

# Drug education

Year 5-6, Lesson 4: Tobacco, vaping and alcohol in the media



# Tobacco, vaping and alcohol in the media

This is the fourth of four drug education lessons, for year 5-6. This lesson focuses on media messages and influences in relation to tobacco, vaping and alcohol. Pupils assess the reliability of sources and learn how to access reliable and accurate advice and information about alcohol, tobacco and vaping (e-cigarettes).

Classroom-ready PowerPoint versions of the lesson plans are available to [members](#) of the PSHE Association.

## Learning objective

To learn how mixed messages about drug use in the media can influence opinions and decisions.

## Learning outcomes

Pupils will be able to:

- identify mixed messages in the media in relation to tobacco, vapes and alcohol
- analyse key messages, suggest who they are targeted at and why
- describe how these messages might affect a person's thoughts, feelings and actions
- explain what would help a person to make informed decisions about health, and where they could find reliable information

## Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson. These include relevant subject knowledge for this topic, guidance on creating a safe learning environment, and curriculum links.

Pupils will have experienced varying levels of exposure to media. Some may never have noticed media regarding tobacco, vapes or alcohol and others will be very aware, especially with increasing exposure to social media platforms as they get older. If necessary, remind pupils that most social media platforms require users to be aged 13 years and over. This lesson uses re-produced images rather than real adverts which may include upsetting or inspirational images, so please use these resources rather than source your own.

## Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Resource 1: *Mixed message posters* [one set enlarged and displayed per class or one set per small group]
- Resource 2: *Think, feel, do* [one per pair]
- Resource 3: *Sources of information cards* [one set per group or one set enlarged for whole class use]

## Key words

media

marketing

advertising

social media

messages

information

## Baseline assessment

### Baseline assessment activity (Slide 10, 10 mins)

**This activity should be completed before the lesson.** This allows time to look through pupils' work and gain a sense of their current understanding and experiences of media messages. Remind pupils of the ground rules for these lessons before completing the following activity.

Read aloud the following instructions, without giving any additional prompts or examples:

*A young person (aged about 13) is looking at an advert, film or TV programme which features tobacco (for example in cigarettes), vapes or alcohol. Draw or write about what they are seeing and, in a 'think bubble', write what they are thinking about this.*

Ask pupils to draw and/or write their responses in their book or on a blank piece of paper, working on their own, without discussing with anyone else. Stress that there is no 'right answer' – you just want to know their initial ideas.

Collect these in and use them to identify pupils' starting points and to inform your approach to the lesson.

### Introduction (Slides 11-13, 5 mins)

Reinforce ground rules and point out any that are especially pertinent, such as being respectful to each other's views and opinions, accepting these may be different to our own and recognising that we may have different thoughts or experiences.

Introduce the learning objective and outcomes. Ask the class to identify different places where a person might see or hear messages related to drugs, and make a list on the board. This might be any drug for now but later in the lesson the focus will be on tobacco, vapes and/or alcohol.

*For example: films, TV documentaries, advertisements, posters, shops, health warning posters, drug packaging, newspapers and magazines, radio, social media.*

## Core activities

### Analysing media messages (Slides 14-21, 15 mins)

Display around the classroom, or provide each group with, copies of **Resource 1: Mixed message posters**. In their groups, or moving around the room, ask pupils to analyse the media excerpt to identify the key messages in each.

Before taking feedback on each poster, ask pupils why they think there are mixed messages about tobacco, vapes and alcohol.


*Suggestions might include:*


*It depends whose message it is – advertisers want to sell a product so will give positive messages about it; the government, health service, charities etc. are more likely to focus on risks and harmful effects to discourage people from using tobacco, vapes and alcohol.*

Then, using slides 15–21, take feedback on each poster.

*Pupil responses might include:*

- a. *Smoking is bad for your health; smoking could lead to death/fatal diseases; smoking is a waste of money; don't smoke*
- b. *It's easy to become addicted (chained) to smoking; smoking is a hard habit to break; don't smoke*
- c. *Vapes are quite interesting gadgets; lots of different types to choose from; encouraging vaping*
- d. *Parties always include alcohol; if you drink you'll have a good time; there are certain times to drink; alcohol is fun; encourages drinking alcohol*
- e. *That only men drink beer; beer is the best drink for men; men should drink beer; encourages drinking alcohol*
- f. *Alcohol will affect your brain badly; drinking alcohol is unhealthy; don't drink alcohol*
- g. *Vaping is bad for your health; vaping might affect your health; don't vape*

 **Support:** Using each poster from **Resource 1: Mixed message posters**, ask pupils to identify which are encouraging and which are discouraging people to use the drug (tobacco, vapes or alcohol) and, if possible, explain their thinking.

 **Challenge:** Ask pupils to discuss what lifestyle choices these adverts are promoting.

### **Think, feel, do (Slide 22, 15 mins)**

In pairs, ask pupils to choose one example from Resource 1 and imagine a young person looking at it. Then, discuss what it might make the young person think, feel, and do (or want to do) and complete **Resource 2: Think, feel, do**.

Ask them then to 'pair/share', first with another pair who have chosen the same example as them, to compare responses and see if they concur, then with a pair who chose a different example, and compare responses for similarities and differences.

Bring the class together to feedback and draw some conclusions from their findings. For example, pupils might say: *The adverts might make them think that all young people vape*. However, it is important to draw out that actually most young people choose not to use these drugs at all.

Highlight the following positive social norms:

- The number of young people in England (aged 11–15) who smoke tobacco regularly (smoking at least one cigarette a week) is very low at 1%.
- Some people might think that lots of people use vapes but actually only 4% of young people (aged 11–15) use them regularly (at least once a week).
- We might think that lots of teenagers drink alcohol, but actually 63% of young people (aged 11–15) say they have never drunk alcohol.

*Reference: [Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England 2023 \(NHS\)](#)*

### **Accurate information continuum (Slide 23, 10 mins)**

Show **Resource 3: Sources of information cards**. Explain what they are, how someone could access them, and what information they might find out by doing so.

As a whole class, or in small groups (each with a set of cards), ask pupils to discuss which will give the most reliable and accurate information, explaining their thinking, then organise the cards on a continuum from least to most likely to be accurate and reliable.

*For example: up-to-date health advice should be available on the NHS website; PSHE education lessons teach the facts; a friend may not really know best; an advert on social media might be trying to persuade someone to buy something and may not give all the information about the product, such as health risks.*

### **Giving advice (Slide 24, 5 mins)**

Ask pupils to return to their *think, feel, do* sheets (Resource 2) and imagine they are giving advice to the young person looking at the media advert. Ask them to use the sentence starters below to write them a message and take feedback.

- You might think that...
- But this might not be reliable because...
- Some facts about the effects of tobacco/vaping/drinking alcohol are...
- Somewhere you could get more information is...

## **Signposting support**

### **Signposting support (Slide 25, 5 mins)**

Remind pupils that if they have any worries or concerns about drugs, tobacco (e.g. in cigarettes), vapes, or alcohol, they should talk to a trusted adult at home or in school. They can also contact Childline on 0800 1111.

## **Reflection and endpoint assessment**

### **Endpoint assessment (Slide 26, 5 mins)**

Ask pupils to complete all or some of the following sentence starters in their books, as evidence of their learning:

- The lesson has made me think about...
- The mixed messages in the media about tobacco, vapes and alcohol include...
- People should...
- I have learnt that...

## **Extension activity**

### **Informing young people (Slide 27)**

Using one of the 'positive' social norms statistics as inspiration, ask pupils to design material aimed at accurately informing young people about the risks of tobacco/vaping/drinking alcohol. It should avoid using stereotypes, shock or scare tactics and instead aim to be informative and convey correct information. It could take the form of a poster, film/radio clip or Public Health social media message.