

The one change that worked: When good things happen, I write them down – and it's made me more optimistic

Level 3: Advanced

Article summary: This article tells the story of a woman with a very negative outlook who starts to change her attitude when she makes notes of the good things that happen to her.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Writing, Speaking

Language focus: Gerunds as subject and object nouns

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to let students consider how optimistic or pessimistic they are, how they combat negativity and the things in life that make them happy. Be cautious that conversations don't steer into more delicate subjects that might make students uncomfortable.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do this task individually and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. As an extension activity, ask students to highlight the key words in the article.

Key:

1. *fake*
2. *objectively*
3. *optimist*
4. *preservation*
5. *reassure*
6. *sportier*
7. *tendency*
8. *thankful*
9. *awe*
10. *chronic*
11. *conviction*
12. *draining*

13. *embarrass*
14. *fulfilling*
15. *intensified*
16. *ritual*
17. *turbulent*
18. *catastrophising*
19. *journalling*
20. *compulsively*

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

Key:

1. *conviction*
2. *tendency*
3. *compulsively*
4. *turbulent*
5. *fulfilling*
6. *fake*
7. *catastrophising*
8. *sportier*
9. *optimist*
10. *draining*
11. *objectively*
12. *intensified*
13. *ritual*
14. *preservation*
15. *embarrass*
16. *chronic*
17. *reassure*
18. *thankful*
19. *journalling*
20. *awe*

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. Have students make notes where they think an answer is false, as that will help them when they check their answers. Then have them correct the false statements and check their answers with a partner.

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Key:

1. *False. She was envious of optimists.*
2. *True*
3. *False. They helped over the years, but sometimes the catastrophising 'flared up'.*
4. *False. Everything changed when she found a £20 note.*
5. *True*
6. *True*
7. *False. She sometimes rereads the list on trickier days.*
8. *True*

4. Key language

- a. This activity helps students see the uses of gerunds used in context. To prepare them for the task, you might need to refresh their memory of key metalanguage, including *nouns, verbs, subjects* and *objects*.

Key:

They are gerunds: verbs which are used as nouns in the -ing form.

- b. Students take the verbs from the wordpool, put them into the *-ing* form, and then put them into the appropriate gaps. This allows students to have more controlled practice using the forms in context.

Key:

1. *Reading*
2. *Cooking*
3. *Running*
4. *Travelling*
5. *Learning*
6. *watching*
7. *listening*
8. *building*
9. *answering*
10. *cleaning*

- c. Students now have a little freer practice by producing a sentence of their own. Encourage students to use their own experience. This can also act as preparation for the writing task.

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the statements related to the article and give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. Have students think about the interplay of positive and negative ways of thinking in the article and then compare it to their own experience. Then, have them begin to write, using the article as a model. You might like to pair up weaker students to work together or use the same prompt as a presentation activity instead.
- b. Proofreading is an essential skill when we write in our second language. Invite students to take on the role of the teacher, and to underline sections they believe are errors. Monitor closely to support students who have any doubts or questions.