

World Water Day on 22 March



Water: tasteless, odourless and almost colourless – but it's essential to our existence. And that's why the UN created *World Water Day*.

Whether circulating inside our bodies, used in manufacturing and agriculture, or for sanitation, water is one of the most important elements in our world.

Twenty-five years ago, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development recommended an international day to celebrate fresh water; the UN General Assembly responded by designating 22 March as *World Water Day*. Each year, a theme is chosen in order to encourage sustainable freshwater use; past topics have included *Sanitation, Water for Cities, Water and Food Security*, and *Water and Energy*. In 2017 the theme is *Wastewater*.

Think about all the water that is used in your home for domestic purposes: brushing your teeth, showering, using the toilet, the washing machine, the dishwasher. And that's without taking into account making tea and coffee, boiling the pasta or freezing the ice for your gin and tonic. According to recent figures from 2014, the average German uses just less than 200 litres of water per day; but that's nothing compared to the Americans who use almost three times as much: 575 litres. Australians also like to waste their water – average use there is nearly 500 litres per day. Once we get to India, we're down to 135 litres daily consumption. In some of the poorest countries in the world, like Haiti and Ethiopia, the daily water use is around 15 litres per person per day. This huge difference in water consumption was one of the factors that spurred the UN into creating *World Water Day*.

Of course we need water to survive, regardless of how many showers we take every day. Up to 60% of our bodies is made up of water – we need it to build new cells, regulate our body temperature, carry nutrients around our body, flush waste out of our system, work as a shock absorber for our spine and brain, form saliva and lubricate our joints.

Huge amounts of water are used in industry, manufacturing and agriculture. Think about how much water is needed to produce the food we eat: a recent comparison of foods and the required volume of water that is used in their production shows it's a very watery business! Producing coffee requires far more water than tea (104 litres for a cup of coffee compared to 35 litres for a cup of tea); chicken requires nearly 4,500 litres of water for each kilo of meat but beef requires over 15,000 litres for a similar amount; a kilo of bread made from wheat requires 1600 litres of water, but a kilo of potatoes only requires 287 litres. If you would like to reduce your water footprint, eat fewer animal products and more plant products. And cut down on those processed foods: tomato ketchup has more than twice the water footprint of tomatoes.

If you would like to know more about *World Water Day* on 22 March, then click on <http://www.unwater.org/campaigns/world-water-day/en/>.

And if you would like to use water as a topic in your lesson, then we have provided you with an activity at B1 level. You'll find it in the following **Teacher's notes** and on the **Worksheet**.

Teacher's notes

A water quiz (Level B1 and above, 15+ mins)

- Make a copy of **A water quiz**, one for each student.
- On the board write: H^2O , 71%, 2.5% and 193 litres. Ask students what the symbol means and what the numbers refer to. (The chemical sign for water; 71% of our planet is covered by water; 2.5% of the earth's water is fresh water; 193 litres is the average daily amount of water used per person in Germany.) Explain that 22 March is *World Water Day* run by the United Nations to raise people's awareness of water's importance to the environment, agriculture, health and trade.
- On the board write: *Thousands have lived without love, not one without water*. Let students comment about this quote from W.H. Auden. Explain that it shows the importance of water in our lives.
- Tell students they are going to do an activity about more sayings about water.
- Handout the **Worksheet**, one to each student and explain that they should match the saying to its explanation.
- Give students five minutes to complete the activity.
- Tell students to check answers with a partner.
- Check answers together in class. (Key: 1f; 2a; 3i; 4g; 5b; 6j; 7h; 8e; 9d; 10c)
- Ask students if they know any similar expressions in their own language.

Worksheet

A water quiz

Match the saying to the correct explanation.

	Saying		Explanation
1	A fish out of water.	a	Family is more important than anyone else.
2	Blood is thicker than water.	b	He still has a lot to learn about life.
3	Don't make waves.	c	It's in the past.
4	Don't throw the baby out with the bath water.	d	He's in a difficult situation.
5	He is wet behind the ears.	e	You're in trouble, someone will be angry.
6	It is like drinking a glass of water.	f	Not feeling at home where you are.
7	Still waters run deep.	g	When you're making a change, save what matters to you and throw away the rest.
8	You're in hot water.	h	The quiet people can be the smartest and wisest.
9	He's in deep water.	i	Don't make trouble; do what others are doing.
10	It's water under the bridge.	j	It is very easy to do.

Do you have any similar expressions in your language?
Tell the class about them.