms may only select options from a limited number of **brands,** or may favour products from certain companies. There are also concerns that we aren't always shown the cheapest or best deal, even though that's what we're searching for. Finally, some algorithms generate ads which tell you there are only a limited number of items you're interested in left. They might just be there to manipulate you.

So, the takeaway from this is that algorithms are here to stay, and it's wise to know they exist. Whenever you're shopping, be it online or off, make sure to **shop around** for the best deals. The first thing you see might not always be the best for you.

词汇表

fluid	流畅的
head to	前往（某地）
browse	随便看看、浏览
peruse	浏览
wander round	逛来逛去
aisle	（商场、超市货架间的）走道
settle for	无奈选择，只好接受
click on	用鼠标点击
description	（商品）描述
user review	用户评价
fit the bill	符合要求
basket	（网购结账前商品所在的）购物篮
a wealth of options	选择众多
at one's fingertips	触手可及
pop up	突然出现
algorithm	算法
hinder	阻碍
advert	广告
splash the cash	花大笔钱，挥霍
goods	商品
entice	引诱，吸引

sift through	筛选
brand	品牌
shop around	货比三家

测验与练习

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. In online shopping, where do we send our items before we pay?

2. What are algorithms?

3. How does an algorithm predict what you might buy?

4. How can algorithms help us save time?

5. What sort of algorithm-generated ads may try to manipulate you?

2. 选择意思恰当的单词或词组来完成下列句子。

1. I don't want to have to _____ endless receipts looking for the right one.

sift through	pop up	deal	basket

2. Are you trying to _____ me with that low price?

aisles	entice	hinder	click on

3. I don't want to buy anything. I'm just _____.

entice	basket	browsing	pop up

4. You're not helping at all. Are you trying to _____ me?

entice	description	sift through	hinder

5. I have been walking round these _____ looking for something for hours.

hinder	click on	description	aisles

答案

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. In online shopping, where do we send our items before we pay?

We send items to the basket before paying.

2. What are algorithms?

Mathematical instructions which tell a computer how to solve a problem.

3. How does an algorithm predict what you might buy?

By analysing what you've previously looked at.

4. How can algorithms help us save time?

By showing us the best deals.

5. What sort of algorithm-generated ads may try to manipulate you?

The ones that show us there are limited numbers left.

2. 选择意思恰当的单词或词组来完成下列句子。

1. I don't want to have to **sift through** endless receipts looking for the right one.

2. Are you trying to **entice** me with that low price?

3. I don't want to buy anything. I'm just **browsing**.

4. You're not helping at all. Are you trying to **hinder** me?

5. I have been walking round these **aisles** looking for something for hours.