

## Would You Return a Lost Wallet?

Imagine you see a wallet on the sidewalk. You are the only person who sees it. Inside, there is some money and a business card with an email address. Now, you have to decide: do you keep it or return it?

Many people and experts thought most finders would keep the money. However, a large study in 40 countries showed this was not true.

To see if people are honest, researchers left 17,300 wallets in 355 cities around the world. Some wallets had no money, but others contained about \$13 of that country's money.

For the study, a research assistant walked into businesses, for example, banks, hotels, post offices, and museums. They went to one of the staff members and said, "Hi, I found this on the street outside your building." Then they gave the wallet to the staff member and said, "Somebody must have lost it. I'm in a hurry and have to go. Can you please try to find the owner?"

How many staff members were honest?

If there was no money in the wallet, 40% of the staff returned it to the owner by email. However, interestingly, 51% of the wallets with money in them were returned.

The researchers were so surprised by these findings that they repeated the experiment in three countries with even more money. This time, they compared wallets with \$94, \$13, and no money at all. Here are the results:

- **\$94 in the wallet:** 72% were returned.
- **\$13 in the wallet:** 61% were returned.
- **No money:** 46% were returned.

In other words, the more money the wallets had in them, the more likely people would return them.

Why did so many people return the money?

According to Professor Alain Cohn, people want to be kind and don't want to think of themselves as bad people. He said that if you find a lot of money, you might want to keep it, but you will also feel much worse about stealing it. It is hard to feel like a good person if you keep a lot of money. However, if you find a wallet with no money and don't return it, you probably won't feel like you are stealing.

Also, in another part of the study, some wallets contained a key. A key has no value to the finder, but it is very important to the owner. Wallets with a key were more likely to be returned. This suggests that people are more honest when they can imagine how the other person feels.

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## Comprehension Exercise

**Directions:** Write T (true) or F (false) next to each sentence.

- \_\_\_ 1. Most experts thought people would keep the wallet with money in it.
- \_\_\_ 2. Research assistants put the wallets on the sidewalk and waited for people to pick them up.
- \_\_\_ 3. All the wallets in the studies had a key in them.
- \_\_\_ 4. Wallets with money were more likely to be returned than wallets with no money.
- \_\_\_ 5. Professor Alain Cohn believes people return wallets because they are afraid of being caught by the police.
- \_\_\_ 6. Wallets with a key were returned more often because a key is valuable to the person who finds it.

## Paraphrasing Exercise

**Directions:** Imagine that you have this conversation with a friend.

You: I just read this interesting article.

Friend: Oh yeah. What did it say?

Write what you would tell your friend. Include as many details as you can.

After you finish writing a first draft, you can re-read the article and revise your draft. However, don't look at the article while you are writing. You can use some of these **key words** in your paraphrase.

### Key Words

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• business card with email address</li><li>• 17,300 wallets in 355 cities</li><li>• no money, \$13 of that country's money</li><li>• research assistants</li><li>• businesses</li><li>• "Hi, I found this on the street outside your building."</li><li>• "Somebody must have lost it. I'm in a hurry and have to go. Can you please try to find the owner?"</li><li>• no money—40%</li><li>• \$13—51%</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Another experiment</li><li>• \$94 in the wallet: 72% were returned.</li><li>• \$13 in the wallet: 61% were returned.</li><li>• no money: 46% were returned</li><li>• Professor Alain Cohn</li><li>• think of themselves as bad people</li><li>• won't feel like you are stealing key</li><li>• imagine how good the other person will feel.</li></ul>
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## Reflection Exercise

**Directions:** Write a reflection about the article. Try to write a paragraph with several sentences. In your reflection, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*