

Biofuels



Advance organiser: This lesson has a dual focus. At the end of the lesson
a) you will have learned about benefits and downsides of biofuels;
b) you will have a better understanding of how to organise a pro/con-composition.

Task 1 (learning about biofuels):

- Read the text. thoroughly.
- Write down 5 key chunks from the text on the back of this sheet of paper – 5 chunks you would use in a summary of the text.
- Tell your neighbour about the text. Only use the backside of this sheet of paper – your chunks – for the summary

Task 2 (learning about writing a composition):

- Use a highlighter to mark the expressions, that are used to organise the text.
- Find synonyms for all of these expressions.
- Find a suitable sentence or question to transition from the introduction to the main part of the text.
- Write a conclusion for the text to make it a proper composition.

Discuss advantages and disadvantages of biofuels.

Biofuels have been hailed as the environmentally-friendly answer to the energy crisis because it is said that they are much 'greener' than the fuels we have been burning to produce energy in recent history. For example, coal and petrol.

On the one hand, biofuels are alleged to be carbon-neutral which means that the quantity of carbon dioxide they produce when burnt to produce energy is only equal to, and not greater than, the amount of CO₂ they use up while growing. So their carbon-footprint is exemplary. Traditional fossil fuels, on the other hand, produce a lot of carbon dioxide during combustion and so leave a very large carbon-footprint, polluting the atmosphere. Some say that a quarter of global greenhouse emissions can be blamed on transport exhaust fumes.

Another advantage of biofuels is that they are not a finite resource. The world is expected to run out of fossil fuels in the near future and even uranium, the element needed for generating nuclear power, will not last forever. The fact that biofuels can be re-grown every year makes them an ideal way of securing our energy supply for the future.

On the other hand there are many scientists who claim that biofuels are not as green as we think. It has been pointed out that in farming bio-fuel-producing plants tractors are needed to plough the fields and harvest the crops; chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides etc. need to be applied to the plants and, once harvested, the crops need to be processed in factories before the end product can be distributed by transporting it to the customer. Some people go as far as to say that certain biofuels require more energy to be produced than they are capable of producing!

Another disadvantage, according to some, is that huge areas of land are needed to produce the crops for biofuels. This can threaten the amount of land available for food production. If there is less land being cultivated for food purposes then the price of food itself may be affected. Food prices may rise, which is a point of concern especially for poor countries.

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