**Plastic**

What images spring to mind when you hear the word ‘plastic’?

Do you know how plastic is made?

What plastic things can you think of?

What’s your favourite thing made of plastic?

What is the best summary for all these articles?

*a* Plastic bags are terrible and should be banned everywhere.

*b* Both paper bags and plastic bags cause problems.

*c* Everybody should use paper bags and not plastic bags.

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| At the end of 2006 Tanzania, along with Zanzibar, joined other African nations in banning thin plastic bags. They said that the bags are an eyesore, and that they cause problems for animals and fish.  In 1999, 14 million trees were cut down to produce 10 billion paper grocery bags for the US.  A group of women in Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa make hats, handbags and baskets out of old plastic bags. Each hat is made from about 30 plastic bags. Each month the group use about 30,000 plastic bags.  In Britain only about 0.5% of plastic bags are recycled, and in the US only 1%.  Most plastic bags are made from polyethylene (commonly called polythene), which is made from crude oil and natural gas. Both of these are non-renewable resources. | In May 2003 South Africa brought in a law to ban thin plastic bags. It said that the country was using 8 billion bags every year. So many bags are caught in trees and bushes that South Africans call them the new ‘national flower’. The country wants to reduce the use of plastic bags to 4 billion.  Each year about 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide. That is about 1 million per minute. Billions of bags end up as litter each year.  More than a billion plastic bags are given out free every day in China.  Hundreds of thousands of sea turtles, whales and other marine animals die every year from eating plastic bags. They think the bags are jellyfish.  During *Clean Up Australia Day* people collected nearly 500,000 plastic bags.  In the US only 10 to 15% of paper bags are recycled. | The capital city of Bangladesh, Dhaka, banned all plastic bags in 2002. The bags clogged up drains and made flooding much worse.  Plastic bags were first introduced in 1977 and now four out of every five bags used at grocery stores in the US are plastic.  In 2001 Ireland used 1.2 billion plastic bags, about 316 per person. In 2002 the country introduced a plastic tax: the PlasTax. The use of plastic bags fell by 90% and the money raised in the first year, almost $10 million, was used to help the environment.  Paper bags create 50 times more water pollutants than plastic bags. They also create 70% more air pollutants.  There are over 60 million tons of polyethylene produced around the world each year. It was first made in 1898 by a German chemist. |

What would your home be like without plastic?

What are the downsides to plastic?

Do you think we’ll find an environmentally friendly alternative to plastic?

What is plastic surgery? Would you like to try it?

How useful are plastic containers?

What do you think of plastic shopping bags?

In English, we sometimes describe someone as being ‘plastic’. What do you think this means?

Do you prefer to use cash or plastic (credit cards)?

What do you think of plastic knives and forks on airplanes?

**Finish the sentences:**

If I saw somebody throwing an empty packet on the street, I would ...

If I discovered the factory I worked in was secretly polluting the environment, I would ...

If I were minister for the Environment, I would ...

If I had to do without perfume/deodorant, I would ...

If I were a fish, I would ...

If I were a fisherman, I would ...

If I lived on an island, I would ...

If a nuclear bomb exploded, I would ...

If they tried to build a nuclear power station near my house, I would ...

If I lived in a jungle, I would ...

If I were an endangered species, I would ...

If I had to light my fire with either coal or wood, I would ...

If I wanted to dump a box of rubbish, but I could not find a bin, I would ..

If the local council were planning to build a dump near my house, I would ..

**Conversation continues:**

1. Are you concerned about the environment?
2. Are there litter laws where you live? If so, what is the penalty for littering?
3. Do you think cars should be banned from city centres?
4. Do you think people should recycle? Why or why not? What?
5. Does your local government make it easy or hard for citizens to recycle?
6. How often is garbage collected in your neighbourhood?
7. What can you do to make this world a better place?
8. Which is more important, increasing people's standard of living, or protecting the environment?
9. Who do you think is more responsible for pollution, individual people or the government? Explain.
10. Do you usually drink bottled water? Why or Why not?
11. If you could choose one alternative energy source to develop which one would you choose? Why?
12. What are some ways energy is wasted?
13. What types of energy are popular in your country?
14. What is the main problem with renewable energy sources?
15. Do you think overpopulation is an important environmental issue? Why or why not?
16. Should gas for motorists be more expensive?
17. Do you think global warming is real?
18. What's happening to forests in the world?
19. What happens when we remove forests?
20. Are there people in your country who make their living from picking-up other people's garbage?
21. How has the environment changed since you were a child?
22. What do you think the Earth will be like in the future?  Please explain.

 