

Plastic: Teachers' notes and tips – upper intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Read through the text and if possible bring into the classroom a number of the items mentioned, or a range of things made from plastic whether soft, hard, transparent etc. At the very least have some plastic bags.
- b Display the items and ask students to guess the theme of the reading.

Tip: use realia

This will help to create an interest in the topic and motivate the students to read the text.

- c Write on the board this sentence from the text: *What exactly is plastic, and where does it come from?* Get students in pairs to answer the question if possible.
- d Get some open class feedback – who knows the most about plastic?
- e Then get students in pairs to brainstorm different types of plastic.

Tip: do an example first

Perhaps give 'nylon' to start off with, but if students really can't think of any (more) then stop the activity.

- f Give each pair a copy of the worksheet. Ask them to match an item with its plastic. They can then compare their answers with another pair, no feedback.

2 First reading tasks

- a Give each student a copy of the reading. They are going to read the text and see if they were correct about their answers. They should also see if the information they brainstormed about plastic was included.
- b No need for feedback, the students can check the answers with each other. Only polystyrene is not mentioned in the text and therefore it's the plastic used for moulded packing material.

Tip: make sure the first reading is 'doable'

A task like this helps student concentrate on the important information and worry less about detail and unknown vocabulary.

3 Second reading tasks

- a Students read again and identify the aim of the text and the writer's attitude. Let them discuss this with each other and compare ideas before feedback.
- b Feedback: to warn and inform definitely, perhaps to shock a little; overall the writer is concerned.

Tip: help students to understand the writer's intention and attitude

If students fail to recognise this they can easily misunderstand the whole text. Someone who has a different opinion will give the information in another way.

4 Post-reading tasks

- a Students often put a lot of pressure on themselves to understand everything in a text, even if that's not necessary. In pairs ask students to look at part

three on the worksheet. They should tell each other how much they understood of the reading.

- b There's no right or wrong answers here, the aim is for students not to worry about not having understood everything.

Tip: do an example first

At the start of the text the writer refers to a game called I-Spy. Did the students understand the game? It's not that clear how to play; the important thing is that the writer noticed all the plastic bags everywhere. So elicit *no, but it doesn't matter*. Do the same with *flummoxed*. The students can see the writer's friends were confused and didn't know the answer so it must mean something like that: *no, but I get the general idea*.

5 Post-reading tasks – speaking

- a In groups of three or four ask students to consider the content of the reading and decide:
- if they agree with the writer and if so, in what way
 - if they think the writer is worrying unnecessarily or exaggerating
 - if they don't care one way or another
- b Let them share their ideas and then perhaps vote and see what most of the students think.

Tip: link the reading to a speaking activity

Encourage students to react to the information they hear: *Really? So do !! / That's nonsense!*