

## 'Tastes like water': how a US facility is recycling sewage to drink

### Level 1: Elementary

#### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- How much water do you drink per day?
- Do you drink water from the tap or buy bottled water? Why?

#### 2 Key words

a. Find the words from the wordpool in the article. Then use the words to complete the definitions.

bacteria  
chemicals

drawback  
fibres

gallons  
import

pipes  
praise

recycled  
wastewater

- \_\_\_\_\_ : very thin pieces of material
- \_\_\_\_\_ : dirty water from homes or factories
- \_\_\_\_\_ : to bring something from another country to sell or use
- \_\_\_\_\_ : long tubes that carry water or other liquids
- \_\_\_\_\_ : positive words used to describe someone or something
- \_\_\_\_\_ : a negative point; a disadvantage
- \_\_\_\_\_ : very small organisms that can cause problems with your health
- \_\_\_\_\_ : special liquids that we use to clean things
- \_\_\_\_\_ : a measure of liquid, especially in the US (1 = about 4 litres)
- \_\_\_\_\_ : used again instead of being thrown away

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

- Water comes into the kitchen through \_\_\_\_\_.
- I received \_\_\_\_\_ for my excellent work on my maths exam.
- The only \_\_\_\_\_ of the job is the long hours.

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4. Wash your hands before you eat to remove dangerous \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I don't use \_\_\_\_\_ to clean my house – I prefer natural products such as lemons and soda.
6. We \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of fruit such as oranges from Spain.
7. We use \_\_\_\_\_ paper at work – it's better for the environment.
8. The fuel tank on my car holds eight \_\_\_\_\_ of petrol.
9. We make clothes from natural \_\_\_\_\_, such as cotton or wool.
10. The factory cleans \_\_\_\_\_ and makes it safe for people to drink.

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- 1 In Orange County, California, there is a water company that produces 130 million gallons of water each day. That's enough for a million people. The factory, which opened in 2008, takes wastewater from houses and makes clean water from it. It provides 45 per cent of Orange County's water and reduces the need to import water from other places.
- 2 In general, when wastewater is cleaned, they return the water to rivers, but climate change means that cities are using recycled sewage for drinking water. This also happens in Israel, Singapore and Kuwait, but Orange County is the first place in the US to try the idea.
- 3 When the wastewater reaches the factory it is clean enough to go back into the oceans, but not clean enough to drink. It goes through a three-step process. The first step is to push the water through special fibres to remove bacteria. Then pipes carry the water to a different building where they remove the salts. Finally, they use UV lights and chemicals to clean it.
- 4 After walking around all three buildings, we reach a sink with running, clear water. I drink a cup of it – it's super clean, and tastes okay. On the cup it says, "Tastes like water ... because it is water".
- 5 The big drawback to this system is that making water – instead of taking it from the ground – takes a lot of energy. The system uses 17 megawatts of electricity and has a monthly electricity bill of \$2.5 million (£1.85 million).
- 6 Some countries are looking to the oceans for drinking water, but wastewater is cheaper because there is less salt in wastewater than seawater. That makes the energy costs of cleaning the water about half of what it would be to remove the salt.
- 7 The idea is also being used in other areas in the US. Los Angeles County is building a water recycling project in the San Fernando Valley to produce 20 million gallons a day. There are also projects starting in Utah, Texas and Colorado.
- 8 The Orange County factory has won awards, including a Guinness World Records title for the most wastewater recycled to drinking water in 24 hours on 16 February 2018. But the best praise is the public support for the water and the fact that people are happy to drink it.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Are these sentences True (T) or False (F)?

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. The factory in Orange County makes clean water from wastewater.                | T / F |
| 2. The US is the first country in the world to use wastewater for drinking water. | T / F |
| 3. The water goes through a two-step process.                                     | T / F |
| 4. The water tastes bad because it still has bacteria in it.                      | T / F |
| 5. Cleaning wastewater uses a lot of electricity every month.                     | T / F |
| 6. People in Orange County do not want to drink the recycled water.               | T / F |

#### 4 Key language

a. Put these steps in the correct order (1-4) according to the article.

Step: \_\_\_\_\_

They use UV light and chemicals to clean the water.

Step: \_\_\_\_\_

Pipes carry the water to a different building.

Step: \_\_\_\_\_

People can safely drink the water.

Step: \_\_\_\_\_

They push the water through fibres to remove bacteria.

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b. Look at the example sentences. Choose the correct option a, b or c in each sentence.

**Active Voice:** *People drink tap water in most European countries.*

**Passive voice:** *Tap water is drunk in most European countries.*

1. When we change a *present simple* sentence to *simple present passive*, we use the ...

- a. present form of the verb.
- b. past participle form of the verb.
- c. *-ing* form of the verb.

2. In the *present simple passive*, we use ...

- a. *have / has* + past participle.
- b. *will* + base verb.
- c. *am / is / are* + past participle.

3. In the *present simple passive* with *can*, we use ...

- a. *can* + *be* + past participle.
- b. *can* + *is* + past participle.
- c. *can* + past participle + *have*.

c. Rewrite the steps in task a using the present simple passive and in the correct order.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

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#### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Would you drink clean water made from wastewater? Why or why not?
- What do people in your country do to save water?

#### 6 In your own words

- a. The article describes the process by which wastewater is turned into drinking water. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features and making comparisons where relevant. Write at least 80 words.
- b. Share your summaries with the class.