

Teflon diet, garlic milk and zebra cows triumph at 2025 Ig Nobel prizes

Level 2: Intermediate

Article summary: This article examines some of the unusual scientific research that was carried out by the winners of the 2025 Ig Nobel awards.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Phrasal verbs

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to get students thinking about unusual or surprising scientific research and what the possible benefits are to science of research into quirky topics. You can extend the activity by asking students to name well-known scientists from around the world and what discoveries they became famous for.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to work individually to match the words in bold from the article to the correct definitions. Remind them to look at the different forms of any verbs (e.g. simple past, present continuous, etc.) in the definitions, as these will give them clues as to the form of the verb they need to look for in the article. For an extra challenge, ask students for any synonyms (or antonyms) that they know for any of the words in bold. Allow a few minutes for students to check answers in pairs or groups before checking answers with the whole class.

Key:

1. shoe rack
2. arrogant
3. bragging
4. garlic
5. growth

6. honoured
7. nutrition
8. obesity
9. posthumously
10. recognition
11. smelly
12. surface

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences using words from the previous activity in the correct form.

Key:

1. Garlic
2. honoured
3. smelly
4. posthumously
5. arrogant
6. nutrition
7. recognition
8. bragging
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12. shoe rack

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students can work individually or in pairs to do this activity. Encourage them to highlight the section of the article where they found the answers to the questions. You may want to ask students to answer the questions using their own words where possible. Explain to students that *burnt* is the past participle of the verb *burn*. In American English, the spelling *burned* is more common.

Key:

1. a chemical found on Teflon saucepans
2. It showed that people's foreign language skills improved when they had a small amount of alcohol. / It made people feel more confident.
3. They drank (their mother's) milk for longer.
4. They painted the cows with black stripes (to look like zebras).
5. It burnt/damaged the trainers.
6. The growth/length of his fingernails and toenails.

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4. Key language

- a. Students work individually to find the phrases in the article and match them to the correct definitions. You may want to do this as a timed activity to practice students' ability to find key words in a text quickly (scanning).

Key:

1. *b*
2. *c*
3. *e*
4. *a*
5. *d*

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences with the phrases from the previous activity in the correct form. To extend the activity, ask students to work in pairs to write example sentences of their own using the phrases.

Key:

1. *confused with*
2. *battled to*
3. *disguised as*
4. *transformed into*
5. *sticks together*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions in pairs or groups. Ask them to justify their opinions, referring to their own experiences whenever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. The aim of this task is to get students to do some research of their own to identify interesting or unusual awards. Give them some time to work together in pairs to search online for different awards. Remind them that they can use photos, video clips or quotes in their presentations.
- b. Give students time to prepare their presentations before they share them with the class. Students can then decide which award they like best.