

Wash well – and don't forget the lid: how to clean your reusable water bottle

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- Do you own and use a water bottle? How often do you wash it with hot water?
- Why do you think reusing water bottles may not be healthy?

2 Key words

a. Find the key words (marked in bold) in the article. Then circle the correct definition.

1. **antibacterial**

- a. containing harmful bacteria
- b. designed to kill harmful bacteria

2. **bacteria**

- a. very small organisms that can cause illness
- b. dirt that you can see

3. **bleach**

- a. a type of bacteria
- b. chemical for cleaning

4. **carried out**

- a. removed
- b. done; completed

5. **dishwasher**

- a. machine that cleans dishes
- b. a person who cleans dishes in a restaurant

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Level 2: Intermediate

6. **micro-organisms**

- a. small pieces of plastic
- b. very small living things

7. **moisture**

- a. a small amount of water
- b. dry air

8. **refilled**

- a. filled with a liquid after being empty
- b. emptied completely

9. **reinfect**

- a. to recover from an illness
- b. to get ill again after recovering

10. **rinsing**

- a. cleaning with soap
- b. washing with water

11. **soap bubbles**

- a. pieces of soap that are used for washing your hands
- b. small balls of air you make when you use soap and water

12. **trap**

- a. to keep something in a place, so it can't leave or escape
- b. to release someone or something after catching them

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Level 2: Intermediate

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity in the correct form.

1. The experiment was _____ by a team of scientists at Oxford University.
2. Try adding _____ to your wash to make your T-shirts white again.
3. Most children love playing with _____ in the bath.
4. Keep biscuits in a tin with a lid to keep out the _____.
5. Alice _____ her coffee cup from the machine in the office kitchen.
6. _____ the pasta under cold water stops it from overcooking.
7. _____ in food or drinks can cause stomach problems.
8. A single drop of water from a river or lake can contain millions of _____.
9. Small gaps between the kitchen tiles can _____ dirt and dust.
10. Most gyms provide _____ spray to clean the gym equipment.
11. Doctors advise changing your toothbrush after being ill so you don't _____ yourself.
12. I usually wash big pans by hand because they don't fit in the _____.

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Nervous Water bottles are the 'perfect environment for bacteria to grow' – as we've seen from the horror pics on social media. Follow these steps to stay clean.

Sarah Sloat

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- 1 Reusable water bottles are very popular. But many people don't know how to clean them. "The water bottle is just the perfect environment for **bacteria** to grow," says Kelly Reynolds at the University of Arizona, who studies water quality. Keeping your water bottle clean is important, but many people don't know what this means. For example, in a study of 30 people, 27 regularly **refilled** their water bottles without washing them. Here's what experts recommend.
- 2 **Wash your hands – and clean your phone:**
First, you should wash your hands because it's your hands that probably contain the bacteria. You should also clean your phone weekly, using a cloth and soap and water. Research suggests that at least 68 per cent of phones contain bacteria.
- 3 **Wash the bottle with soap, bleach or vinegar:**
Rinsing your water bottle with just water is not enough explains Reynolds.
- 4 You should clean the bottle in the sink or in the **dishwasher**, says Reynolds. Fill the sink with water, add a small amount of soap, **bleach** or vinegar, and leave it for a minute or two. Then rinse your bottle with clean water. Note: never mix bleach with any other product.
- 5 **Hot water can be better than cold:**
Hot water is good because it is better for creating **soap bubbles** which help the cleaning process. For very dirty bottles, a quick prewash with cold water is also a good idea.
- 6 **Don't forget the lid, mouthpiece or straw:**
These parts are often the dirtiest because they **trap** water so it can be easier for bacteria to grow. Use a bottle brush for these areas.

7 **Let the water bottle dry completely:**

Without **moisture**, bacteria have a hard time growing, Reynolds says.

8 **Wash regularly and sensibly:**

It's generally a good routine to wash your water bottle daily. This is especially important if you leave it in a hot environment such as your car because bacteria grow more quickly in warm places.

9 **If you can see or smell something, it's too late:**

Bacteria won't harm you immediately, but it can cause a slimy gel called biofilm to develop. Biofilm sticks to the sides of a water bottle and produces an unpleasant smell and taste. There could be millions of biofilm **micro-organisms** in a water bottle. And you only need around one hundred micro-organisms to make you sick, says Reynolds.

10 **Choose your bottle wisely:**

Metal and glass water bottles are better than plastic ones because they are **antibacterial**. This means they can stop bacteria and biofilm from growing. However, you should still wash these water bottles regularly.

11 **What happens if you don't clean your water bottle?**

Bacteria can easily grow in a water bottle. Reynolds recently **carried out** a survey at a water refill station. She tested the water in people's water bottles and found that about half of them contained bacteria and 10 per cent contained E. coli. Drinking water that contains E. coli can cause stomach pain and sickness. It's also important to clean your water bottle when you are ill, because you can **reinfect** yourself, says Reynolds.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Read the article and write T (True) or F (False).

According to the article ...

1. ... most people wash their water bottles before refilling them. _____
2. ... there is no point cleaning your hands if you don't also clean your phone. _____
3. ... it's a good idea to mix bleach with vinegar. _____
4. ... hot water is recommended because it produces more soap bubbles. _____
5. ... you need to consume millions of micro-organisms to become ill. _____
6. ... you should clean your water bottle after recovering from an illness, so you don't get ill again. _____

4 Key language

a. Complete the table with a prefix from the box.

re

micro

anti

pre

bio

non

multi

Meaning	Prefix
again	1. _____
against; opposing	2. _____
before	3. _____
life; living	4. _____
many	5. _____
not; without	6. _____
very small; tiny	7. _____

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b. Complete the sentences with the word in brackets and a suitable prefix.

1. A small amount of soil can contain billions of different _____ (organisms).
2. Our local supermarket sells _____ (usable) bags to reduce plastic waste.
3. _____ (virus) software will protect your computer from a cyber-attack.
4. This _____ (purpose) tool also has a bottle opener, a knife and scissors.
5. If your clothes are very dirty, you should _____ (wash) them first and then wash them at a high temperature.
6. My flight is a(n) _____ (stop), 14-hour direct flight from Tokyo to London.
7. _____ (film) is a type of bacteria that can grow in water bottles and affect the smell and taste.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Has reading this article changed how you think about cleaning everyday items? Why or why not?
- Do you think most people know about the dangers associated with water bottles? Why or why not?

6 In your own words

a. Work in pairs or small groups to create an informative poster about water bottle hygiene for your school, gym or workplace.

Your poster should include:

- an interesting title
- reasons why cleaning your water bottle is important

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- tips on how to clean a water bottle properly
- a warning section about what to avoid

Remember to use modals of obligation (*must/should/have to*) and prohibition (*mustn't*) and imperatives (*wash, dry, rinse, etc*) for giving instructions.

b. Present your poster to the class and explain the information you have included.