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**Level 5** – 24th April, 2021

## Scientists make biodegradable plastic

**FREE** online quizzes, mp3 listening and more for this lesson here:

<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210424-biodegradable-plastic-5.html>

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Please try Levels 4 and 6. They are (a little) harder.

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# THE READING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210424-biodegradable-plastic-5.html>

Plastic has polluted the countryside and been a threat to wildlife for decades. Environmentalists have pleaded with us to cut the amount of plastic we use or switch to biodegradable alternatives. There may be a solution. Scientists have made a biodegradable plastic. This means the billions of plastic bags, cups, straws, etc. that we throw away each day could be "compostable" - they could break down like organic waste. The scientists are from the University of California. They have invented a plastic that could break down within a few weeks, rather than centuries, using just heat and water.

The new, biodegradable plastic has polyester-eating enzymes inside it. When these enzymes are exposed to heat and water, they eat away at the plastic and turn it into nutrients for the soil. Professor Ting Xu said up to 98 per cent of the plastic her team made degraded into tiny particles. She said: "We are basically saying that we are on the right track. We can solve this continuing problem of single-use plastics." She added: "Look at all the wasted stuff we throw away - clothing, shoes, electronics....We are taking things from the earth at a faster rate than we can return them."

Sources: <https://phys.org/news/2021-04-biodegradable-plastics-compostable.html>  
<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/plastic-compost-new-enzyme-technique-biodegradable>  
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2021-04-22/biodegradable-plastic-compost-enzymes-environment-soil-green/100082958>

# PHRASE MATCHING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210424-biodegradable-plastic-5.html>

## PARAGRAPH ONE:

- |                                      |                          |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Plastic has polluted              | a. could break down      |
| 2. a threat                          | b. alternatives          |
| 3. cut the amount of plastic         | c. bags                  |
| 4. switch to biodegradable           | d. rather than centuries |
| 5. billions of plastic               | e. the countryside       |
| 6. like organic                      | f. we use                |
| 7. They have invented a plastic that | g. waste                 |
| 8. within a few weeks,               | h. to wildlife           |

## PARAGRAPH TWO:

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. polyester-eating                    | a. right track      |
| 2. exposed to heat                     | b. them             |
| 3. we are on the                       | c. use plastics     |
| 4. We can solve this continuing        | d. at a faster rate |
| 5. single-                             | e. enzymes          |
| 6. Look at all the wasted stuff        | f. problem          |
| 7. We are taking things from the earth | g. and water        |
| 8. we can return                       | h. we throw away    |

# LISTEN AND FILL IN THE GAPS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210424-biodegradable-plastic-5.html>

Plastic has polluted the countryside and (1) \_\_\_\_\_ to wildlife for decades. Environmentalists have pleaded with us to cut the amount of plastic we (2) \_\_\_\_\_ to biodegradable alternatives. There may be a solution. Scientists have made a biodegradable plastic. This (3) \_\_\_\_\_ of plastic bags, cups, straws, etc. that we (4) \_\_\_\_\_ day could be "compostable" - they could break down (5) \_\_\_\_\_. The scientists are from the University of California. They have invented a plastic that could break down within a few weeks, rather than centuries, using (6) \_\_\_\_\_ water.

The new, biodegradable plastic has polyester-eating enzymes inside it. When these (7) \_\_\_\_\_ to heat and water, they eat away at the plastic and turn (8) \_\_\_\_\_ for the soil. Professor Ting Xu said up to 98 per cent of the plastic her team made degraded (9) \_\_\_\_\_. She said: "We are basically saying that we are on (10) \_\_\_\_\_. We can solve this continuing problem of single-use plastics." She added: "Look at all (11) \_\_\_\_\_ we throw away - clothing, shoes, electronics....We are taking things from the earth at (12) \_\_\_\_\_ than we can return them."

# PUT A SLASH ( / ) WHERE THE SPACES ARE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210424-biodegradable-plastic-5.html>

Plastic has polluted the countryside and been a threat to wildlife for decades. Environmentalists have pleaded with us to cut the amount of plastic we use or switch to biodegradable alternatives. There may be a solution. Scientists have made a biodegradable plastic. This means the billions of plastic bags, cups, straws, etc. that we throw away each day could be "compostable" - they could break down like organic waste. The scientists are from the University of California. They have invented a plastic that could break down within a few weeks, rather than centuries, using just heat and water. The new, biodegradable plastic has polyester-eating enzymes inside it. When these enzymes are exposed to heat and water, they eat away at the plastic and turn it into nutrients for the soil. Professor Ting Xu said up to 98 percent of the plastic her team made degraded into tiny particles. She said: "We are basically saying that we are on the right track. We can solve this continuing problem of single-use plastics." She added: "Look at all the wasted stuff we throw away - clothing, shoes, electronics... We are taking things from the earth a lot faster than we can return them."

# BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC SURVEY

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210424-biodegradable-plastic-4.html>

Write five GOOD questions about biodegradable plastic 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.

## WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student A: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

d) \_\_\_\_\_

e) \_\_\_\_\_

f) \_\_\_\_\_

*Scientists make biodegradable plastic – 24th April, 2021*  
More free lessons at [breakingnewsenglish.com](http://breakingnewsenglish.com)

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## WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student B: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

d) \_\_\_\_\_

e) \_\_\_\_\_

f) \_\_\_\_\_

