

In episode three of the Right2Education podcast, we talk about the threat of plastic pollution, and what **you** can do to help save the planet! Listen to the audio [here](#), and read the transcript below!

Hello everyone and welcome back for a new episode of the Right2Education podcast! This is episode three of the podcast, and I'm very happy that you are joining me again! I hope that everything is good for you, and that you are keeping safe! And, most importantly, I hope that you are staying well as we move further into the autumn season.

It seems as though in just one moment the weather changed from nice warm and sunny days, to super windy and rainy days, with dark, cloudy skies and cold long nights - but I guess that's The Netherlands for you! Personally, I always get a little bit disappointed with the end of the summer and the bad weather because I love to spend my time outside. But then, after a while I usually start to actually enjoy the wind and rain - sometimes people will tell me I'm crazy, because I will often still go for walks outside even when the weather seems terrible! But I really love seeing all the trees as the leaves change colour, and I love feeling the fresh air of a cold day! And then, after the walk, it's always super nice to come back inside - after getting cold and wet, there's nothing better than drying off, getting warm under a blanket, and sipping on some delicious hot chocolate!

In the previous episode, I talked about something that I am very passionate about, and I find very interesting - the secret to writing a good story. At the end of the episode, I suggested that maybe you would want to try and use the method to write a story of your own. Well? Did you? How did it go? I'd love to read your story, so please feel free to send it to me! You can always contact me through the Right2Education email address, and I'd be really super happy to hear from you anytime!

In this episode, I want to talk about another topic that I am very passionate about, and one that I think is very important. But this is really quite a different topic. I want to talk about environmental problems, in particular, the problem of plastic waste. Maybe this sounds as if it is a little bit boring. It seems as if people are always talking about the environment, about pollution, and climate change, and maybe you are feeling a bit fed up with hearing about it - I know, sometimes, I definitely feel that way! But, in this episode, I want to try and recapture your attention, and try to make the subject interesting again!

We have been hearing for years and years about why this is an important topic, about why environmental problems are very serious. And we are always being told that we must try and do all that we can to solve the issue, to fix the climate crisis. The world is being damaged more and more, and it is harming us, as well as many plants and animals. The changing climate is a big threat to our future. But, even with all this talk, it does not seem as if much action is being taken, it does not seem as if a lot is being done - and definitely not enough is being done!

But, one way in which we can all make a difference, is through paying attention to our plastic waste. And if we all make a little difference, together, we can make a very big change! Through reducing our plastic waste, we can help protect the planet. We can help protect the world, and

we can help to save many, many animals. Of course, there are other ways to do this as well. You could become a vegetarian and not eat any meat, or you could become a vegan, and not eat any food that comes from an animal at all! Not only does someone who is vegan not eat any animal meat, but they also don't have any sorts of dairy food - that's food which includes milk, such as cheese, butter, or yoghurt, - and they don't have any other food from animals such as eggs, and even honey!

Sometimes, though, people don't want to stop eating meat, and they don't want to become vegetarians or vegans. And sometimes, people are already vegetarian or vegan, and still they want to do more to save animals and protect the planet! And, through reducing plastic pollution, all these people can still help fight for a better world!

When it is garbage day in any neighbourhood - the day each week when the garbage truck comes to pick up all the waste that everyone is throwing out - you can see a huge amount of rubbish being thrown away. You can see bags and bags and bags filled with junk that people are not using anymore, and rubbish that they have no need for. And all these bags are taken away in the back of huge trucks. And, often, all that rubbish ends up, eventually, in the ocean! Can you imagine? All these bags and bags of rubbish making their way to the sea! How dirty that must make the sea! And how dangerous that must be for all the animals living in the ocean!

But some people don't make very much waste at all, some people have very little rubbish to throw away. And some people don't throw away any waste at all! I recently saw a video of a talk by some people who live a lifestyle they call a 'zero waste' lifestyle. And, at the start of this video, they arrived on the stage with one very small pot. This one small pot showed the amount of waste that they had made in one whole year! Wow! I was shocked! I thought that this was something really very extraordinary! I try to throw away as little as possible, but even then I still cannot imagine making only this one very small pot of waste over one whole year! They had found ways to consume much, much less, to use much, much less, and they had found ways to produce much, much less waste. I was fascinated, and I thought it was remarkable. But I also felt a little bit guilty. If they were able to produce such a small amount of waste, maybe I could too! And then I could maybe help a bit more to save the planet. So, that was what motivated me to make this episode. We are all able to reduce our waste, we are all able to throw away less plastic - even less than we think possible! And, if we know some ways to start saving the planet, maybe the issue becomes interesting again. Then we can stop feeling fed up with hearing about environmental problems, and we can start to feel passionate about protecting the world again!

When I look around me, I can see plastic everywhere. There is the keyboard of my computer, and also the computer mouse. There is a water bottle that I drink from. There are the headphones that I use to listen to music. There is a folder for sorting all my different documents. There is a pencil case... Really, so many of the things around me are made from plastic, so many daily objects are plastic! Even some of the clothes that we wear have plastic in them! When something is made from a synthetic material, it contains plastic microfibres, so we might even be carrying a whole load of plastic around with us without even really realizing! Because the material is so present these days, because plastic is found everywhere, this time is sometimes called "The Plastic Age". In the past, there was "The Iron Age", and "The Bronze

Age" - and now it seems as though we are living in "The Plastic Age". But why has plastic become so popular? Why is it so common? Why do we find it in all the products that we use, in everything that surrounds us?

One reason that plastic is everywhere these days is because it has a lot of very useful qualities. It can be used in many different ways, it can be used for lots of different things. It can be made into many different shapes, and to many different strengths and sizes and thicknesses. It is also very resistant, and it is very durable - this means it can last a long time through a lot of different conditions, through a lot of different weather and different temperatures, and it can last through the dry and the wet. And, perhaps most importantly, it is very cheap to produce, it is not very expensive to make.

Because of all these different qualities, plastic is an excellent material to use for making packaging. Packaging is the material which is used to protect a product - for example a box for containing an object, or a bag for carrying the object. This packaging makes up a huge amount of the demand for plastic - and often it is used for protecting products which are also made from plastic!

But producing all this plastic makes a lot of problems for the environment - it is very harmful for the environment. To make plastic, it takes a lot of non-renewable energy. This means that it uses energy that cannot be replaced - once the source of the energy is used, it cannot be used again, once the fuel has been used there is none left. Producing plastic uses energy that comes from fuels such as petrol, gas and carbon - all fuels that cannot be used again after they are used once, we cannot replace them.

And to produce plastic uses a lot of energy. So really a lot of these fuels are used up in producing plastic. And using these fuels also does a lot of harm to the environment. Using non-renewable energy does a lot of damage to the environment, and it is very bad for the planet, producing lots of harmful gases and waste.

It is not only in the production that plastic is bad for the environment. One of the qualities of plastic that I talked about is that it is durable. This means that it lasts for a very long time, it takes a very long time to break down, to decompose. The plastic bags that we use will last for around twenty years, and plastic bottles can last for almost five hundred years before breaking down. Every year, we produce tonnes and tonnes of plastic - hundreds of tonnes! As I said, a lot of this plastic is produced for packaging. And this packaging is hardly used before it goes straight in the bin - it is usually thrown away right away. If we get a plastic bag to carry our shopping, it is usually only used for around twenty minutes before we throw it away. These plastic bags used to be free. But now, because they are so dangerous to the environment, a lot of shops will charge you to use one, at many shops you have to pay to buy a plastic bag. This is to try and discourage people from using them only once, to try and stop people throwing away the bag after only one use.

But, even with this effort to stop people throwing away plastic after only one use, the production of plastic is still increasing. The production of plastic goes hand-in-hand with the economic development of a country. This means that it matches the economic development of a country. So as a country's economy improves, as its economy gets better, the production of plastic

increases as well. More plastic is used as the economy grows, and the threat of plastic grows too. And, because the production of plastic continues to increase, many ecologists and scientists are trying to alert the public to the threat of using so much plastic. A lot of energy is used to make the plastic, and this is very bad for the environment, and, almost immediately, it is then thrown away, and this is very bad for the environment too!

But why is it so dangerous when plastic is thrown away? Why is it so harmful to the environment and to humans when we throw away plastic? After we throw away plastic, it usually ends up in the ocean. At the moment, there is so much plastic in the ocean that it even forms little islands, it forms continents of plastic. There is so much plastic floating on the surface of the sea that it looks like whole countries! In the Pacific Ocean, there is one collection of plastic which is three times the size of France! All that, made only from plastic that we have thrown away!

Where can all this waste come from? Obviously, some of the waste comes from tourists at the beach. And some of it is carried out to sea through natural disasters - such as tsunamis: very big waves that crash into the land and take waste away with them. And some of it comes from large ships that transport products. If the weather is very bad and there is a big storm, the products on the ship can fall overboard, the objects can fall into the sea. But also, all of the waste which is thrown into landfill, all the rubbish that we throw away at home eventually ends up in the ocean.

But the plastic pollution in the ocean is not only these large islands of plastic. There is also another type of plastic pollution that we cannot see in the same way, but which is just as harmful, which is maybe even more harmful! In a lot of material that is used these days, we can find plastic microfibres. And when we wash these materials, for example when we wash our clothes, little bits of these microfibres fall off, and they pass into the ocean. They fall off into the washing machine, and they are carried through the pipes and plumbing into rivers, and these rivers flow all through a country, all through a continent, until they finally reach the ocean. And, even though these microfibres are very small, it all adds up to a lot of plastic polluting the sea. If you think of everyone doing their washing, over and over and over again, week after week, even the smallest amounts of microfibres falling off will build up into really quite a lot!

So why is all this plastic pollution just so dangerous? A lot of the large plastic waste begins to break down into smaller and smaller parts, and then it can look a lot like food to the aquatic life in the sea. The fish and the crabs and all the other animals that live in the ocean can see the small pieces of plastic, and think that it looks like food. And then they will eat it, and it will cause really a lot of health problems for the animals - it is really very dangerous to the animals! And the microfibres are already so small that it doesn't even have to break down - the animals will often think it looks like food straight away! Not only is this very dangerous for the animals, but it can also be really very dangerous for humans! The smaller fish that eat the plastic are often then eaten by larger fish, and these fish are then caught by humans who eat them themselves! So all the plastic that the small aquatic life has eaten often ends up inside of humans! Not only is plastic pollution dangerous to the animals in the ocean, but it is also very harmful to us! Plastic pollution has a direct effect on our health, it has very serious consequences for our long-term health, it has a very dangerous impact!

Fortunately, there are many organisations that are very aware of this issue of plastic pollution, and they are dedicated to fighting the problem and to removing the plastic from the sea. Unfortunately, it is impossible to clean the whole ocean! The sea is an immense surface, and it is constantly moving. There are different currents which all flow in different ways, and this makes it really very difficult to clean away the plastic. Have you ever tried to catch a little thing which is floating on top of some water? It's really super difficult!

But, still, there are many people working very hard to try and solve this problem, thinking very hard about ways in which they can clean up at least some of the ocean. And many people are creating remarkable inventions to help take the plastic out of the ocean! An invention is a device which is totally new, a totally original device that can be used for a new purpose. Some of the devices which have been invented to help with cleaning the ocean even get their power from the wind or from the sun. This is really great because it means that they do not use any harmful energy! They can clean up the oceans without causing any damage.

But we can't all be super geniuses. We can't all be really very clever and creative and make amazing inventions which can take the plastic out of the sea. But don't worry! You can still help to fight against the problem of plastic pollution! Just by reducing your plastic waste, you can help! And how can you reduce your plastic waste, how can you help to stop harming the planet, and start to make it cleaner and safer again?

The first solution might seem really quite obvious. It just involves sorting your waste and recycling. Sorting your waste simply means putting different things into different categories, separating different materials. So you can simply put the different waste you produce into different bins. You can put the plastic with all the other plastic, the glass with glass, the paper with paper. And then, when it is all sorted, this waste can easily be recycled. This means that the waste is not thrown away into the landfill, but it is instead converted into new material, it is made into material which can be used again. Instead of being thrown away, the waste is used to make new products.

Recycling waste is becoming more and more common, and it is becoming the normal mentality, the normal way of thinking - it is becoming almost natural to sort our waste and to recycle it. This helps to fight plastic pollution, but it does not completely fix the problem. Why? Well, because not all plastic is recyclable, it cannot all be recycled. So not all plastic can be used again, and still some will end up in the sea.

So what else can we do? As well as recycling, we can also pay attention to the things which we consume. We can decide which things we use. We can choose between different types of packaging, for instance. If we see something in a paper bag, or something in a plastic bag, we can choose the one in the paper bag instead.

And we can also simply choose to consume less, choose to buy and use less. We can stop using so much single-use plastic. Single-use plastic is plastic which we use only once and then throw away. For example, plastic straws and plastic cutlery - knives and forks and spoons - are often single-use. We use them to drink or to eat, and then, once we are finished, we throw them away. But we can choose not to use them, and we can use alternative materials. Instead of

using things which are made from plastic, we can choose to use things which are made from materials which last longer and are of better quality. And even when these things break, we still don't have to throw them away! We can repair the broken objects, we can fix them, and, in this way, we can really stop producing so much waste!

It might seem as if these are only little changes. It might seem as if making these changes will not have an impact at all. Maybe you are thinking that there is so much plastic in the ocean that only one person making these small changes won't really do anything to solve the problem. The problem has been going on for years and years and years, and there is really so much waste, there is really so much plastic. And it doesn't seem as if we can make any difference just by changing our habits, just through doing these little things. How can the choices of one person make any big change? Surely, the actions of one person are not enough to stop the problem!

But paying attention to these little things can really make a very big difference! It can have an impact which is much larger than you might think! If more and more people stop using plastic, if more and more people choose to consume differently, then the large companies, who produce really huge amounts of waste, the big organisations who do the majority of the damage, will also start to change. The producers will start to see that people are choosing other materials instead of plastic, they will see that the public prefer the products without plastic, and they will stop producing as much plastic. They will stop making the products from plastic, and they will start to use alternative materials which do not damage the environment, and which do not produce so much waste! So, simply by choosing to use a different product, by choosing something which is not made from plastic, you can help to stop the massive production of plastic by large companies, you can help to reduce waste on a much larger scale.

Making little changes to your choices will have positive consequences which are so much larger than you think!! Each of us is able to make small changes to make a difference, and, together, we can really have a very large impact and help protect the environment and save the planet!

That's it for today's episode of the Right2Education podcast. I hope that I have been able to recapture your attention and show you why plastic pollution is such a big problem. And maybe I have been able to make you passionate about the topic! I really hope so! And, now that you know some of the ways in which you can help, and now that you know that even the actions of just one person can have a very big impact, maybe you will start to help fight against plastic waste! It would be really great if I have been able to persuade you to join in the fight to protect the environment! That would make me really super happy! Maybe you even have a great original idea for a new way to reduce waste or to clean the ocean - that would really be amazing!

But, most importantly, I hope that you enjoyed this episode of the podcast, and I hope that you have learned something new. Thank you very much for listening. I hope that you have found it helpful for practising your English. And remember, if you practise even just a little bit of English every day, you will improve really very, very quickly. Every day, try to find something in English to watch, or to read, or to listen to - you'll be amazed at just how much you will learn! And don't forget to let me know if there's something that you're super interested in and would love to hear

a podcast episode about! You can always send a message to the Right2Education email address - I'd really love to hear from you! But, for now, it's goodbye from me. Stay safe, take care, and until the next time!