

NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob...

Finn

...and I'm Finn. Hello.

Rob

Hello, Finn! Are you chewing gum over there?

Finn

Yeah. Oh hang on – I'll just stick it under the desk for now.

Rob

Yuck – that's revolting! Why don't you go and put it in the bin? Since when did you take up this antisocial habit? **Antisocial** means annoying to other people, by the way.

Finn

Yeah, well. OK, Rob. Fine. Since I heard that there was evidence that chewing gum can improve your brain.

Rob

So how does it do that?

Finn

Well, some experts say that the chewing action can lead to an increase in blood flow to the brain.

Rob

Interesting! And guess what, we're taking about chewing gum on today's programme! So here's a question for you, Finn. When did the Singapore government outlaw chewing gum? Was it in...

a) 1982?

b) 1992?

or c) 2002?

Finn

And just before I answer, **to outlaw something** means to make it illegal. Well, I think the answer is a) 1982.

Rob

Well, we'll chew on it for a while, shall we, and find out if you're right at the end of the programme.

Finn

So, Rob, what's the history of chewing gum?

Rob

Well, people have been chewing gum for thousands of years. The Ancient Greeks chewed gum made from **resin** – a sticky substance produced by trees. But why do people like chewing gum?

Finn

Well, for many people it's just something to do. But you know, I like the idea that it's good for my brain. Research has shown that people find gum chewers are also more **approachable** – that means they're friendlier and easier to talk to.

Rob

OK. Well, there might be some truth in that. The thing we're here to discuss today, though, is how to **dispose** – or get rid – of gum responsibly. And you didn't set a very good example earlier in the show, did you, Finn?

Finn

Ah, well. Yeah, no, I didn't. But lots of people dispose of gum irresponsibly – that means not responsibly. It's often found stuck underneath tables, chairs, benches and escalators. And it's really difficult and expensive to remove once it has dried.

Rob

Right – because gum actually creates a **chemical bond** – which means when one thing joins firmly to another. For example it bonds with tarmac roads, rubber shoe soles, and concrete paving.

Finn

So how do we remove dried gum from roads and pavements? Rob, how would you do it?

Rob

Well, people do use high-pressure steam cleaners and then they scrape it off. But it's a slow process that's **labour-intensive** – which means it takes a lot of people to do it.

Finn

I'm sure it does. So let's hear someone telling a BBC reporter about why they threw their gum away in the street. Can you hear the reason she gives?

INSERT

Woman: Not that often. I often put it in the bin.

Reporter: But you do it sometimes?

Woman: Yeah, sometimes.

Reporter: Why do you do it sometimes?

Woman: I don't know. Because there's no bins around.

Finn

Now, she says she throws her gum in the street when she can't find a bin.

Rob

So, why doesn't she put it in her pocket and wait until she finds a bin?

Finn

Ah, no. No way, man! That's – that would make her pocket sticky!

Rob

Oh dear – it sounds like you and her are **two of a kind** – and that means very similar. OK, well, let's find out what another gum chewer does.

INSERT

Reporter: If you're walking along the street, and you had some other, a packet of crisps, when you'd finished it, would you throw that away?

Man: Not really.

Reporter: So why do you sometimes throw the chewing gum away? What's the difference?

Man: It's like food. It's not like a wrapper. Do you know what I mean?

Finn

So, this guy says gum is like food, so it's OK to drop it on the ground. Do you agree, Rob?

Rob

No, I don't. Food, such as a discarded apple core or banana skin, quickly and naturally **degrades** – or breaks down. And other types of litter, for example, a crisp packet or a sweet wrapper, can be picked up easily.

Finn

That's right. Whereas chewing gum is a bit like glue once it dries and it's extremely difficult to remove. So, in this way, of course, it can also be environmentally damaging.

Rob

In 2000 a study of a busy London shopping street showed that a quarter of a million pellets of chewing gum were stuck to the pavement. And a **pellet** is a small round ball of something that has become hard.

Finn

That's a lot of pellets, isn't it! The amount of discarded gum in Singapore was considered to be such a problem that the government banned the sale and consumption of gum altogether. They said it was because people were sticking their gum in the sliding doors of subway trains, stopping the doors from opening and closing.

Rob

Yes, it's a sticky subject isn't it?

Finn

It is indeed. A sticky situation, Rob.

Rob

And that brings us on to today's quiz question! I asked you earlier: when did the Singapore government outlaw chewing gum? Was it in... a) 1982? b) 1992? or c) 2002?

Finn

I said a) 1982.

Rob

You are wrong, Finn, just for today. The answer is actually b) 1992.

Finn

Which means the people of Singapore could chew gum for ten more years than I said. That's good. Now, how about those words again, Rob?

Rob

OK, well, the words we heard today were:

antisocial
to outlaw something
resin
approachable
chemical bond
labour-intensive
two of a kind
degrades
pellet

Finn

Well, that brings us to the end of today's 6 Minute English. We hope you've had plenty to chew on in today's programme. And you can hear more programmes at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again soon.

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

antisocial

not caring about other people and society in general

to outlaw something

make it illegal

resin

a sticky substance produced by trees

approachable

friendly and easy to talk to

chemical bond

a situation where one thing is joined firmly with another.

labour-intensive

involves a lot of people to do something

two of a kind

very similar

degrades

breaks down into smaller pieces over time

pellet

small round ball of something that has become hard