

Legalize it?

An ESL Speaking Lesson for Level 6+

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“Legalize it?” - ESL Speaking Lesson Plan

Level: 6+

Materials Required: “Vocabulary Exercise” handout, “What do you think?” handout, Poster-size paper and markers (optional)

Goals: Learning vocabulary related to drugs, reaching a consensus, arguing opinions, writing persuasively (follow-up activity)

Introduction (for students):

Today we will be discussing a very important topic for our society. In Canada, there is a big debate going on over the legalization of marijuana. People have very strong opinions. Some of you probably come from countries where marijuana use is more common than in Canada. Others may come from countries where you could go to jail for smoking marijuana.

The debate is not just about marijuana. New drugs are always appearing and the government has to decide which drugs should be criminalized and which drugs should be legal. Different countries have different opinions, and some countries are stricter about drug use than others.

Pre-speaking Activity #1 (5-10 mins)

In groups of 2, have students discuss the following questions:

1. Are illegal drugs a problem in your home country?
2. Why do you think people use illegal drugs?
3. What are the punishments for using illegal drugs?

Pre-speaking Activity #2 (10-20 mins)

Give each group of 2 a copy of the **Vocabulary Exercise**.

Instructions: Work together with your partner to complete the sentences with the appropriate vocabulary. You may use English-English dictionaries only.

Take up answers with students.

Speaking Activity (20-30 mins)

Have students form groups of 4. Give each group a copy of the handout ***What do you think?*** Have students read along as you read them the first two paragraphs:

A drug called POP is becoming popular and causing major controversy in Toronto. Right now, POP is a “street drug” but the government is trying to decide if it should be legalized. Your group has been asked for an opinion.

Users of POP usually smoke it, although it can also be eaten. The effects of POP have been well studied.

Instructions (to students):

Read through the list of side-effects with your group. Use the following chart to organize your ideas. (draw chart on board)

<u>Arguments for legalization</u>	<u>Arguments against legalization</u>

After your group is done listing your arguments, you must come to a decision: Should POP be legalized or not? Then you will present your decision to the class.

Post-Activity

After the students present their ideas, the class can engage in a discussion/debate. This can be done casually or you can divide the class into “YES” and “NO” sides.

Some questions to spark additional conversation:

1. Is POP any different than alcohol or tobacco?
2. Why are some drugs legal (tobacco, alcohol) when others are not?
3. When it comes to drug use, should the government respond differently to teenagers than to adults?
4. What influence does culture have on drug use (eg, drinking a glass of wine with dinner, teenagers smoking because of peer pressure, etc)?

Follow-Up Activity

For homework, students are to write a 2-page persuasive essay arguing their opinion on the legalization of POP.

Vocabulary Exercise

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With a partner, match the sentences with the appropriate word.
Only English-English dictionaries are allowed!

Prescription	Controversy	Addictive
Controlled	Hard drug	Recreational
Over-the-counter	Legalized	Assault
Vandalism	Coordination	Criminalized
Chronic pain	Depression	Soft drug

1. People often get into arguments about drugs, it is a big _____.
2. Alcohol was once illegal, but since then it was _____.
3. Tobacco is _____, that's why it's hard to quit smoking.
4. I tried to buy a drug at the pharmacy, but the pharmacist told me that I needed a _____.
5. Cancer is a difficult disease to have for many reasons, including the _____ that it causes.
6. Yesterday Brian was beat up on Main St. He was a victim of _____.
7. Some people believe that tobacco should be _____ because it can cause cancer.
8. Someone destroying public property is an example of _____.
9. Basketball players need good _____ in order to score points.
10. Drugs like Aspirin and Tylenol are common painkillers. You do not need a prescription to buy them. They are available _____.
11. People who are always sad may be suffering from _____.
12. Many people use illegal drugs for _____ reasons. They want to have fun.
13. Drugs like alcohol and tobacco aren't illegal, but they are _____ by the government.
14. Cocaine is considered a _____ while marijuana is considered a _____.

What do you think?

A drug called POP is becoming popular and causing major controversy in Toronto. Right now, POP is a “street drug” but the government is trying to decide if it should be legalized. Your group has been asked for an opinion.

Users of POP usually smoke it, although it can also be eaten. The effects of POP have been well studied.

1. Addictive: Only after several years of using it regularly.
2. Mood altering: Most often, users feel happy and relaxed. Several people report that POP helped their depression/anxiety when prescription drugs had no effect. Some scientists believe POP may be helpful for chronic pain. Often, people on POP become affectionate and very social. About 15% of the population, however, may be prone to violence while on POP. Assault, vandalism and rape have all been linked to POP.
3. Impairs coordination and judgment: Many people report that people on POP are “in their own world.” They become irrational and sometimes lose control of their bodies. Coordination is impaired and simple tasks can be very difficult while on the drug.
4. Medical Effects: POP can damage brain cells, memory, the stomach and kidneys. The risk of cancer is low, but possible. In a few cases, an overdose of POP has caused death.

People have different opinions about POP:

Brad: “POP should definitely be illegal. I hate people who use POP, they are always loud and annoying. After a few hours, they stop making sense and eventually fall asleep. I think a lot of crime is caused by POP.”

Rachel: “I love POP! Usually I am a shy person and have trouble making friends. After I take POP I relax and can speak to anyone! I think POP should be legal for adults who use it responsibly.”