

Should diesel vehicles be banned from cities?

Level: Upper intermediate–advanced

Time: 90 minutes +

Summary: This lesson is about diesel vehicles. In this lesson, students:

1. discuss what vehicles their companies make use of;
2. read either a text in support of banning diesel vehicles or one against the idea;
3. share information with a partner about the text they didn't read;
4. discuss their responses to the articles and what their workplace can do to reduce their carbon footprint.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student, one copy of Article A and Article B per student

Group size: Two or more students

Note: This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 1/2018.

Warmer

Hand out the worksheet. The warmer questions introduce the topic of vehicles in connection with work and, in particular, with the types of vehicles that the students' companies use.

Key words

Divide the students into two groups, A and B. Give group A the 'Yes!' article and group B the 'No!' article. Each group should read their text and find the corresponding key words in task 2. Note that the definitions are given in the order that the words appear in the articles.

Key:

Group A

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. carcinogen | 6. prohibited |
| 2. ill effects | 7. scrappage |
| 3. particulates | 8. exhaust pipes |
| 4. premature | 9. churning up |
| 5. acute | 10. imposed |

Group B

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. particulate matter | 6. local authorities |
| 2. aviation | 7. reconfiguration |
| 3. idling | 8. sleeping policemen |
| 4. fumes | 9. National Grid |
| 5. pragmatic | 10. carbon footprint |

Understanding the article

Working with two or three others who read the same text, students answer five questions, using information from their part of the article.

Key:

Group A

1. the higher risk of cancer; 40,000 premature deaths in the UK alone
2. road transport: exhaust pipes, brake wear and dust, the churning up of existing pollution from the roads
3. £20 billion a year because of sickness caused by air pollution
4. governments and car manufacturers encouraging people to buy diesel vehicles in order to reduce their CO₂ emissions
5. prohibiting the oldest and most polluting vehicles from entering restricted (clean-air) zones; scrappage schemes that offer financial incentives to people who trade in their old car for a less polluting one or even get rid of their car completely; financial incentives to encourage people to buy electric or hybrid vehicles; improved local transport plans; greener public transport alternatives to personal vehicles

Group B

1. gas central heating; wood-burning stoves; rail; aviation; diesel vehicles
2. In 2001, the Labour government introduced tax incentives so that people would buy new diesel-driven cars in order to reduce CO₂ emissions.
3. The food we buy in shops is transported by road to its retail points. The goods we buy online are delivered to us by vans that mostly run on diesel.
4. encouraging local authorities to find ways to deal with their local air-quality problems, such as traffic-light reconfiguration, limiting idling of vehicles, removing traffic-control features that make drivers slow down and use their brakes, changing road layouts and providing road lanes for buses
5. There are not enough charging points and the process of charging takes much longer than filling a car with petrol or diesel. He also mentions concerns about the minerals needed for high-performance batteries, as well as the emissions created while producing these batteries.

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Information sharing

Students pair up with someone who read the other text, or sit together in small mixed groups of four to six, and share the information in their texts by explaining to their partner(s) the points that the authors make.

Students then discuss which of the two authors they find to be most convincing and why. Note that this does not have to be the one they personally most agree with. Rather, they should base their judgement on the language and arguments used and the information given.

Expressions

Students work together to decide which word from the box is needed to complete each expression, before matching them with the definitions. Then, hand out copies of whichever article the students weren't originally given and have them underline the expressions in both articles, noting how they are used and in what context. They must then use the expressions in sentences of their own (not necessarily on the same topic as the article).

Key:

- a. 1. *negative*; 2. *good*; 3. *worst*; 4. *state*
b. 1. *d*; 2. *a*; 3. *b*; 4. *c*

Discussion

Students first discuss the questions about their perception of the articles and the feelings they had when they read them, then they talk about their company or place of work.

Related topics on onestopenglish

This set of news lessons is about how Oslo fought back against car pollution by banning parking in its city centre.

www.onestopenglish.com/skills/news-lessons/weekly-topical-news-lessons/2017-weekly-news-lessons-archive/17th-august-2017-oslos-car-ban-and-the-backlash/556205.article

If you want to delve further into the topic of hybrid cars, this worksheet explains what they are and how they work.

www.onestopenglish.com/clil/secondary/english-across-the-curriculum/science-and-nature/pdf-content/is-the-car-of-tomorrow-here-today-worksheet/550791.article

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1 Warmer

- What kind of vehicles does your company own?
- Do you have a company car? Or the use of one?
- How do goods or deliveries arrive at and leave your company?
- What form of transport do you use to get to work?
- Do the majority of the vehicles used at your workplace run on diesel, petrol or battery power?

2 Key words

Read the definitions, then find the key words in your article.

Group A

1. a substance that can cause cancer _____
2. bad or negative changes (two words) _____
3. extremely small particles of a substance or substances, especially those that cause air pollution _____
4. happening too soon or before the usual time _____
5. very serious or severe _____
6. officially stopped _____
7. the process of paying people compensation when they get rid of a polluting vehicle, an old and inefficient boiler, etc _____
8. the pipes at the back of a vehicle that take waste gases out of the engine (two words) _____
9. disturbing particles and throwing them up into the air (two words) _____
10. (of a law or restriction) introduced so that people are forced to accept it _____

Group B

1. extremely small particles of a substance or substances, especially those that cause air pollution (two words) _____
2. the practice of flying planes _____
3. (of an engine) running slowly and not producing any movement _____
4. harmful smoke or gas or other emissions _____
5. involving practical results rather than theories and ideas _____
6. the organizations in a particular area or city that are responsible for providing public services (two words) _____
7. the rearrangement of something so that it works in the way you want it to _____
8. a raised area across the width of a road that forces drivers to drive more slowly (two words) _____
9. in the UK, the system of wires that connects the places where electricity is produced (two words) _____
10. the amount of carbon dioxide a person, organization, building, etc produces, used as a measure of their effect on the environment (two words) _____

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Yes!

Article A



Diesel cars play a large part in air pollution caused by fine particles. So should they be banned from our cities? Julian Earwaker hears arguments for and against.

“It is at the roadside where the problem is most acute” – Oliver Hayes

The World Health Organization classifies diesel as a Group One carcinogen. In densely populated areas, people are at greater risk from the ill effects of diesel NOx (nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide) and particulates. The Royal College of Physicians estimates that there are 40,000 premature deaths each year in the UK as a result of outdoor air pollution.

It is at the roadside where the problem is most acute. Some 80 per cent of damaging NOx comes from road transport, of which diesel is the biggest proportion. Air pollution costs the economy more than £20 billion a year because of sickness.

The government’s modelling shows that the best way to bring pollution down quickly is to set up clean-air zones, whereby the oldest and most polluting vehicles are either prohibited from entering or charged. Drivers should be supported by comprehensive scrappage schemes, with the biggest incentives for people getting rid of cars altogether. For people who need cars, incentives should encourage electric vehicles (EVs) or hybrids. It’s not just exhaust pipes that cause pollution

but brake wear and dust, tyre wear and the churning up of pollution already on the road.

Diesel is a fossil fuel, which we need to eliminate from transport as from other areas of our economy. For a long time, the message from government and car manufacturers has been that if you buy diesel, you are reducing CO₂ emissions. People bought diesel cars in good faith. Research now shows that the life-cycle CO₂ emissions of diesel vehicles are slightly greater than those of petrol vehicles, not least because people tend to drive diesel vehicles longer.

The cost of alternative-fuel vehicles and batteries is falling dramatically. Manufacturers are putting more and more research-and-development money into EVs. From January, 2018, all new London taxis will have to be electric or have hybrid electric engines. There is no technological reason why we can’t see a rapid change towards goods vehicles being substantially powered by electricity. UK city leaders recognize the huge benefits to people living in their areas if diesel restrictions are imposed hand in hand with improved local transport plans and green public-transport options.

OLIVER HAYES is air-pollution campaigner for the environmental organization *Friends of the Earth*.

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Should diesel vehicles be banned from cities?

Should diesel vehicles be banned from cities?

No!

Article B



Diesel cars play a large part in air pollution caused by fine particles. So should they be banned from our cities? Julian Earwaker hears arguments for and against.

“The UK is a road-transport economy” – Brian Madderson

The London Assembly recently published work showing that over 50 per cent of NOx and particulate matter in London is not vehicle related. Gas central heating, wood-burning stoves, rail and aviation all have an impact. Banning diesel vehicles isn't going to solve the problem. London is its own worst enemy. A lack of investment in road infrastructure to keep traffic moving; giving licences for a large number of mainly diesel, private-hire vehicles; buses idling in Oxford Street – all have contributed to the current state of affairs.

In 2001, the Labour government introduced tax incentives for diesel-driven cars to improve CO₂ emissions, knowing that NOx fumes were a cause of medical and environmental concern. In 2000, very few new car registrations were diesel. By 2015, this had risen to 50 per cent. The current government has been pragmatic by giving incentives to local authorities to find ways of dealing with their air-quality problems, such as traffic-light reconfiguration, limiting idling, removing sleeping policemen, changing road layouts and providing throughways for buses.

There is no short-term solution that would not have a negative impact on the economy and consumer. The UK is a road-transport economy: 100 per cent of our fresh food and nearly 75 per cent of all other goods move on our roads. The 50 per cent increase in new vehicle registrations from 2013 to 2016 for light vans, almost exclusively diesel, has been driven by online shopping and delivery. The UK consumes 18 billion litres of retail diesel and ten billion litres of commercial diesel a year, largely for road-fuel consumption. Together with petrol, this generates around £36 billion in tax each year.

It takes five minutes or less to fill up a car with petrol. The multiplicity of fill options and times in existing petrol filling stations is far greater than the number of EV charging points. Do we have the future electrical capacity for new EVs? The National Grid has already said that at the current rate of development, we could be 30 per cent short. There are real concerns about the cost and availability of key minerals, such as lithium, for high-performance batteries. And what about the carbon footprint of this new vehicle-battery production?

BRIAN MADDERSON is chairman of the Petrol Retailers Association.

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3 Understanding the article

Answer the questions using information from the article.

Group A

1. What health risks does the author describe?

2. Where does he say the pollution comes from?

3. What costs to the economy does he mention?

4. What misinformation does he tell us about?

5. What solutions does he offer?

Group B

1. What causes NOx (diesel) and particulate-matter pollution?

2. What was the reason for the jump in the number of new diesel vehicles registered between 2001 and 2015?

3. How do we as consumers contribute to air pollution?

4. What is the current UK government doing to improve air quality?

5. What worries does the author have concerning electric vehicles?

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4 Information sharing

- Talk to someone who read the other text. Present and explain the arguments made by the author of the text you read.
- Discuss who makes the strongest case. Which part of his argument was the most convincing? Why?

5 Expressions

- Complete the expressions from texts A and B using the words in the box. Then, find the expressions in the articles to check your answers. Note how they are used.

worst state good negative

- have a _____ impact
- in _____ faith
- its own _____ enemy
- the current _____ of affairs

b. Match the expressions above with their meanings below.

- with the intention of behaving in an honest and sincere way
- the cause of its own problems
- the situation that something is in at the moment
- have a bad or harmful effect

c. Use the expressions in sentences of your own.

6 Discussion

The texts

- Which points in the two texts do you most agree with? Which do you least agree with?
- Do the authors make any points or arguments that surprise or annoy you?

Your workplace

- What is your workplace already doing to reduce its carbon footprint?
- What further measures do you think it could realistically take?
- What obstacles might stand in the way of this happening?