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## **The Breaking News English.com Resource Book**

“1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers”

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

## **Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity**

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0607/060703-toys-e.html>

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**3 July, 2006**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity**

Researchers at an American university have found a new and simple way to help children burn more calories and stay slim. Their idea is to make toys heavier and so make children work harder during playtime. The research team, at Indiana State University, did tests on ten young volunteers aged between six to eight years. The kids played with toys and teddy bears that contained steel blocks weighing one-and-a-half kilograms. Test results showed the children with the heavier toys burnt more calories than other children playing with regular toys. The research may change how children play and increase the muscles of parents who tidy up after their kids.

Lead researcher Dr. John Ozmun doubted his research would solve the problem of overweight kids but said, "it could be a small part of the puzzle". He added: "This study provides one [answer] to the current trend of declining fitness in America's youth." He explained that: "Handling heavier objects...may provide opportunities to increase workload...allowing for...improvements in children's physical fitness." He told reporters that his findings are just a starting point and that weighted toys would take a long time to be on toy store shelves. He guessed they would first be used by physical therapists to help their young patients with strength, balance and coordination.

## WARM-UPS

**1. TOYS:** Write down three toys you think are good for children and three you think are bad. Share what you wrote down with your partner(s). Decide together on the two best and worst toys.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Researchers / calories / being slim / toys / playtime / teddy bears / tidying up / problems / puzzles / fitness / toy stores / strength / balance / coordination*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**3. EXERCISE TOYS:** With your partner(s), decide how these toys might be changed to help children increase the exercise they do every day. Put the toys in order - most effective first. Change partners and compare your answers.

\_\_\_\_\_ Video/Computer games

\_\_\_\_\_ Building blocks

\_\_\_\_\_ Board games

\_\_\_\_\_ Role play games

\_\_\_\_\_ Card games

\_\_\_\_\_ Soft toys

\_\_\_\_\_ Action figures / Barbie dolls

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**4. HEADLINE PREDICTION:** With your partner(s), use all of the words in the "Chat" activity to guess what the article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and compare. Who was closest to the real story?

**5. CHILDHOOD OBESITY:** Which of the ideas below do you think would be best at reducing childhood obesity? Do you think children would be happy to do these?

- a. Walk (faster) to school
- b. No candy, potato chips or fast food, except on special occasions
- c. Sports lessons every day at school
- d. Doing lots of housework
- e. Spending more time playing outdoors than indoors
- f. Linking pocket money to body weight
- g. Jogging before breakfast every day
- h. Heavier toys

**6. TEDDY BEARS:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with teddy bears. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. Research shows that heavier toys help children lose weight.               | T / F |
| b. The research was conducted on ten children.                               | T / F |
| c. Steel blocks weighing one-and-a-half kilos were put inside the toys.      | T / F |
| d. Parents want heavier toys to increase the size of their muscles.          | T / F |
| e. The lead researcher is positive his research will reduce obesity in kids. | T / F |
| f. More tests will be made on heavy jigsaw puzzles.                          | T / F |
| g. Weighted toys will be on sale in toy stores before the end of the year.   | T / F |
| h. The toys will probably be used first by physical therapists.              | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |             |         |
|-------------|---------|
| a. simple   | give    |
| b. slim     | used up |
| c. harder   | head    |
| d. blocks   | answer  |
| e. burnt    | thin    |
| f. lead     | present |
| g. solve    | chunks  |
| h. current  | easy    |
| i. provide  | power   |
| j. strength | more    |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| a. a new and                                 | of overweight kids     |
| b. burn                                      | harder during playtime |
| c. make children work                        | up after their kids    |
| d. teddy bears that contained                | fitness                |
| e. parents who tidy                          | simple way             |
| f. solve the problem                         | America's youth        |
| g. a small part of                           | point                  |
| h. the current trend of declining fitness in | more calories          |
| i. children's physical                       | steel blocks           |
| j. just a starting                           | the puzzle             |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity

Researchers at an American university have \_\_\_\_\_ a new and \_\_\_\_\_ way to help children burn more calories and stay \_\_\_\_\_. Their idea is to make toys heavier and so make children work harder \_\_\_\_\_ playtime. The research team, at Indiana State University, did tests on ten young \_\_\_\_\_ aged between six to eight years. The kids played with toys and teddy bears that \_\_\_\_\_ steel blocks weighing one-and-a-half kilograms. Test results showed the children with the heavier toys \_\_\_\_\_ more calories than other children playing with regular toys. The research may change how children play and increase the \_\_\_\_\_ of parents who tidy up after their kids.

Lead researcher Dr. John Ozmun \_\_\_\_\_ his research would solve the problem of overweight kids but said, "it could be a small part of the \_\_\_\_\_". He added: "This study provides one [answer] to the \_\_\_\_\_ trend of declining fitness in America's youth." He explained that: "Handling heavier \_\_\_\_\_ ...may provide opportunities to increase workload...allowing for...improvements in children's physical \_\_\_\_\_." He told reporters that his findings are just a starting \_\_\_\_\_ and that weighted toys would take a long time to be on toy store shelves. He guessed they would first be used by physical therapists to help their young \_\_\_\_\_ with strength, balance and \_\_\_\_\_.

*volunteers*

*slim*

*muscles*

*found*

*burnt*

*simple*

*contained*

*during*

*point*

*objects*

*puzzle*

*fitness*

*doubted*

*coordination*

*current*

*patients*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity**

Researchers at an American university have \_\_\_\_\_ a new and simple way to help children burn more calories and stay slim. Their idea is to make toys heavier and so make children work harder \_\_\_\_\_ playtime. The research team, at Indiana State University, did tests on ten young volunteers \_\_\_\_\_ between six to eight years. The kids played with toys and teddy bears that contained steel blocks \_\_\_\_\_ one-and-a-half kilograms. Test results showed the children with the heavier toys \_\_\_\_\_ more calories than other children playing with \_\_\_\_\_ toys. The research may change how children play and increase the muscles of parents who \_\_\_\_\_ after their kids.

Lead researcher Dr. John Ozmun \_\_\_\_\_ his research would solve the problem of overweight kids but said, "it could be a small part of the \_\_\_\_\_". He added: "This study provides one [answer] to the \_\_\_\_\_ trend of declining fitness in America's youth." He explained that: "Handling heavier objects...may \_\_\_\_\_ opportunities to increase workload...allowing for...improvements in children's physical fitness." He told reporters that his findings are just a \_\_\_\_\_ point and that weighted toys would take a long time to be on toy store shelves. He guessed they would first be used by \_\_\_\_\_ therapists to help their young patients with \_\_\_\_\_, balance and coordination.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**childhood**' and '**obesity**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "TOYS" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about toys and their possible uses in fighting childhood obesity.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| • simple     | • doubted       |
| • idea       | • puzzle        |
| • volunteers | • trend         |
| • burnt      | • opportunities |
| • regular    | • guessed       |
| • tidy       | • balance       |

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of children's toys today?
- c. Should toys be for play or for exercise?
- d. Do you think video and computer games are dangerous?
- e. What is/was your favorite toy?
- f. Do you think the idea of heavier toys will be popular?
- g. What is the heaviest a teddy bear should weigh?
- h. Is childhood obesity a problem in your country?
- i. Are there things in your daily life that might be changed to make you exercise more?
- j. Do you think heavier toys would cost too much money?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think toy makers should design toys that let children get more exercise?
- d. Do you think heavier toys might do more harm than good?
- e. What other areas of children's lives could be changed so they get more exercise?
- f. Is the government of your country doing anything to reduce childhood obesity?
- g. What is the most important thing parents can do for their children to avoid obesity?
- h. Would you buy a child a weighted toy as a present?
- i. Do you think children would care that their toys are heavier?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?



## SPEAKING

**FITNESS SCHEDULE:** In pairs / groups, discuss how children could increase the amount they exercise each day by changing the things or routines around them. Make a mini presentation for the rest of your class.

Age group	Ideas
1. 0 - 2 years	
2. 3 - 6 years	
3. 7 - 10 years	
4. 11 - 15 years	
5. 16 - 18 years	

Change partners and talk about what you wrote with your previous partner(s).

Give your presentations.

Discuss what was said in each presentation and vote on the best ones.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information childhood obesity around the world. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s).

**3. OBESITY:** Make a poster describing the many ways children can change their daily lives to increase their levels of exercise. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which poster(s) did you like most and why?

**4. HEAVY BEARS:** Make a poster advertising the benefits of heavy teddy bears. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which poster(s) did you like most and why?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. T      b. T      c. T      d. F      e. F      f. F      g. F      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. simple	easy
b. slim	thin
c. harder	more
d. blocks	chunks
e. burnt	used up
f. lead	head
g. solve	answer
h. current	present
i. provide	give
j. strength	power

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. a new and	simple way
b. burn	more calories
c. make children work	harder during playtime
d. teddy bears that contained	steel blocks
e. parents who tidy	up after their kids
f. solve the problem	of overweight kids
g. a small part of	the puzzle
h. the current trend of declining fitness in	America's youth
i. children's physical	fitness
j. just a starting	point

### GAP FILL:

#### Heavier toys help fight childhood obesity

Researchers at an American university have **found** a new and **simple** way to help children burn more calories and stay **slim**. Their idea is to make toys heavier and so make children work harder **during** playtime. The research team, at Indiana State University, did tests on ten young **volunteers** aged between six to eight years. The kids played with toys and teddy bears that **contained** steel blocks weighing one-and-a-half kilograms. Test results showed the children with the heavier toys **burnt** more calories than other children playing with regular toys. The research may change how children play and increase the **muscles** of parents who tidy up after their kids.

Lead researcher Dr. John Ozmun **doubted** his research would solve the problem of overweight kids but said, "it could be a small part of the **puzzle**". He added: "This study provides one [answer] to the **current** trend of declining fitness in America's youth." He explained that: "Handling heavier **objects**...may provide opportunities to increase workload...allowing for...improvements in children's physical **fitness**." He told reporters that his findings are just a starting **point** and that weighted toys would take a long time to be on toy store shelves. He guessed they would first be used by physical therapists to help their young **patients** with strength, balance and **coordination**.