

# www.**Breaking News English**.com

Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **The Breaking News English.com Resource Book**

“1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers”

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

## **Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity**

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0607/060703-toys.html>

## **Contents**

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| The Article                | 2  |
| Warm-ups                   | 3  |
| Before Reading / Listening | 4  |
| While Reading / Listening  | 5  |
| Listening Gap Fill         | 6  |
| After Reading              | 7  |
| Discussion                 | 8  |
| Speaking                   | 9  |
| Homework                   | 10 |
| Answers                    | 11 |

**3 July, 2006**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity**

Researchers at a university in America have come up with a novel and ingenious way to help kids stay trim and avoid childhood obesity. It is a simple trick of making toys heavier, thus requiring children to exert more effort during playtime and so burn more calories. The research team, at Indiana State University, conducted tests on ten young volunteers aged between six to eight years. The kids played with specially adapted toys and teddy bears that had been inserted with steel blocks to increase their weight by one-and-a-half kilograms. The children were oblivious to the fact the toys were heavier and burnt more calories than other children playing with regular toys. The research may lead to a revolution in how kids exercise and simultaneously increase the biceps of parents who tidy up after their children.

Lead researcher Dr John Ozmun remained cautious about the implications of his research. He doubted it would solve the obesity problem but ventured to say: "it could be a small part of the puzzle, making a positive contribution... This study provides one intervention to the current trend of declining fitness in America's youth." He tentatively added: "Handling heavier objects, either through play or instruction, may provide opportunities to increase workload intensity in a benign manner allowing for subsequent improvements in children's physical fitness." He stressed that his findings are just a starting point and that weighted toys would not be on toy store shelves any time soon. He said they would initially most likely serve a niche market for physical therapists to help their young patients with strength, balance and coordination.

## WARM-UPS

**1. TOYS:** Write down three toys you think are good for children and three you think are bad. Share what you wrote down with your partner(s). Decide together on the two best and worst toys.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Ingenuity / obesity / simplicity / tricks / playtime / toys / calories / steel / revolutions / biceps / puzzles / fitness / toy stores / balance / coordination*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**3. EXERCISE TOYS:** With your partner(s), decide how the following toys might be adapted to help children increase the exercise they do every day. Put the adapted toys in order of the most effective. Change partners and compare your answers.

\_\_\_\_\_ Video/Computer games

\_\_\_\_\_ Building blocks

\_\_\_\_\_ Board games

\_\_\_\_\_ Role play games

\_\_\_\_\_ Card games

\_\_\_\_\_ Soft toys

\_\_\_\_\_ Action figures / Barbie dolls

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**4. HEADLINE PREDICTION:** With your partner(s), use all of the words in the "Chat" activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and compare your different versions. Who was closest to the real story?

**5. CHILDHOOD OBESITY:** Which of the ideas below do you think would be best at reducing childhood obesity? Would you have been happy to do these as a child?

- a. Walk (faster) to school
- b. No candy, potato chips or fast food, except on special occasions
- c. Sports lessons every day at school
- d. Doing lots of housework
- e. Spending more time playing outdoors than indoors
- f. Linking pocket money to body weight
- g. Compulsory jogging before breakfast
- h. Heavier toys

**6. TEDDY BEARS:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with teddy bears. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Research shows teddy bears inserted with steel help kids lose weight. T / F
- b. The research was conducted on ten children. T / F
- c. Toys were inserted with steel blocks weighing one-and-a-half kilos. T / F
- d. Parents want heavier toys to increase their bicep size. T / F
- e. The lead researcher is positive his research will reduce obesity in kids. T / F
- f. Further tests are to be conducted on weighted jigsaw puzzles. T / F
- g. Weighted toys are due to hit toy store shelves before the year is out. T / F
- h. The toys will most likely fill a niche market for physical therapists. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| a. novel       | unaware    |
| b. ingenious   | cautiously |
| c. exert       | careful    |
| d. oblivious   | use        |
| e. regular     | offered    |
| f. cautious    | original   |
| g. ventured    | harmless   |
| h. tentatively | specialist |
| i. benign      | inventive  |
| j. niche       | normal     |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| a. come up                                | trim                           |
| b. help kids stay                         | to say                         |
| c. requiring children to exert            | after their children           |
| d. children were oblivious to             | a niche market                 |
| e. parents who tidy up                    | the fact the toys were heavier |
| f. remained cautious about the            | in a benign manner             |
| g. ventured                               | with a novel and ingenious way |
| h. increase workload intensity            | implications of his research   |
| i. toys would not be on toy store shelves | more effort during playtime    |
| j. most likely serve                      | any time soon                  |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity

Researchers at a university in America have \_\_\_\_\_ up with a \_\_\_\_\_ and ingenious way to help kids stay trim and avoid childhood obesity. It is a simple \_\_\_\_\_ of making toys heavier, thus requiring children to \_\_\_\_\_ more effort during playtime and so burn more calories. The research team, at Indiana State University, \_\_\_\_\_ tests on ten young volunteers aged between six to eight years. The kids played with specially adapted toys and teddy bears that had been \_\_\_\_\_ with steel blocks to increase their weight by one-and-a-half kilograms. The children were \_\_\_\_\_ to the fact the toys were heavier and burnt more calories than other children playing with regular toys. The research may lead to a revolution in how kids exercise and simultaneously increase the \_\_\_\_\_ of parents who tidy up after their children.

*conducted*

*oblivious*

*trick*

*novel*

*come*

*biceps*

*inserted*

*exert*

Lead researcher Dr John Ozmun remained \_\_\_\_\_ about the implications of his research. He doubted it would \_\_\_\_\_ the obesity problem but ventured to say: "it could be a small part of the \_\_\_\_\_, making a positive contribution... This study provides one intervention to the \_\_\_\_\_ trend of declining fitness in America's youth." He \_\_\_\_\_ added: "Handling heavier objects, either through play or instruction, may provide opportunities to increase workload intensity in a \_\_\_\_\_ manner allowing for subsequent improvements in children's physical fitness." He stressed that his findings are just a \_\_\_\_\_ point and that weighted toys would not be on toy store shelves any time soon. He said they would initially most likely serve a \_\_\_\_\_ market for physical therapists to help their young patients with strength, balance and coordination.

*puzzle*

*starting*

*cautious*

*current*

*niche*

*solve*

*benign*

*tentatively*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity**

Researchers at a university in America have \_\_\_\_\_ a novel and \_\_\_\_\_ way to help kids stay trim and avoid childhood obesity. It is a simple trick of making toys heavier, thus requiring children to \_\_\_\_\_ more effort during playtime and so burn more calories. The research team, at Indiana State University, conducted tests on ten young volunteers aged between six to eight years. The kids played with specially \_\_\_\_\_ toys and teddy bears that had been inserted with steel blocks to increase their weight by one-and-a-half kilograms. The children were \_\_\_\_\_ to the fact the toys were heavier and burnt more calories than other children playing with regular toys. The research may lead to a revolution in how kids exercise and simultaneously increase the \_\_\_\_\_ of parents who tidy up after their children.

Lead researcher Dr John Ozmun remained cautious about the implications of his research. He doubted it would solve the obesity problem but \_\_\_\_\_ to say: "it could be a small part of the puzzle, making a positive contribution... This study provides one \_\_\_\_\_ to the current trend of declining fitness in America's youth." He \_\_\_\_\_ added: "Handling heavier objects, either through play or instruction, may provide opportunities to increase workload intensity in a \_\_\_\_\_ manner allowing for subsequent improvements in children's physical fitness." He stressed that his findings are just a starting point and that weighted toys would not be on toy store shelves any time soon. He said they would initially most likely serve a \_\_\_\_\_ market for physical \_\_\_\_\_ to help their young patients with strength, balance and coordination.

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**childhood**' and '**obesity**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "TOYS" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about toys and their possible uses in fighting childhood obesity.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| • novel     | • remained |
| • trick     | • puzzle   |
| • exert     | • benign   |
| • specially | • point    |
| • oblivious | • soon     |
| • biceps    | • niche    |

## **DISCUSSION**

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of children's toys nowadays?
- c. Should toys be for play or for exercise?
- d. Do you think video and computer games are dangerous?
- e. What is/was your favorite toy?
- f. Do you think the idea of weighted toys will catch on?
- g. What is the heaviest a teddy bear should weigh?
- h. Is childhood obesity a problem in your country?
- i. Are there things in your daily life that might be adapted to make you exercise more?
- j. Do you think weighted toys would cost too much money?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think toy manufacturers need to take more responsibility in designing toys that also ensure children get exercise?
- d. Do you think heavier toys might do more harm than good?
- e. What other areas of children's lives could be adapted to ensure they exercise more?
- f. Is the government of your country taking any measures to tackle childhood obesity?
- g. What is the most important thing parents can do for their children to avoid obesity?
- h. Would you buy a child a weighted toy as a present?
- i. Do you think children will care about the fact that their toys will be heavier?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?



## SPEAKING

**FITNESS REGIME:** In pairs / groups, discuss how children could increase the amount they exercise each day by adapting the things or routines around them. Make a mini presentation for the rest of your class.

| Age group        | Ideas |
|------------------|-------|
| 1. 0 - 2 years   |       |
| 2. 3 - 6 years   |       |
| 3. 7 - 10 years  |       |
| 4. 11 - 15 years |       |
| 5. 16 - 18 years |       |

Change partners and talk about what you wrote with your previous partner(s).

Give your presentations.

Discuss what was said in each presentation and vote on the best ones.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information childhood obesity around the world. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s).

**3. OBESITY:** Make a poster outlining the many ways children can change their daily lives to increase their levels of exercise. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which poster(s) did you like most and why?

**4. HEAVY BEARS:** Make a poster advertising the benefits of heavy teddy bears. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which poster(s) did you like most and why?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. T      b. T      c. T      d. F      e. F      f. F      g. F      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

|                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| a. novel       | original   |
| b. ingenious   | inventive  |
| c. exert       | use        |
| d. oblivious   | unaware    |
| e. regular     | normal     |
| f. cautious    | careful    |
| g. ventured    | offered    |
| h. tentatively | cautiously |
| i. benign      | harmless   |
| j. niche       | specialist |

### PHRASE MATCH:

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| a. come up                                | with a novel and ingenious way |
| b. help kids stay                         | trim                           |
| c. requiring children to exert            | more effort during playtime    |
| d. children were oblivious to             | the fact the toys were heavier |
| e. parents who tidy up                    | after their children           |
| f. remained cautious about the            | implications of his research   |
| g. ventured                               | to say                         |
| h. increase workload intensity            | in a benign manner             |
| i. toys would not be on toy store shelves | any time soon                  |
| j. most likely serve                      | a niche market                 |

### GAP FILL:

#### Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity

Researchers at a university in America have **come** up with a **novel** and ingenious way to help kids stay trim and avoid childhood obesity. It is a simple **trick** of making toys heavier, thus requiring children to **exert** more effort during playtime and so burn more calories. The research team, at Indiana State University, **conducted** tests on ten young volunteers aged between six to eight years. The kids played with specially adapted toys and teddy bears that had been **inserted** with steel blocks to increase their weight by one-and-a-half kilograms. The children were **oblivious** to the fact the toys were heavier and burnt more calories than other children playing with regular toys. The research may lead to a revolution in how kids exercise and simultaneously increase the **biceps** of parents who tidy up after their children.

Lead researcher Dr John Ozmun remained **cautious** about the implications of his research. He doubted it would **solve** the obesity problem but ventured to say: "it could be a small part of the **puzzle**, making a positive contribution... This study provides one intervention to the **current** trend of declining fitness in America's youth." He **tentatively** added: "Handling heavier objects, either through play or instruction, may provide opportunities to increase workload intensity in a **benign** manner allowing for subsequent improvements in children's physical fitness." He stressed that his findings are just a **starting** point and that weighted toys would not be on toy store shelves any time soon. He said they would initially most likely serve a **niche** market for physical therapists to help their young patients with strength, balance and coordination.