

Life's a picnic!



Everyone loves a picnic and June is just the right time for a picnic in the park.

No matter where you travel throughout the United Kingdom in June, you'll find lots of invitations to picnics in the park. From Pittville Park in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London and from the

Armed Forces Day Picnic in the Park in Mesnes Park, St Helens, Merseyside to the Picnic in the Park in Thirsk North Yorkshire: picnicking in parks remains a popular activity. Indeed, there's a whole music festival in Towcester, Northamptonshire, which is called *Picnic in the Park* – be there this year on Saturday 2 July.

The origin of the word 'picnic' is unclear – some people say it comes from the French *piquer* (to pick or peck) and *nique* (something of little importance). However, we know that a picnic is always an informal occasion where there is sharing of food and it has been in use since the 18th century. As far back as the 1800s, there was a group of Londoners called the *Picnic Society* who met informally and shared the provision of food and entertainment.

Even the British Heart Foundation has got in on the act – proposing a picnic in the park as a healthy alternative to a team meeting at the office. They give plenty of tips for activities, such as rounders, kite-flying and boules, and tips for healthy picnic food, such as tuna and bean salad, pasta pots and pink fizz.

If you would like to picnic in any of the eight royal parks in London, then beware, as there is a page of guidelines which include: use plastic cups where possible, refrain from erecting any tents or marquees and don't fix anything to trees. And don't have a picnic with more than 20 participants in St James's Park (that's the park that runs alongside The Mall); head off to Regent's Park instead where up to 40 people can celebrate together.

So much for picnicking in the United Kingdom – if you go to the USA, you'll find quite a different take on having a picnic in the park – on Saturday 18 June the National Park service is celebrating International Picnic Day by inviting people to go to their National Parks and enjoy 'Picnic in the Park Day' with friends and family. This does not mean sitting by the band stand or the paddling pool – this means going into the great outdoors of the Bluestone National Scenic River or the Shenandoah National Park, for example.

So dust off your picnic basket and shake out your picnic blanket and head off to your local park this June for a picnic in the park.

If you would like to find out more about the *Picnic in the Park Day* in the USA, then click [here](#).

And if you would like to use picnics as a topic in your lesson, then we have provided you with an activity at A2 level. You'll find it in the following **Teacher's notes**.

Teacher's notes

Life's a picnic! (Level A2 and above, 20+ minutes)

- This activity will work better if you *don't* tell the students that it concerns picnics. Instead, just tell them you're going to play a game.
- On the board write: *1 food that is savoury (= 'würzig'), 2 food that is sweet, 3 a drink, 4 fruit (plural), 5 weather (adjective), 6 colour, 7 clothes, 8 famous person, 9 animals, 10 kitchen equipment.*
- Students find one word for each of the categories. Help them if needed.
- When everyone has finished finding the words, tell the students they are going to use the words in a dictation.
- Read out the following dictation slowly and clearly. When you come to a gap with a number, tell students to write in their number 1 word, number 2 word and so on.

- Dictation:

Tomorrow, we're going to have a picnic. I'm going to make some _____(1)_____ and you can buy some _____(2)_____. We must remember the cups for the _____(3)_____. I'll wash some _____(4)_____ and take them with me. I hope the weather is _____(5)_____. I'll bring the old _____(6)_____ blanket to sit on and I'll wear my favourite _____(7)_____. I'll invite _____(8)_____ to join us. I know a nice place for a picnic where there are no _____(9)_____. And don't forget to bring the _____(10)_____!

- Read the dictation out loud one more time.
- When everyone has finished, ask students in turn to read out their texts. There are sure to be some funny picnics.

Follow up: Ask students whether they enjoy picnics. Why (not)?