

Lesson 3 – Extension 2 – Is food packaging good or bad?

Writing a persuasive text can consolidate the students' understanding of the impact of both food waste and packaging.

Meets Science ACSSU043 Living things have structural features and adaptations that help them to survive in their environments

Design and Technologies ACTDEK019 Examine how people in design and technologies occupations address competing considerations, including sustainability in the design of products, services, and environments for current and future use

Science ACSHE083 Scientific knowledge is used to solve problems and inform personal and community decisions

English ACELY 1704 Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structures, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience

Sustainability OI.1-OI.9 All life forms are interconnected and actions for sustainability require evaluation of past practices and balanced judgements based on future economic, social and environmental impacts

Method

Explain to the students the important role that food packaging plays in protecting and preserving contents. In countries where there is no packaging or food preservation, a lot of food is 'lost'. Some people think that some things are 'overpackaged', but food packaging is usually designed for a purpose – to get food to the consumer without breakage or decay. Think of a biscuit – if it wasn't packaged properly, it might go stale or be crushed before it even gets on the supermarket shelf. This might be unacceptable to the consumer, and it might have to be discarded. Also, wrapping a cucumber in plastic film can extend its life from 3 days to 14 days. Food naturally wrapped in its own skin can be safely transported and consumed when it doesn't have to travel far, but when food is transported from further away, which is quite often, plastic can play an important role in preventing it from becoming waste.



However, there are devastating environmental impacts from the improper disposal of packaging, particularly plastic.

Ask the students to write a 100 word persuasive text.

Option A is to give half the class Statement 1 (below) and the other half should be given Statement 2. Allow 15 minutes for the students to prepare their 100 word argument about their statement. Students could work in pairs.

Statement 1

Packaging is good for the environment

Statement 2

Packaging is bad for the environment

Hint: Issues in line with Statement 1 could include that packaging preserves food and protects it from damage, hence reduces food waste, therefore saves energy, resources, water, carbon emissions and reduces pollution. Issues in line with Statement 2 could include that packaging, if it enters the ocean, can kill wildlife via entanglement or ingestion. Also packaging uses resources such as energy and materials to produce.

Ask one or two representatives from each 'camp' to present their persuasive argument to the class.

Option B is to present the question to each student “Is packaging good or bad for the environment?” This could be used as practice for NAPLAN testing.

Ask the students what they think about this question. Do they think packaging saves a lot of food from being wasted, therefore it is good for the environment, or packaging is bad because it ends up as litter the environment? Can the students see both sides of the issue? Ask them to write as if to persuade someone to agree with their opinions.

Students could think about:

- What their point of view is
- How to write an introduction to clearly state their perspective

- Their arguments, with reasons or examples
- How to be persuasive
- How to write a conclusion, summing up the main points

Students should try to

- Plan their writing
- Make it interesting
- Write in sentences
- Use correct spelling and punctuation
- Stay on the topic
- Use paragraphs for each new topic
- Edit their writing

Reference: Package it Better, Primary Connections, Australian Academy of Science
<https://www.primaryconnections.org.au/curriculum-resource/package-it-better>

At St Mary’s College in Hobart, the students are passionate about their local environment and reducing their ecological footprint, one step at a time. Students formed the College’s sustainability group, The Footprint Project.

Their school canteen plays an important role in the College’s sustainability movement, which looks at positive ways that they can improve their waste management practices and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.

The canteen serves healthy, tasty meals while doing away with single-use products and packaging. The College has also introduced reusable plates, bowls, cups and cutlery for all staff and students to enjoy their meals before being returned to the canteen for washing and re-use. The school discontinued packaged drinks, instead offering tea and coffee in re-usable cups and encouraging students to drink tap water from their own drink bottles. Free-range eggs and locally sourced ingredients are also used.

These changes were implemented at the end of October 2019 and have led to a significant decrease in waste volume, with only one garbage bin of rubbish now coming from the canteen each day.