

Food Waste

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. How much of the food that you buy do you think goes to waste?
2. What can restaurants and grocery stores do to waste less food?
3. How does improper food storage lead to food waste?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ___ 1. go to waste | a) to reject |
| ___ 2. portion | b) to take responsibility for paying for a service or product |
| ___ 3. disregard | c) too soon |
| ___ 4. foot the bill | d) to break down organic material and reuse |
| ___ 5. prematurely | e) not good enough |
| ___ 6. edible | f) to not be used as planned, to be put in the garbage |
| ___ 7. inadequate | g) to not think about, to ignore |
| ___ 8. greenhouse gas | h) a single part or amount |
| ___ 9. discard | i) good enough to eat |
| ___ 10. compost | j) something that traps heat in the atmosphere and contributes to the greenhouse effect |

Reading

FOOD WASTE

Do we need a food waste tax?

1. Over one-third of the food that is produced each year **goes to waste**. Food waste occurs in developed countries where people store and often consume up to two times more food than is required. It also occurs in developing nations where improper farming techniques and food storage cause food to spoil.
2. How much food does your favorite restaurant waste? Restaurant **portion** sizes are getting larger by the day. Children almost never finish their meals in restaurants. Business workers are often the worst offenders for wasting food in restaurants. It's easier to **disregard** food waste when you aren't **footing the bill**. How much food do you think gets wasted at all-you-can-eat, buffet style restaurants?
3. According to a US study, 90% of Americans throw food out **prematurely** due to confusion about food dating. Most packaged food comes with a best-before date. Even a bottle of water has an expiration date. Do you throw out food the moment a best-before date passes? Many people incorrectly believe they will get food poisoning if they eat food that has passed a use-by date. While your food may no longer be as fresh as it was when you bought it, it will likely be **edible** for a few more days or weeks. Developing nations have the opposite problem. **Inadequate** storage means that food spoils much too soon. In fact, in poor countries, food often spoils before it leaves the farm.
4. Food waste is bad for the economy as well as the environment. Water, land, and energy are wasted on producing food that never makes it to our mouths. Produce that doesn't look edible due to its abnormal shape or size is left in the field. This **discarded** food rots instead of being **composted** properly. Approximately 10% of **greenhouse gas** comes from food that is grown but not eaten. Should wealthy nations pay a food waste tax?

“Throwing away food is like stealing from the table of those who are poor and hungry.”

—Pope Francis

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. Approximately how much food goes to waste in the world each year?
2. Is food waste mainly a problem in rich countries? Explain.
3. Why does the reading mention buffets?
4. How does food dating contribute to food waste?
5. Why is food waste a major environmental concern?

Vocabulary Review

A. Chunking

Pair up the words that are commonly found together in English. Try to do this without looking at the reading. Write a sentence for each example.

Word List

- greenhouse
- the bill
- expiration
- developing
- foot
- go
- to waste
- country
- gas
- worst
- date
- offender

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Vocabulary Review cont.

B. Odd One Out

Which word or expression does not belong?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. a) waste
b) disregard
c) throw out
d) discard | 3. a) inadequate
b) insufficient
c) poor
d) developed | 5. a) foot the bill
b) pay
c) cover
d) discard |
| 2. a) size
b) portion
c) amount
d) compost | 4. a) too soon
b) early
c) morning
d) premature | 6. a) use by
b) expire
c) best before
d) pass |

Discussion

1. Do you think food waste will still be a major problem 20 years from now?
2. What can the average person in a wealthy country do to reduce food waste?
3. What can be done with food that is not fit for human consumption?

Critical Thinking

IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

Rich countries have twice as much food than necessary on their grocery store shelves, in their shops and restaurants, and in their cupboards, fridges, and spare freezers. This doesn't include the corn and wheat used to feed livestock so that people can enjoy a wide variety of meat and dairy products. Do you agree with the Pope that food waste in rich nations is a form of stealing from the poor?

Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

FOOD WASTE

Do we need a food waste tax?

1. Over one-third of the food that is produced each year goes to waste. Food waste occurs in _____ where people store and often consume up to two times more food than is required. It also occurs in _____ where improper farming techniques and food storage cause food to spoil.
2. How much food does your favorite restaurant waste? Restaurant portion sizes are getting larger by the day. Children almost never finish their meals in restaurants. Business workers are often the worst offenders for wasting food in restaurants. It's easier to disregard food waste when you aren't footing the bill. How much food do you think gets wasted at all-you-can-eat, _____ restaurants?
3. According to a US study, 90% of Americans throw food out prematurely due to _____ about food dating. Most packaged food comes with a best-before date. Even a bottle of water has an expiration date. Do you throw out food the moment a best-before date passes? Many people incorrectly believe they will get _____ if they eat food that has passed a use-by date. While your food may no longer be as fresh as it was when you bought it, it will likely be edible for a few more days or weeks. Developing nations have the opposite problem. Inadequate storage means that food spoils much too soon. In fact, in poor countries, food often spoils before it leaves the farm.
4. Food waste is _____ as well as the environment. Water, land, and energy are wasted on producing food that never makes it to our mouths. Produce that doesn't look edible due to its abnormal shape or size is left in the field. This discarded food _____ instead of being composted properly. Approximately 10% of greenhouse gas comes from food that is grown but not eaten. Should wealthy nations pay a food waste tax?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about and discuss some of the leading causes of food waste. The lesson includes vocabulary review exercises, comprehension questions, and discussion questions.

TEACHING TIPS:

See *Discussion Starters Teaching Guide* (<https://esllibrary.com/courses/72/lessons/>) for a variety of ways to use the reading.

LEVEL: Int – Adv

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion food, food waste, environment, green, health

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Answers will vary. Discuss as a class or in pairs or groups. You could also assign these questions as a warm-up task for homework. Tell your students to have a phone or text-based chat.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. f | 3. g | 5. c | 7. e | 9. a |
| 2. h | 4. b | 6. i | 8. j | 10. d |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 5. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

1. Approximately one-third of the food that is produced goes to waste in the world each year.
2. Food waste is a problem in developed nations and developing nations. In developed nations, people have too much food and waste it carelessly. In developing nations, inadequate storage and transportation leads to the spoiling of food.
3. The reading mentions buffets to get the reader to think about how much food waste occurs in this style of restaurant. People take more than they need.
4. Food dating contributes to food waste because people throw food out prematurely. Many people think they will get sick if they eat food after the best-before/use-by/expiration date. In reality this food may not be “fresh” anymore even though it’s still consumable. (Here you can also discuss the example of water. Why does it have an expiration date? Do a little research together.)
5. Food waste is a major environmental concern because food waste contributes to greenhouse gas. We also waste a lot of natural resources to grow food that we just throw away.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Vocabulary Review

A. CHUNKING

Sentences will vary.

1. greenhouse gas
2. foot the bill
3. go to waste
4. worst offender
5. expiration date
6. developing country

B. ODD ONE OUT

1. b
2. d
3. d
4. c
5. d
6. d

Challenge your learners to create their own “Odd One Out” exercise using the odd words. Have them challenge a classmate.

Discussion

Answers will vary. Discuss as a class or in pairs or groups.

Critical Thinking

Answers will vary. Discuss as a class or in pairs or groups.

Listening

1. developed countries, developing nations
2. buffet-style
3. confusion, food poisoning
4. bad for the economy, rots

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Favorite*. Other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Favourite*. Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

“Expiration date” is used primarily in North American English, whereas “expiry date” is used mainly in British English.