

'If you're sad, get a cookie': how US schoolkids launched a hotline to spread joy

Level: Elementary – Teacher's notes

Article summary: How and why a hotline, set up by an elementary school, providing life advice from children has gone viral.

Time: 90 minutes

Skills: Reading, speaking, giving advice

Language focus: Vocabulary, speaking, writing

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- Working first on their own, students rank the things by writing the numbers 1–8 on the lines to show which of the things are most likely to make them feel better (1), and which are least likely to do so (8). They may add other things if they like.
- Then they talk with a partner or in small groups and compare their ranking order, discussing the similarities and differences.

2. Key words

- Students write the words from the wordpools next to the definitions on the lines provided. Then they should find and highlight them in the article to read them in context. As these words are on the tricky side for this level, the paragraph numbers are given for additional help.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. <i>inspiration</i> | 6. <i>pep talk</i> |
| 2. <i>advice</i> | 7. <i>complicated</i> |
| 3. <i>viral</i> | 8. <i>experience</i> |
| 4. <i>frustrated</i> | 9. <i>remote learning</i> |
| 5. <i>encouragement</i> | 10. <i>isolation</i> |

- Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand and know how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:

- viral*
- inspiration*
- experience*
- complicated*
- encouragement*

3. Understanding the article

- Students read the statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the article and correct any that are false.

Key:

- True*
- True*
- False. The hotline is free and callers do not have to pay.*
- True*
- True*
- False. They can go to school now, but during the pandemic they sometimes had to stay at home and do their lessons remotely.*
- True*
- False. The author says that life doesn't have to be complicated.*

4. Key language

- Students first look for American words in the article that have the same meaning as the British words in the table and write them in. If they need help, offer them the first letter of each answer.

Key:

American English (AE)	British English (BE)
cookie	biscuit
elementary school	primary school
5th grade	(school) year 6

- Next they draw lines to join the AmE words with their BrE equivalents.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>c</i> | 5. <i>f</i> |
| 2. <i>g</i> | 6. <i>a</i> |
| 3. <i>h</i> | 7. <i>d</i> |
| 4. <i>b</i> | 8. <i>e</i> |

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- c. Finally, they should talk about other AmE–BrE word pairs that they know or have heard (perhaps in songs, on the TV or in films).

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions related to the article, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

- a – e. Follow the steps on the worksheet and hold a feedback discussion afterwards. The advice-giving part can be done in pairs to make it more collaborative. Use this task and the sentence stems in the prompt box to review how to give tactful and helpful advice.

If you are teaching a very small group, have a one-to-one lesson, or feel your students could do with extra support, prepare some problems and challenges in advance so that they have something to give advice to.