

"1,000 IDEAS & ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS"

The Breaking News English.com Resource Book

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London set to ban plastic bags

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THE ARTICLE

London may soon be changing the habits of shoppers in the city and helping the environment by banning the use of the ubiquitous plastic shopping bag. Estimates are that Londoners and tourists use 1.6 billion plastic bags each year, many of which are thrown away after just one use. Shoppers may soon have to buy reusable bags in an attempt to reduce the strain on landfill sites, where the bags take 400 years to break down. Local authorities have asked the British government to ban retailers from giving away free plastic bags. A spokesman said stores should sell reusable bags and pass the money raised on to environmental projects. "As a society, we need to do far more to reduce the amount of waste we are sending to landfill and London as a city is determined to take an ambitious lead on this issue," he said.

Retailers are up in arms at the idea and have promised to fight the government to stop the ban from going ahead. The British Retail Consortium said there was no need for the ban as it would simply cause inconvenience to shoppers. A spokesman told reporters: "We think it's excessive and misguided [because] retailers are already committed to reducing the environmental impact of bags by 25 per cent by the end of next year." He was worried the ban would affect sales, saying: "If somebody is going to go into a supermarket or convenience store, it's hard to see in practical terms, unless they have brought a bag with them, how they will be able to buy more than a few items." A recent survey found 92 percent of Londoners supported a total ban on plastic bags or a tax on them.

WARM-UPS

1. PLASTIC BAGS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about plastic bags. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

habits / environment / shopping bags / landfill sites / environmental projects / being up in arms / bans / inconvenience / sales / convenience stores / surveys

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. BANNING THINGS: Are there everyday things in society we should ban? Rank these things on a scale of 1 (= doesn't need banning) to 10 (= definitely needs banning). Explain your choices to your partner(s).

- plastic bags
- cars that can exceed the speed limit
- fast food
- guns
- Disney goods
- cigarettes
- alcohol
- other _____

4. SHOPPING HABITS: With your partner(s), discuss which of the things below you would miss most when shopping:

- plastic bags
- trolleys / carts
- itemized receipts
- two-for-the-price-of-one special offers
- cash
- sales assistants

5. PLASTIC: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'plastic'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think plastic bags should be banned; Students B think the opposite. Change partners often.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. London has banned all stores from giving plastic bags to shoppers. | T / F |
| b. People use around 1.6 billion plastic bags in London every year. | T / F |
| c. It takes around 4,000 years for a plastic bag to decompose. | T / F |
| d. London has no ambitions to set an example with a plastic bag ban. | T / F |
| e. London stores are totally behind the idea of banning plastic bags. | T / F |
| f. Retailers do not yet have a target to reduce the number of bags. | T / F |
| g. Stores are worried people would buy fewer products with no bags. | T / F |
| h. 19.2 percent of Londoners agreed with the plastic bag ban. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. habits | a. effect |
| 2. ubiquitous | b. furious |
| 3. estimates | c. serious |
| 4. strain | d. questionnaire |
| 5. determined | e. guesses |
| 6. up in arms | f. annoyance |
| 7. inconvenience | g. routines |
| 8. excessive | h. pressure |
| 9. impact | i. ever-present |
| 10. survey | j. extreme |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. banning the use of the ubiquitous | a. total ban on plastic bags |
| 2. many of which are thrown | b. to break down |
| 3. bags take 400 years | c. lead on this issue |
| 4. pass the money raised | d. arms at the idea |
| 5. determined to take an ambitious | e. away after just one use |
| 6. Retailers are up in | f. of bags by 25 per cent |
| 7. it would simply cause inconvenience | g. practical terms |
| 8. reducing the environmental impact | h. plastic shopping bag |
| 9. it's hard to see in | i. on to environmental projects |
| 10. Londoners supported a | j. to shoppers |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

London may soon be changing the _____ of shoppers in the city and helping the environment by banning the _____ of the ubiquitous plastic shopping bag. Estimates are that Londoners and tourists use 1.6 billion plastic bags each year, many of which are _____ away after just one use. Shoppers may soon have to buy _____ bags in an attempt to reduce the strain on landfill sites, where the bags take 400 years to _____ down. Local authorities have asked the British government to ban _____ from giving away free plastic bags. A spokesman said stores should sell reusable bags and pass the money raised on to environmental projects. "As a _____, we need to do far more to reduce the amount of waste we are sending to landfill and London as a city is determined to take an ambitious lead on this _____," he said.

*break**society**use**issue**reusable**habits**retailers**thrown*

Retailers are up in _____ at the idea and have promised to fight the government to stop the ban from going _____. The British Retail Consortium said there was no need for the ban as it would simply _____ inconvenience to shoppers. A spokesman told reporters: "We think it's _____ and misguided [because] retailers are already committed to reducing the environmental impact of bags by 25 per cent by the _____ of next year." He was worried the ban would affect sales, saying: "If somebody is going to go into a supermarket or convenience store, it's hard to _____ in practical terms, unless they have brought a bag with them, how they will be able to buy more than a few _____." A recent survey found 92 percent of Londoners supported a _____ ban on plastic bags or a tax on them.

*see**cause**end**total**arms**items**ahead**excessive*

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

London may soon _____ shoppers in the city and helping the environment by banning the use of the ubiquitous plastic shopping bag. _____ Londoners and tourists use 1.6 billion plastic bags each year, many of which are thrown _____. Shoppers may soon have to buy reusable bags in an attempt to reduce the strain on landfill sites, where the bags take 400 _____. Local authorities have asked the British government to ban retailers from giving away free plastic bags. A spokesman said _____ bags and pass the money raised on to environmental projects. "As a society, we need to do far more to _____ waste we are sending to landfill and London as a city is determined to take an ambitious lead on this issue," he said.

Retailers _____ idea and have promised to fight the government to stop the ban from going ahead. The British Retail Consortium said there was _____ would simply cause inconvenience to shoppers. A spokesman told reporters: "We think it's excessive and misguided [because] _____ committed to reducing the environmental impact of bags by 25 per cent by the end of next year." He _____ affect sales, saying: "If somebody is going to go into a supermarket or convenience store, _____ practical terms, unless they have brought a bag with them, how they will be able to buy more than a few items." _____ 92 percent of Londoners supported a total ban on plastic bags or a tax on them.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'plastic' and 'bag'.

plastic	bag
----------------	------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changing • estimates • strain • pass • society • lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arms • cause • impact • worried • practical • tax
--	--

STUDENT PLASTIC BAGS SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about plastic bags in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
 - b) What are your feelings after reading the article?
 - c) What do you think about plastic bags?
 - d) Are there too many plastic bags in your country?
 - e) Does your country have any campaigns to recycle plastic?
 - f) Do you think shops need to give plastic (or any) bags to customers?
 - g) Do you think our throwaway society has gone too far?
 - h) What do you think of the idea of selling reusable bags and giving the money to environmental projects?
 - i) Could you easily live without bags?
-

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think retailers are right to be up in arms over this issue?
- c) When was the last time you were up in arms about something?
- d) Do you think no free plastic bags would inconvenience shoppers?
- e) What other everyday things do you think should be banned to help protect the environment?
- f) Do you think people really would buy less if there were no free plastic bags?
- g) What questions would you like to ask the head of the retail organization?
- h) What do you think his answers would be?
- i) Did you like this discussion?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

London may soon be changing the (1) _____ of shoppers in the city and helping the environment by banning the (2) _____ of the ubiquitous plastic shopping bag. Estimates are that Londoners and tourists use 1.6 billion plastic bags each year, many of (3) _____ are thrown away after just one use. Shoppers may soon have to buy reusable bags in an attempt to reduce the strain on landfill sites, where the bags take 400 years to break (4) _____. Local authorities have asked the British government to ban retailers from giving away free plastic bags. A spokesman said stores should sell reusable bags and pass the money (5) _____ on to environmental projects. "As a society, we need to do far more to reduce the amount of waste we are sending to landfill and London as a city is determined to take an ambitious (6) _____ on this issue," he said.

Retailers are up in (7) _____ at the idea and have promised to fight the government to stop the ban from going ahead. The British Retail Consortium said there was no need for the ban as it would (8) _____ cause inconvenience to shoppers. A spokesman told reporters: "We think it's excessive and misguided [because] retailers are (9) _____ committed to reducing the environmental impact of bags (10) _____ 25 per cent by the end of next year." He was worried the ban would affect sales, saying: "If somebody is going to go into a supermarket or convenience store, it's (11) _____ to see in practical terms, unless they have brought a bag with them, how they will be able to buy more than a few items." A recent survey (12) _____ 92 percent of Londoners supported a total ban on plastic bags or a tax on them.

- | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. | (a) habitation | (b) habit | (c) habits | (d) habitat |
| 2. | (a) useful | (b) use | (c) using | (d) user |
| 3. | (a) which | (b) whom | (c) that | (d) who |
| 4. | (a) away | (b) out | (c) in | (d) down |
| 5. | (a) heightened | (b) upped | (c) increased | (d) raised |
| 6. | (a) leading | (b) leader | (c) lead | (d) leads |
| 7. | (a) legs | (b) arms | (c) head | (d) feet |
| 8. | (a) simply | (b) simple | (c) simpler | (d) simplest |
| 9. | (a) yet | (b) already | (c) as | (d) by |
| 10. | (a) at | (b) with | (c) for | (d) by |
| 11. | (a) hard | (b) hardly | (c) harden | (d) hardness |
| 12. | (a) findings | (b) finding | (c) found | (d) find |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about countries that have had campaigns regarding plastic bags and the environment. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. PLASTIC BAGS: Make a poster about how plastic bags can affect the environment. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all include similar things?

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about how plastic bags can affect the environment. Include imaginary interviews with a plastic bag manufacturer and an environmentalist.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down new words and expressions.

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the head of the British Retail Consortium. Ask him/her three questions about the plastic bag ban. Give him/her three pieces of advice on how to keep shoppers happy and keep the environment clean. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. F d. F e. F f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. habits | a. routines |
| 2. ubiquitous | b. ever-present |
| 3. estimates | c. guesses |
| 4. strain | d. pressure |
| 5. determined | e. serious |
| 6. up in arms | f. furious |
| 7. inconvenience | g. annoyance |
| 8. excessive | h. extreme |
| 9. impact | i. effect |
| 10. survey | j. questionnaire |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. banning the use of the ubiquitous | a. plastic shopping bag |
| 2. many of which are thrown | b. away after just one use |
| 3. bags take 400 years | c. to break down |
| 4. pass the money raised | d. on to environmental projects |
| 5. determined to take an ambitious | e. lead on this issue |
| 6. Retailers are up in | f. arms at the idea |
| 7. it would simply cause inconvenience | g. to shoppers |
| 8. reducing the environmental impact | h. of bags by 25 per cent |
| 9. it's hard to see in | i. practical terms |
| 10. Londoners supported a | j. total ban on plastic bags |

GAP FILL:

London set to ban plastic bags

London may soon be changing the **habits** of shoppers in the city and helping the environment by banning the **use** of the ubiquitous plastic shopping bag. Estimates are that Londoners and tourists use 1.6 billion plastic bags each year, many of which are **thrown** away after just one use. Shoppers may soon have to buy **reusable** bags in an attempt to reduce the strain on landfill sites, where the bags take 400 years to **break** down. Local authorities have asked the British government to ban **retailers** from giving away free plastic bags. A spokesman said stores should sell reusable bags and pass the money raised on to environmental projects. "As a **society**, we need to do far more to reduce the amount of waste we are sending to landfill and London as a city is determined to take an ambitious lead on this **issue**," he said.

Retailers are up in **arms** at the idea and have promised to fight the government to stop the ban from going **ahead**. The British Retail Consortium said there was no need for the ban as it would simply **cause** inconvenience to shoppers. A spokesman told reporters: "We think it's **excessive** and misguided [because] retailers are already committed to reducing the environmental impact of bags by 25 per cent by the **end** of next year." He was worried the ban would affect sales, saying: "If somebody is going to go into a supermarket or convenience store, it's hard to **see** in practical terms, unless they have brought a bag with them, how they will be able to buy more than a few **items**." A recent survey found 92 per cent of Londoners supported a **total** ban on plastic bags or a tax on them.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - c 2 - b 3 - a 4 - d 5 - d 6 - c 7 - b 8 - a 9 - b 10 - d 11 - a 12 - c