

Learning and Teaching Resources for Learning English through Social Issues

The resources presented here are meant to be examples to show the types of activities/materials that can be designed and developed to help students to work on the various focuses of the module in the *Suggested Schemes of Work for the Elective Part of the Three-year Senior Secondary English Language Curriculum (Secondary 4-6)* (2007) (hereafter referred to as “SoWs”). Teachers are encouraged to adapt, modify and develop their own resources or make use of other relevant materials to suit the needs and interests of their students.

Part 1: Identifying, examining and presenting social issues

Lessons 1-2: Identifying and examining social issues – Introducing the module (please refer to SoWs pp.94-95)

Activity

Work on the following in groups of 4.

1. Look through a list of social issues prepared by your group members/your teacher and further brainstorm other social issues.
2. Discuss what each social issue means to you.
3. Think of the aspects (e.g. economy, education, technology and environment) into which the social issues can be categorised.
4. Categorise the social issues.
5. Choose one or two social issues from your list and consider how each social issue affects
 - you
 - your society
 - your country
 - the world
6. Share the result of your discussion with the class.

Lessons 3-4: Definition of a social issue (please refer to SoWs pp.94-97)

Activity 1

Work on the following in groups of 4.

1. Read the article provided by your teacher, e.g. the article on p.8 (or the one you have collected).
2. Find out where in the article a definition of the social issue discussed is given or where the social issue is described.
3. From the definition/description of the social issue, try to find answers to the following:
 - Who are involved?
 - What has happened?
 - Where does it happen?
 - When does it happen?Can you find answers to all of the above? Do you think the definition/description is adequate?
4. If there is more than one article on the same social issue, compare the different definitions/descriptions given in the articles and discuss which definition/description is better and why.
5. Report to the class what you have discovered about the definition/description of the social issue.

Activity 2

Work on the following in pairs.

1. Study the graphs/charts on social issues provided by the teacher.
 - a. List as much as possible the information you can find out from each graph/chart, including the issue (what), the population affected (who and how many) and the context (where and when).
 - b. Compare your list with your partner and see who has been able to find out more information from the graphs/charts.
2. Choose two or three social issues to work on.
 - a. For each issue, write a few sentences to define/describe it. Your definitions should address the issue, the population affected and the context. Include other information if necessary.
 - b. Present orally in class one of the definitions/descriptions that you have written.
 - c. Listen to the presentations of other groups and give comments.

Lessons 5-8: Causes of a social problem (please refer to SoWs pp.96-97)

Activity 1

Work on the following in groups of 4.

1. Read the article provided by your teacher, e.g. the article on p.8 (or the one you have collected).
2. Discuss where in the article the causes of the social problem identified are given.
3. Report to the class what you have found out about the causes of the social problem identified (i.e. what the causes are, and how details and examples are given to explain/illustrate them).
4. Read the article again and highlight the expressions for identifying causes.
5. Suggest and make a list of other expressions that can be used to identify causes.
6. Share with the class the expressions that you have come up with.

Activity 2

In the same group,

1. Select one or two social problems to work on.
2. For each social problem:
 - Consider the most significant causes.
 - List the causes according to their order of significance (i.e. from the most significant to the least significant).
 - Discuss how details and examples are given to explain/illustrate each of the causes. For clarity, you may use a mind map to organise your ideas.
 - Write a paragraph that presents the causes. The paragraph should start with a topic sentence that introduces the causes of the social problem. If you have sufficient information, you may choose to write a few short paragraphs, each of which focusses on one particular cause and starts with a topic sentence.
3. Present orally the paragraph(s) that you have written.
4. Listen to the presentations of other groups and give comments.

Teachers' notes

**For Activity 1, teachers might like to refer to the handout "Useful Expressions for Identifying Cause and Effect" on p.5 of the resources for expressions to be added to the list produced by students.*

**For Activity 2, teachers might like to make use of the examples in the handout "Examples of Mind Map" on p.6 of the resources to demonstrate how, with the use of a mind map, details and examples can be used to illustrate causes.*

Lessons 9-12: Effects of a social problem (please refer to SoWs pp.96-99)

Activity 1

Work on the following in groups of 4.

1. Read the article provided by your teacher, e.g. the article on p.8 (or the one you have collected).
2. Discuss where in the article the effects of the social problem identified are given.
3. Report to the class what you have found out about the effects of the social problem identified (i.e. what the effects are, and how details and examples are given to explain/illustrate them)
4. Read the article again and highlight the expressions used to identify effects.
5. Suggest and make a list of other expressions that can be used to identify effects.
6. Share with the class the expressions that you have come up with.

Activity 2

In the same group,

1. Select one or two social problems to work on.
2. For each social problem:
 - Consider the most significant effects.
 - List the effects in descending order of significance (i.e. from the most significant to the least significant).
 - Discuss how details and examples are given to explain/illustrate each of the effects. For clarity, you may use a mind map to organise your ideas.
 - Write a paragraph that presents the effects. The paragraph should start with a topic sentence that introduces the effects of the social problem. If you have sufficient information, you may choose to write a few short paragraphs, each of which focusses on one particular effect and starts with a topic sentence.
3. Present orally the paragraph(s) that you have written.
4. Listen to the presentations of other groups and give comments.

Useful Expressions for Identifying Cause and Effect

A. Cause

1. using verbs:

- *...stems from...*
- *...is caused by...*
- *...is resulting from...*
- *...can be attributed to...*
- *...can be accounted for by...*

2. using nouns:

- *The most likely causes of...*
- *...is an important factor...*
- *...is a consequence/result of...*
- *One of the chief/main causes is...*
- *A contributing factor is that...*
- *The root of...is...*
- *The reason why...is that...*

3. using prepositional phrases:

- *...owing to...*
- *...due to...*
- *...because of...*
- *...as a result of...*

4. using adverbs:

- *...because...*
- *Since...*

B. Effect

1. using verbs:

- *...may cause...*
- *...can lead to...*
- *...can result in...*
- *...can give rise to...*
- *...can bring about...*

2. using nouns:

- *The most likely effects of...*
- *...is a result/consequence of...*
- *...can have a serious effect/impact/influence on...*

3. using prepositional phrases:

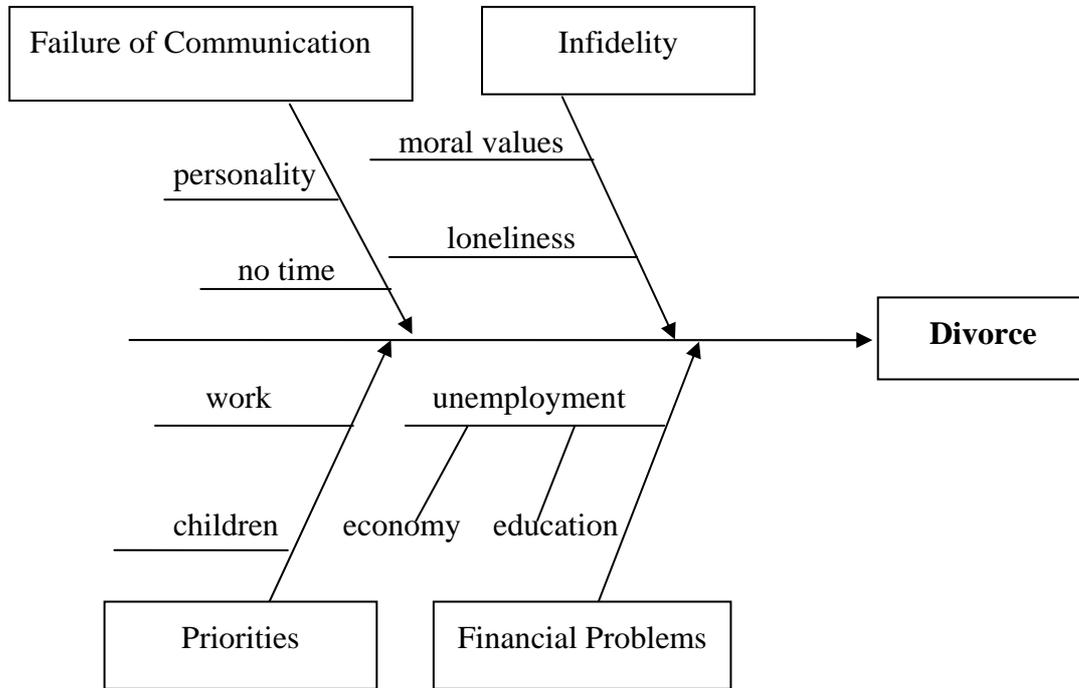
- *...as a result of...*

4. using adverbs/adverbial clauses:

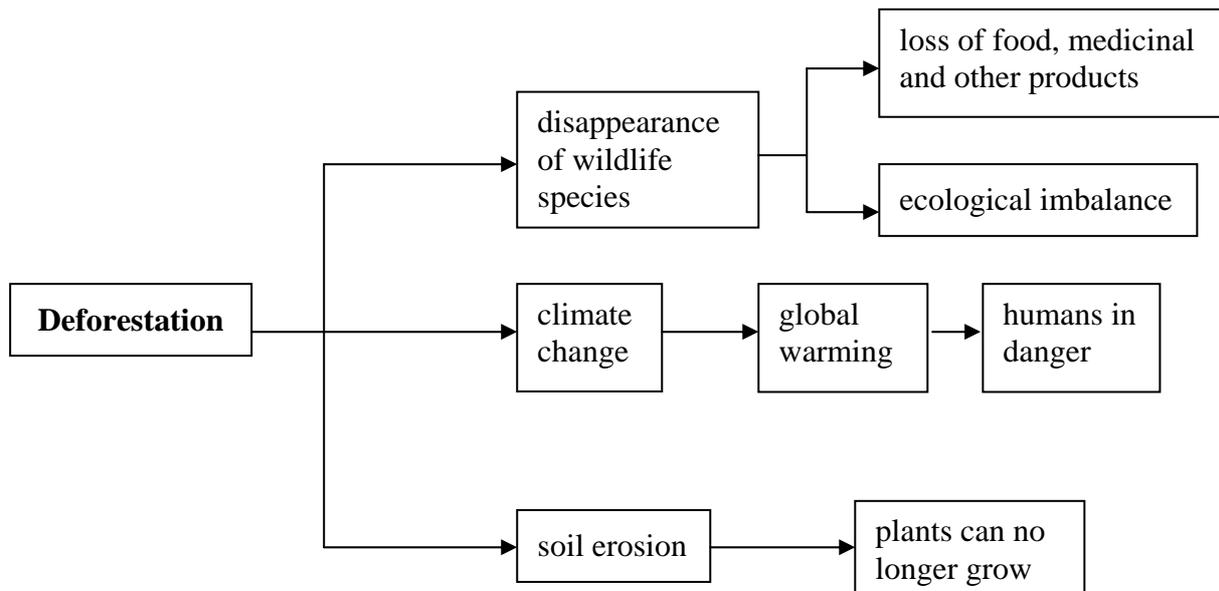
- *Consequently,...*
- *As a result/consequence,...*
- *Due to the fact that...*

Examples of Mind Map

Example One: Fishbone Diagram for Causes of a Social Problem



Example Two: Tree Diagram for Effects of a Social Problem



Lessons 13-16: Solutions for a social problem (please refer to SoWs pp.98-99)

Activity 1

Work on the following in groups of 4.

1. Read the article provided by your teacher, e.g. the article on p.8 (or the one you have collected).
2. Identify the social problem being presented.
3. Make a list of the causes of the social problem.
4. Draw a diagram to demonstrate the effects of the social problem.
5. Locate where in the article the solutions of the social problem identified are given and discuss whether you think they are feasible.
6. Suggest one or two more ways of solving the social problem.
7. Report to the class what you have found out and what you think about the solutions to the social problem identified. Share also the other possible solutions that you have come up with.
8. Read the article again and highlight the expressions used to talk about solutions.
9. Suggest and make a list of other expressions that can be used to talk about solutions.
10. Share with the class the expressions that you have come up with.

Activity 2

In the same group,

1. Select one or two social problems to work on.
2. For each social problem:
 - *Make a list of the possible solutions to the social problem.*
 - *Write a paragraph that presents the solutions. The paragraph should start with a topic sentence that introduces the solutions to the social problem.*
3. Present orally the paragraph(s) that you have written.
4. Listen to the solutions put forward by other groups and comment on their feasibility. Suggest other solutions that you can think of.

Example of an expository essay

Obesity

Obesity occurs when someone is unhealthily fat. The problem has become more and more serious in many countries, particularly in the United States, where more than 64% of adults are either overweight or obese, according to results from the 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

The problem of obesity can be attributed to poor diet, insufficient exercise and lack of education. People nowadays eat a lot of junk food such as fries and chocolate, which contain a huge amount of fats, sugar, and cholesterol. Some may favour foods that contain lots of carbohydrates or are mouth-watering but oily. When excess fats are not consumed by the body, they are converted into body fats. The problem is aggravated by the little physical activity that people do when they seldom walk or exercise because of the sedentary nature of their job, the availability of transport, and, perhaps, laziness. In fact, many people are simply not aware of the need for regular exercise and good eating habits due to lack of parental and school education, and are further misled by commercials that present distorted information about unhealthy foods.

Obesity can have great impact on individuals as well as society. It is a health hazard for individuals as it can bring about serious medical conditions including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease and even cancer. Obese people may also suffer from emotions such as depression or shame as they feel rejected by others. This may cause eating disorder and further aggravate the problem of obesity. Society also suffers as citizens who are unhealthy tend to be less productive and require more medical care from the government. Shorter life expectancy also adversely affects economic productivity.

To put a halt to the problem of obesity, different parties should work together. For instance, schools can stop students' access to fast food in schools and provide nutritious food and ample opportunities for physical exercise. The government should educate the public about the significance of healthy diet and lifestyle. Most importantly, individuals should maintain their health by having a balanced diet and regular exercise. If all are contributing to avoid obesity, the world is bound to become a healthier place.

Lessons 17-22: Examining a social issue from various perspectives (please refer to SoWs pp.98-99)

Activity 1

Work on the following in groups of 4.

1. Read the article provided by your teacher (or the one you have collected).
2. Identify the social issue being presented.
3. Identify the individuals and/or different groups who might be affected or involved in this social issue.
4. Discuss in what ways the individual and/or group you have identified is likely to be affected by the social issue.
5. Share with the class what you have discussed.

Activity 2

In groups of 4, examine the social issues presented in the tables below, in terms of:

1. who are likely to be affected in the issues; and
2. how they are affected or what their perspectives might be.

You are encouraged to conduct simple research of the issues in order to find out the different views on them. After you have completed the tables, reflect on how the activity helps to view an issue from multiple perspectives.

Social Issue	Individuals/Groups likely to be affected	How they are affected and what they might say
Underage smoking	Children under 18	
	Parents	
	Schools	
	Government	
	Medical community	
	Social workers	
	Cigarette companies	

	Advertisers who advertise cigarettes	
	Stores that sell cigarettes to minors	
	Police	

Social Issue	Individuals/Groups likely to be affected	How they are affected and what they might say
Homelessness in Hong Kong	Individuals who are homeless	
	Families	
	The public	
	Private charities	
	Social workers	
	Government agencies	
	The police	
	Medical community	

An illustration of what you should consider is provided below.

Social Issue	Individuals/Groups likely to be affected	How they are affected and what they might say
Childhood obesity in Hong Kong	<i>Obese children</i>	<i>They are becoming obese and unhealthy. “I don’t have time to do exercise. I like to stop by the fast food shop on my way home.” “I don’t know why I am fat. I don’t like it.”</i>

	<i>Fast food chains</i>	<p><i>They provide the food that helps to make children obese.</i></p> <p><i>“It is not our responsibility if people overeat and don’t exercise. If people are obese it is their own fault.”</i></p>
	<i>Parents</i>	<p><i>They can help or hurt their children by providing good or bad food and encouraging good or bad habits.</i></p> <p><i>“My children are very inactive and they snack on bad food. When I was young, I was more active.”</i></p>
	<i>Schools</i>	<p><i>They can stop fast food from being sold in schools and provide nutritious lunch and physical education classes.</i></p> <p><i>“We are ready to provide more physical education classes but we need more resources.”</i></p>
	<i>Government</i>	<p><i>They can require fast food companies to be honest about their products; they can educate the public. They are also affected by the cost of medical care.</i></p> <p><i>“If we don’t stop youth obesity, in the future the government will need to pay more in health care costs.”</i></p>
	<i>Social workers</i>	<p><i>They see the social impact of childhood obesity.</i></p> <p><i>“Obese young people have more problems making friends and feel isolated.”</i></p> <p><i>“Fast food restaurants are like drug pushers encouraging young people to eat poorly by advertising and giving away toy.”</i></p>
	<i>Medical community</i>	<p><i>They must treat children who are affected by obesity.</i></p> <p><i>“Type 2 diabetes is increasing in children as a result of obesity.”</i></p>
	<i>Media advertisers</i>	<p><i>They advertise fast food and snack items.</i></p> <p><i>“We just advertise the product as we do any product.”</i></p>

Part 2: Researching and gathering information on social issues

Lessons 23-28: Features of interviews and observation (please refer to SoWs pp.100-101)

Activity 1

Individually, watch excerpts of a documentary assigned by your teacher. While watching, take note of the following:

1. What was the subject of the documentary?
2. What types of research were carried out?
3. What was the researcher trying to observe?
4. How did he/she record his/her observation?
5. Were they effective methods for investigating the issue?
6. Who did he/she interview?

After watching the excerpts, in groups of 4, discuss your thoughts to these questions. On top of these questions, what other areas could be investigated?

Activity 2

In groups of 4, complete the following:

1. Decide on a social issue that can be investigated through observation.
2. Design a simple observation study.
3. Conduct the study.
4. Report the observations to the whole class.

For example, if the issue to be investigated is fast food eating habit, you may like to consider conducting an observation study, whereby you observe the kinds of people who enter and exit a fast food restaurant over the course of an hour and make notes on the number of people, their approximate ages, gender and whether those exiting take away food from the restaurant. Alternatively, you may like to observe a busy vending machine in the school for an hour and make note of how many people make use of it, who they are (i.e. age, gender) and what purchases are made.

Teachers' notes

**Teachers might like to go over the handout "Guidelines on conducting interviews and observations" on p.14 of the resources with students before asking them to work on Activity 2.*

Activity 3

In pairs, role-play an interview situation based on the set of role-play cards provided. One of you should be the interviewer and the other the interviewee.

Role card A

Situation

As a school campus reporter running a feature on teenage smoking for the education supplement of a local newspaper, you are interviewing a social worker who runs a nicotine addiction support group to find out why young people take up smoking. To gather as much information as possible, you need to ask follow-up questions. Do the following during the interview:

- Start the interview by politely introducing yourself and explaining why you are conducting the interview and thanking him/her for his/her time.
- Find out from the interviewee three reasons why young people take up smoking.
- Ask him/her a follow-up question for every reason s/he offers, e.g.
 - Are there any statistics that show that to be true?
 - Why is that?
 - Could you give some examples?
- Thank the interviewee at the end of the interview.

Role card B

Situation

You are a social worker who runs a nicotine addiction support group. Use the following information to answer the questions a school campus reporter asks you.

Your response

Young people start smoking because:

- there is peer pressure (If the interviewer asks a follow-up question, provide statistics that if a young person has a friend who smokes, s/he is twice as likely to take up smoking.)
- advertisements suggest it is a cool thing to do and young people are affected by advertising (If the interviewer asks a follow-up question, add details about why and how advertising works, e.g. they use cartoon characters that appeal directly to the young, they use well-known youth role models, and they sponsor events for young people to attend during which they give away items that advertise their brand name.)
- some people believe they can lose weight (If the interviewer asks a follow-up question, tell him/her that actually one can only lose weight in the short term but that one will gain back the weight in the long term if they continue to smoke.)

Guidelines on conducting interviews and observations

A. Organising and preparing for an interview

- Determine what kind of person you will need to interview in order to get this information.
- Determine who will be interviewed.
- Determine what questions will be asked.
- Anticipate any follow-up questions that might need to be asked.
- Write out the questions you will ask, and edit them so that they are clear, polite and not misleading.
- Never ask questions you already know the answers to. For instance, do not ask a person who is smoking a cigarette whether s/he should be sued.
- Do not just ask “yes/no” questions as these kinds of questions are not very revealing.
- Contact the interviewee. Politely explain what you are doing and ask whether and/or when you may interview him or her.
- Record your interview (with the interviewee’s permission) or take notes.
- Accurately report back what the interviewee has said.

Language used when requesting and carrying out an interview:

- *Would you mind if I ask you a few questions about... ?*
- *I'd like to start off by asking...*
- *I'd like to know...*

B. Conducting an observation

- Determine what you are trying to observe. Be very clear about this, or you will be trying to observe too much.
- Determine the conditions for your observation – where and when you will be making the observation.
- Determine what measurement or recording you will be making (i.e. What will you be looking for or at?)

Lessons 29-34: Conducting a survey (please refer to SoWs pp.100-101)

Activity 1

Your classmate is hoping to conduct a survey on the smoking and drinking habit of young people. He has given you the survey below to look over and critique. You notice there are a number of problems. Give him some feedback that will help him make it better.

<p>Name:</p> <p>Age:</p> <p>Gender:</p> <p>1. Do you smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol?</p> <p>2. How often do you smoke?</p> <p><i>All the time</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes</i></p> <p><i>Never</i></p> <p>3. How often do you drink alcohol?</p> <p><i>Frequently</i></p> <p><i>Occasionally</i></p> <p><i>Never</i></p>

Suggested advice:

- You should not ask for a name, which is personal information.
- You need to write a purpose statement or polite request for the person to fill out the survey.
- You need to write instructions (e.g. should the respondent circle the options?) or the reader doesn't know what to do.
- The first question needs to be rewritten. It is confusing because the person could answer "yes" to one of the items and "no" to the other. They shouldn't be grouped into one question.
- The words "all the time", "sometimes", "frequently" and "occasionally" are unclear. You need to be more specific. Try "once a week", "once a month" or "every day", etc.
- Indentation and numbering could be used to help make things more clear and reader-friendly.

Teachers' notes

**Teachers might like to go over the handout "Basic features of a simple survey" on p.17 of the resources with students before asking them to work on Activity 1.*

Activity 2

Work on the following in groups of 4.

1. Identify a social issue that is likely to concern your schoolmates.
2. Decide on an area in the social issue which can be investigated by means of a simple questionnaire survey.
3. Design a simple questionnaire made up of a maximum of 8 items (which can be multiple-choice items, close-ended items or a combination of both).
4. Critically examine the questionnaire designed, based on the evaluation form provided. Revise the questionnaire, if necessary.
5. Conduct the survey with at least 8 students.
6. Analyse the responses gathered.
7. Either write a report about the findings or present the findings orally.

Questionnaire Evaluation Form

Evaluate your questionnaire by circling the appropriate number for the criteria below.

	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good
The layout of the questionnaire is reader-friendly.	1	2	3
The respondent's name is not included.	1	2	3
The purpose statement at the beginning of the questionnaire is clear.	1	2	3
The instructions are clear.	1	2	3
The questions are easy to understand.	1	2	3
If there are multiple-choice items, the options available are clearly presented.	1	2	3

Other Comments:

Teachers' notes

**Teachers might like to go over the handout "Reporting on a survey" on p.19 of the resources with students before asking them to work on Activity 2.*

Basic features of a simple survey

- During the planning stage, it is essential to identify the purpose of the survey, determine how many people will be surveyed and determine if a particular type of person should be surveyed (e.g. those leaving a fast food café, young people, school children).
- A brief explanation of the survey's purpose should be included in the survey questionnaire, which also includes a polite request for it to be filled out. (e.g. This survey is being done to help understand why young people take up smoking. Thank you for taking your time to fill it out.)
- The following are some guidelines for designing a survey questionnaire:
 - Depending on the focus of analysis, a survey questionnaire may include questions that request demographic/background information, e.g. age, gender, etc. However, to safeguard the privacy of the respondents, it normally does not ask for names, ID numbers, birth dates, phone numbers or addresses of respondents.
 - It contains instructions and questions that are clear and well focussed and not misleading. Each question seeks information on one point at a time. Avoid words that could be misunderstood, e.g. frequently, sometimes, on special occasions.
 - It seeks only relevant and necessary information about what and/or who is being questioned. For example, if it does not matter whether the respondent attends a private or a government school, the question is not asked.

(Please see examples of survey questions on the next page.)

Example 1

Please tick one response for each question:

1. Do you smoke cigarettes?
 Yes (Go to no.2)
 No

2. How often do you smoke?
 More than 5 cigarettes each day
 1-2 times during the day
 3-4 times each week
 Less than once a week

Example 2

1. How many times a week do you eat fast food? (Tick only one response)
 0-1
 2-3
 4-5
 6 or more

2. Tick the TWO statements you MOST agree with.
 Fast food tastes good.
 Fast food is inexpensive.
 Fast food makes people fat.
 Fast food tastes bad.

Reporting on a survey

Survey data are usually presented by means of a written report. A simple survey report should include:

- an **introduction**, which contains background information on the survey, such as the nature of the issue or problem being investigated and the purpose of the survey;
- a description of the **methodology**, which includes details such as when and where the survey was conducted, who were interviewed, how the sample was selected, what methods and tools were used for data collection and analysis, etc.;
- a description of the **results**, which includes a presentation of the responses gathered in relation to the questions asked, and tables and graphs presenting the statistical information;
- a **discussion** of the survey, which includes explanation and interpretation of the data and their implications; and
- a **conclusion**, which consists of key points derived from the “Discussion”, and/or recommends changes and further actions.

Lessons 35-38: Acknowledging the sources of information (please refer to SoWs pp.100-103)

Activity

In pairs, study the following statements and decide if it is necessary to acknowledge the source of each of them if they are to be included in written texts. Justify your decision.

1. Hong Kong is developing more cyber-based businesses.
2. In the last year 50 new cyber-based businesses have opened up in the new cyber park.
3. An estimated 40 million people in China are currently infected with HIV – the virus that can lead to AIDS.
4. On a typical weekday morning, it is not uncommon to find Beijing’s main roads jammed with motor vehicles.
5. The illegal horse race betting market siphoned away an estimated HK\$50 to 60 billion for the Hong Kong Jockey Club last year.

Teachers’ notes

**Teachers might like to go over the handout “General principles on acknowledging the sources of information” on pp.21-22 of the resources with students before asking them to work on the activity.*

General principles on acknowledging the sources of information

What types of information need to be acknowledged?

- Information that is expert and that could come only from reading or listening to another informed source such as statistics, information not known to the general community, or unusual examples; and
- Passages, words or formats taken directly or in significant amounts from another text. (If entire chunks of language are used, it is obligatory to use quotation marks or indentation so as to show it is not students' own words. If a passage is summarised, it is still necessary to acknowledge that the ideas come from another source.)

What are the common ways to incorporate others' ideas or information into your own work?

- Direct quotation
 - Using the exact words of others as they appear in the original text and placing those words in quotation marks.
- Paraphrase
 - Rewriting others' ideas in your own words with a different sentence structure without changing the meaning of the original text.
- Summary
 - Summarising the main points or key ideas of an original text in your own words.

Steps involved in summarising a text:

- Read over the text, noting, if any, titles or subheadings to help you understand both the meaning and structure of the text.
- Identify the main ideas and the key supporting points of each section.
- List several key terms or statistics from the text that you feel should be included in the summary. Do not include too many as you may end up just copying large chunks of the original text.
- Using only the key words and statistics, rewrite the passage in your own language. Do not include your own comments or evaluation.

How are the sources of information acknowledged?

When ideas or information from other people's works are used, it is essential to acknowledge the source. This can be done by:

- putting the author's name and the year of publication in brackets at the end of the information incorporated (e.g. "As students do not obtain study skills automatically, it is very important to teach them these skills (Jordon, 1997)."); and
- quoting the source, followed by the year of publication in brackets, and presenting the information incorporated (e.g. "According to the article "Obesity and Overweight" published by World Health Organisation (2006), the problem of obesity is ...").

What are the key language features of such acknowledgements?

- Refer to the examples below and note how the sources of information are acknowledged:
 - “According to the Education Bureau ...”
 - “The November 23rd edition of the South China Morning Post reported/mentioned that ...”
 - “Virus experts at the Centre for Disease Control said / pointed out ...”
- There are two key elements to the examples above:
 - The use of reporting verbs, such as *report, say, indicate, point out, suggest, explain, mention*, or phrasal prepositions, such as *according to*; and
 - Identification of information, specifically the naming of the source (e.g. the Education Bureau, virus experts) and sometimes the location (e.g. report, news-conference and brief).

Example of a summary

Activity

Visit the following website and read the article.

<http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/obesity/en/>

Then go through the summary below to see how the paragraphs under the subheading 'The Extent of the Problem' is summarised with its source acknowledged.

Summary

According to the article "Obesity and Overweight" published by World Health Organisation (2006), the problem of obesity is affecting people of all age groups around the world. Child obesity is of great concern as the number of overweight children and youths has been on the rise, with an estimated figure of 22 million children under five being overweight globally. Obesity is taking up an estimate of up to 7% of the total health care costs in some developed countries.