

By Krystal Sato

国際交流員コーナー

CIR's Corner

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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

This Month's Topic: Black Friday

Recently in Japan, there are more and more shops advertising Black Friday sales. Black Friday is originally an American event, so this month, I will tell you all about it.



As in many places in the world, the word "black" generally has a negative meaning. It is usually associated with darkness, mourning, and disasters. For example, the earliest known use of "Black Friday" in American history was on September 24, 1869. On that day, a gold speculation scandal caused a stock market crash, driving thousands of people into bankruptcy. Black Friday nowadays is completely unrelated to this event.

Modern Black Friday is on the fourth Friday of November every year. In the U.S., this is the day after Thanksgiving is celebrated. Thanksgiving is a major holiday where families gather to enjoy a traditional meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie, and other fall favorites. If you would like to know more about Thanksgiving, check the back issues!

Thanksgiving is a federal holiday, but the Friday after Thanksgiving is not. The first time the Friday after Thanksgiving was called "Black Friday" was in 1951. It's because many factory workers called in sick on the Friday after Thanksgiving. It's natural to want a day off after a big family gathering, so most states designated the Friday after Thanksgiving a state holiday. Even in states where it wasn't an official holiday, companies and schools generally closed on that day, giving many Americans a four-day weekend.

When Thanksgiving is over, the Christmas season begins. From the 1960s and 1970s, Americans began to use their four-day weekend to get a head start on Christmas shopping. Because so many shoppers crowded the streets, Philadelphia police officers who had to manage the crowds began calling the Friday after Thanksgiving "Black Friday.



From the 1980s, the meaning of Black Friday changed from negative to positive. Since retailers held large-scale Christmas sales, Black Friday became known as the day when businesses' profits shifted from red to black.



Black Friday sales gradually got bigger and bigger and started earlier and earlier in the morning. Customers desperate to get their hands on “doorbuster” deals often line up outside stores from Thanksgiving night. Some stores even open at midnight. When stores open their doors, customers sometimes push and argue, and in some extreme cases fights have broken out that ended with people being killed. Black Friday shopping can be dangerous!



Due to the rise of the Internet and online shopping, people no longer have to brave the chaos at the shopping mall in order to find great Black Friday bargains. In addition, sales are no longer limited to Black Friday alone; “Cyber Monday” has extended Black Friday sales online until the following Monday. Cyber Monday started in the 2000s when online retailers noticed a specific trend: many people who couldn’t get what they wanted on Black Friday went back to work on Monday and made use of their company’s high-speed internet connection to shop online. The Monday after Thanksgiving was named “Cyber Monday,” and Amazon and other e-commerce sites began to hold special online sales. Now people can use their computers or smartphones to shop in the comfort of their own homes, without worrying about the crowds and chaos typically associated with Black Friday shopping.

Black Friday is deeply rooted in American Thanksgiving and Christmas shopping customs. However, sales events are popping up in Japan and all around the world. As an American, it is very strange to see Black Friday sales without Thanksgiving or Christmas shopping, but if I can make use of sales to buy everyday items, I suppose that’s a good thing.

Popular Black Friday Items

Americans buy gifts for not only children, but also their spouses, parents, siblings, relatives, and friends. Below are some of the most popular items from Black Friday in 2025.

- Large-screen TVs
- Apple products
- Amazon devices, such as Kindles, Fire TV Sticks, and tablets
- Peripherals: Anker mobile batteries and chargers, Bose earphones, etc.
- Home appliances, such as Dyson wireless vacuums and Kitchen Aid stand mixers
- Game consoles and games
- Pokémon cards
- LEGO
- Viral products such as the *Ninja SLUSHi Max Smart Frozen Drink Maker*



Contact Information
Ebetsu City Board of Education
Takasago 24-6, Ebetsu, Hokkaido
Phone: 011-381-1049 Fax: 011-382-3434