

NEWS LESSON

A Meal for a Bag of Plastic

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What would persuade you to pick up litter you did not drop?
2. Can a free meal be a good reason to help a neighbourhood?
3. Would a small reward change a habit you already cared about?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**convenient**	☐	A	use something again to make a new thing
2	**earn**	☐	B	hurt something so that it is not good any more
3	**collectors**	☐	C	find the answer to a problem
4	**recycle**	☐	D	big buildings where things are made
5	**solve**	☐	E	give someone a reason to do something
6	**encourage**	☐	F	get money for work you do
7	**factories**	☐	G	easy and quick to use
8	**damage**	☐	H	people whose job is to pick things up

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

In the Indian city of Ambikapur, a café opened in 2019. Bring one kilogram of plastic waste and you receive a full meal.

1 Imagine walking into a café, ordering a hot lunch and paying with a bag of plastic waste. In the Indian city of Ambikapur, the idea is real. The Garbage Café gives people food in exchange for plastic waste, including used bottles, bags and food packaging that most of us would throw away without thinking.

2 The café opened in 2019 with support from the local authorities. Customers can bring one kilogram of plastic waste and receive a full meal in return. That might include rice, vegetables, bread and other dishes. The plastic is then collected and sent into the city's waste system, instead of being left on the streets or blown into a river.

3 For some people, picking up plastic is more than a way to help the environment. It is a way to earn enough to eat. Waste collectors may spend hours looking for material they can sell, and the money they get for it is often very small. A hot meal in exchange for a bag of plastic makes those hours worth much more, and the food arrives the same day.

4 The café also draws attention to a growing problem. Single-use plastic is cheap and convenient, but it stays in the environment for a very long time. Plastic bags and wrappers block drains, damage natural places and slowly break down into tiny pieces that nobody can clear away again.

5 Of course, one small café cannot solve India's plastic problem on its own. The city produces far more waste than the café could ever collect. People also need good rubbish collection, proper ways to recycle, and good reasons to use less plastic in the first place. Shops and factories play a part too, because they decide how much packaging ends up in the bin.

6 Still, the idea changes the way we think about rubbish. Plastic that looks worthless to one person may be worth a hot meal to somebody else. The café shows that a simple local project can help people and encourage a cleaner city at the same time.

Sources: BBC Future. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The café opened with help from the local authorities. T F NG
2. Customers need to bring two kilograms of plastic for a meal. T F NG
3. Customers can choose their meal from a long menu. T F NG
4. The writer says one small café cannot solve India's plastic problem. T F NG
5. Waste collectors usually earn a lot of money from selling plastic. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

attention	authorities	drains	environment	kilogram	meal	packaging

1. Everything in this shop comes in plastic _____ .
2. The local _____ asked shops to give out fewer plastic bags.
3. Using too much plastic is bad for the _____ .
4. Rubbish can block the _____ , so water cannot leave the street.
5. The new poster got a lot of _____ on social media.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. The café _____ in 2019. (OPEN)
2. Customers _____ plastic bags to the café. (BRING)
3. In return, they _____ a hot meal. (GET)
4. In the past, collectors _____ hours looking for things to sell. (SPEND)
5. Yesterday I _____ a plastic bottle in the park. (FIND)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word. The small word changes the meaning, so learn the two words together.

away	down	for	in	out	round	up

1. Most of us throw plastic _____ without thinking.
2. Volunteers pick _____ litter from the beach every Sunday.
3. The café ran _____ of rice by two o'clock.
4. Waste collectors spend hours looking _____ plastic they can sell.
5. Shops should cut _____ on plastic packaging.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would make a rubbish-for-food scheme feel welcoming rather than embarrassing?
2. Should people need a reward to look after shared spaces?
3. Which everyday problem could your neighbourhood tackle with a simple exchange?

9 Role-play: one kilogram, or nothing?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the café manager

The rule is one kilogram of plastic for one meal. A collector arrives with a bit less. Ask what is in the bag and why it is light. You can say no, or find a fair solution.

Student B · the waste collector

You've worked all day and your bag is a little under one kilogram. You haven't eaten. Explain your day and ask for a meal. Offer something in return.

Useful phrases

I've been collecting since early this morning.

It's only a bit under a kilogram.

I'm sorry, but the rule is the same for everyone.

Could you make an exception just this once?

I'd be happy to give you a smaller meal.

That's fair, I'll bring more tomorrow.

Afterwards, tell the class: was the manager's decision fair, and would you have decided the same?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 F · 3 H · 4 A · 5 C · 6 E · 7 D · 8 B

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 packaging · 2 authorities · 3 environment · 4 drains · 5 attention

6 Verb forms

1 opened · 2 brought · 3 got · 4 spent · 5 found

7 Language focus

1 away · 2 up · 3 out · 4 for · 5 down

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