

Drug education

Year 9, Lesson 1: Vaping



Vaping

This is the first of five drug education lessons, for year 9. This lesson explores the consequences of vaping and the influences that might impact young people's behaviour relating to vaping.

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

Learning objective

To learn about different influences and consequences that might affect decisions relating to vaping.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- assess the potential impact of influences and marketing on young people's behaviour related to vaping
- explain the consequences of vaping, including the environmental cost
- analyse ways to challenge influences and misconceptions about vaping

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.

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Resource 1: Baseline mind map
- Resource 2: *Timeline* [one per pair]
- Resource 2a: *Timeline summary* [support option, as required]
- Resource 2b: *Teacher answers* [teacher copy]
- Resource 3: *Card sort* [one per pair or small group]
- Resource 4: *Consequences of vaping – teacher feedback* [optional – if not using PowerPoint]
- Resource 5: *Challenging misconceptions* [support option, as required]

Baseline assessment

Baseline assessment activity (Slide 10, 15 mins)

Working on their own, ask students to write their responses to the four questions on

Resource 1: Baseline mind-map.

As this is a baseline assessment, it is important to use neutral, non-guiding language and avoid giving any further information until the activity has been completed. Tell students that the accuracy of spelling and grammar does not matter and that slang terms may be used as well as the correct term (if they know it).

Whilst students complete this activity on their own, move around the room to monitor their responses and establish their starting points in relation to the lesson outcomes, using this information to adapt teaching throughout this series of lessons.

Collect this work from students and keep it safe as they will return to it at the end of Lesson 5.

Introduction (Slides 11-12, 3 mins)

Ensure ground rules are established with the group before teaching this lesson and make students aware of the question box, which will be available throughout the lesson. Explain that if they have worries or questions during or after the lesson, that they do not want to raise in front of the class, they can write their question on a piece of paper, anonymously or with their name, and put it in the question box.

Introduce the learning objective and outcomes and explain that today's lesson will focus on the consequences of vaping and the influences that might impact young people's behaviour relating to vaping.

Explain that 'vapes' are also known as e-cigarettes. Different types include vape pens, vape bars, pod devices, 'mods', and 'cigalikes'; some are rechargeable, while others are disposable, although the law is set to change to ban disposable vapes. They work by heating a liquid that can then be inhaled. The liquid typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol, vegetable glycerine, and flavourings, but not tobacco. They therefore do not produce tar or carbon monoxide (two of the most damaging elements in tobacco smoke). Vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking, but that does not mean that it is harmless.

Core activities

Influences and impact (Slide 13, 10 mins)

In pairs, give students **Resource 2: Timeline**, which outlines what a young person sees throughout the day related to vaping. Ask them to respond to the three questions about each stage.

Take feedback, using **Resource 2b: Teacher answers** to help guide discussions.



Support: Give students **Resource 2a: Timeline summary**.



Challenge: Ask students to evaluate what they think has the greatest influence on TJ and explain why, and then consider how and why this might be different to other characters in the timeline.

Consequences of vaping (Slides 14–19, 10 mins)

In pairs or small groups, ask students to sort the consequences cards from **Resource 3: Card sort** into a four-square grid (shown on slide X). Students should decide on which of the following categories each fact about vaping should come under: environmental impact, health impact, legal impact, other impact.

Take feedback, using PPT slides 15–18, or **Resource 4: Consequences of vaping – teacher feedback** to help guide discussions and draw out key learning.

Then, ask students to reflect for themselves and evaluate what they think the most significant impact is, based on which they think would be most likely to influence their own decisions about vaping. As this is a personal reflection task, students should not share their answers with the rest of the class.



Support: If required, share some example answers with students:

Environmental – More than half of people who buy single-use vapes bin them and some of the biggest vaping brands do not take any specific steps to promote recycling. The government are planning to ban disposable vapes and place limitations on the variety of flavours.

Health – The long-term risks of vaping are unclear. While vaping is far less harmful than smoking (the risks from which are well-evidenced), it is not risk free.

Legal – It is not illegal to smoke or vape underage, but anyone who sells cigarettes or vapes to under-18s, or buys them on behalf of anyone under 18, is breaking the law. Over time, the previous government planned to make it illegal for anyone to buy tobacco. Under the new law, each year the legal age for cigarette sales would increase by a year. It meant that people born in or after 2009 would never be able to legally buy cigarettes. If approved by parliament, this would come into force as law from 2027.

Other – Vapes can help someone to quit smoking, by providing a replacement source of nicotine for those who want to quit smoking (although they are not recommended for non-smokers).



Challenge: Ask students to discuss which category is most likely to influence a young person's decision to vape or not and why.

Challenging misconceptions (Slide 20, 10 mins)

In small groups, ask students to return to the timeline in Resource 2 and discuss how someone might challenge negative influences and misconceptions related to vaping. On flipchart paper, they should brainstorm any strategies they think TJ and their friends could use to manage influence, or anything they could say or do to challenge any misconceptions about vaping, drawing on the facts from the previous activity.

Take feedback from each group, drawing out the following key learning:

- *TJ's misconceptions might include: vaping is a safe, social activity, because some other people from school do it; vaping is harmless for children because the packaging and smells seem to make it appeal to young people; vaping can't be that bad for the environment because there's not much information about how to recycle vapes; vaping is the same as smoking cigarettes, so there's no point in Mum switching to vapes from cigarettes; most young people try vaping at some point in their lives; if Ben gets some vapes, TJ has to try them. [Stress to students that these are all misconceptions and therefore untrue].*
- *However, while vaping can benefit someone who is trying to quit smoking, it has no other benefits. Vapes can provide a replacement source of nicotine for those who want to quit smoking, (along with alternatives, like nicotine patches), but are not recommended for non-smokers. Disposable vapes do not contain as much nicotine as a packet of 20 cigarettes, but the National Institute for Health and Care and Excellence (NICE) recommends that vaping should be discouraged in children and young people who have never smoked.*
- *Vaping companies are focused on making profits and will market products with this in mind, rather than raising awareness about the unknown health effects, long-term financial cost of vaping, or environmental impact.*
- *Depending on the influence/pressure someone is experiencing about vaping, someone might say a polite but assertive 'no thanks' to offers of vaping; talk to friends/peers about their intention not to vape; agree to respect others' decisions not to vape; access help and support if required. Remind students that sometimes people might be going along with others because of influences including peers, celebrities/influencers, social media, advertising, but it can just take one person to 'break ranks' for others to admit they feel the same about what is happening. They should also remember that the vast majority of young people do not vape – according to ASH (2023), in 11-17-year-olds, only 3.6% vape more than once a week, and 3.9% vape less than once a week.*



Support: Give students the writing frame provided in **Resource 5: Challenging misconceptions** to help them identify TJ's misconceptions and negative influences, and then consider how to overcome these.



Challenge: Ask students to assess which point they think most effectively challenges one or more misconceptions, and which they think is most effective to challenge negative influences.

Reflection and endpoint assessment

Reflection and endpoint assessment (Slide 21, 10 mins)

Ask students to consider the following overheard conversation (shown on slide X):

Tobi: "I've heard they're safe"

Jaz: "Really? Don't you have to be 18 to buy them though?"

Tobi: "I don't know - people in our year have them... And I've seen loads of flavours online - there's bound to be one we'll like. Besides, they're disposable so we can just bin them if we don't like them. So, shall we give it a try?"

Working on their own, ask students to draw on what they have learnt in this lesson to write a response from Jaz, declining Tobi's offer.

This can be used to demonstrate progress and inform future teaching.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 22-23, 2 mins)

Remind students that they can access support at home, and both in school (through their form tutor, pastoral lead, or school nurse) and out of school, through their GP, local and national organisations. Share the following websites and phone numbers with students:

- Childline - www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111
- FRANK - www.talktofrank.com/drug/vapes 0300 1236600
- National Smokefree Helpline: 0300 123 1044
- Better Health – Quit Smoking www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/NHS

Extension activity

Writing a response (Slide 24)

Ask students to imagine that TJ's friend Ben has decided to ask his brother to buy him a vape (even though TJ no longer wants one) and write a response from Ben's brother explaining why he won't buy him a vape, drawing on their key learning from today's lesson.