
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Could you go vegan?

The logo for BBC Learning English, featuring the letters 'BBC' in a white box above the words 'LEARNING ENGLISH' in white text on a teal background.

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English – the programme where we bring you an interesting topic and six items of vocabulary. I'm Neil.

Catherine

And I'm Catherine.

Neil

Now, if you want to fight climate change – what can you do?

Catherine

Well, you can use less electricity...

Neil

Or stop driving...

Catherine

But scientists believe there's another behaviour which has an even bigger impact on the planet, and that is what you eat.

Neil

We're talking about meat here. If people cut out meat and animal products from their diets – harmful **emissions** could be reduced by 70%. That's according to research from Oxford University.

Catherine

Now **emissions** are the gases produced by an activity or living thing – so we could talk about factory **emissions** or farming **emissions**.

Neil

And if you eat no meat or animal products you're what we call 'vegan'. More and more people around the world are going vegan. And today's question: which of these celebrities is vegan? Is it...

- a) Brad Pitt,
- b) Jennifer Lopez or
- c) Miley Cyrus?

Catherine

And I'm going to go for...c) Miley Cyrus.

Neil

Well, we'll find out at the end of the programme. Now, before we go much further, why don't we find out a bit more about exactly what it means to be vegan?

Catherine

Here's Tom Kuehnel from the Vegan Society in the UK.

INSERT

Tom Kuehnel, Vegan Society

Veganism is a way of living which excludes, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation and cruelty to animals. So that's for food, clothing or any other purpose. So we just don't want to use or abuse animals. And we feel like there, you know, there are plenty of alternatives **in this day and age**. It's never been easier to be vegan.

Neil

Of course, he says that avoiding cruelty to animals is what it's all about, but that doesn't just mean food. If you're a true vegan, then clothing from animals is also out - no more leather shoes!

Catherine

But he feels that it's easier than ever before to become vegan – and uses a nice phrase: "**in this day and age**".

Neil

Yes. It means 'these days', or 'in the present time' – and is often used to highlight a contrast with a previous time.

Catherine

So, many people go vegan for **ethical** reasons. Now **ethical** is a useful word, it means 'relating to moral beliefs', so if you become vegan for **ethical** reasons, you do it because you think it's wrong to eat or use animal products.

Neil

Others go vegan because of environmental considerations, as we looked at earlier. Rearing **livestock** – that means animals like cows and pigs – produces a lot of harmful methane gas. Now, let's just say the animals themselves produce a lot of it from their bodies. The other major reason to choose **veganism**...

Catherine

Veganism – now, that's the noun for the diet.

Neil

... is because they believe it is healthier.

Catherine

In the research from Oxford University we mentioned earlier, scientists found that **8 million** deaths per year could be avoided if the world went vegan.

Neil

Now, that's human deaths. They claim that half of this figure would be because we no longer eat red meat, and the other half would be due to eating more healthy fruit and vegetables – as well as fewer people being overweight.

Catherine

And they say that this would have an economic impact too. They suggest that up to \$1,000bn a year would be saved due to reduced healthcare costs and increased productivity at work - because fewer people would get sick.

Neil

So, if it's all so simple – why don't we all go vegan tomorrow?

Catherine

Well, meat-eating is an important part of most cultures – not everyone wants to change.

Neil

And millions of people worldwide raise **livestock** for a living.

Catherine

So these jobs would disappear. Now, with up to a third of the planet estimated to be **arid** – which means dry and unable to support crops - people living in these regions rely on **livestock**, so people for example like the Berbers in the Sahara region.

Neil

Without animal farming they would be forced to abandon traditional nomadic lifestyles – that's where they move from place to place - and settle in cities.

Catherine

And for many people, well, they just like eating meat and dairy.

Neil

We asked you about well-known vegans: which of these is vegan?

- a) Brad Pitt,
- b) Jennifer Lopez or

c) Miley Cyrus?

Catherine

And I said it was Miley Cyrus.

Neil

Well, you're kind of half right, Catherine. In fact, both Brad Pitt and Miley Cyrus are vegan. Jennifer Lopez used to be, but has since started eating meat again, apparently.

Catherine

Now, why don't we wrap up by looking at today's vocabulary one more time?

Neil

Well – we started with **emissions**: gases produced by something or an activity such as digestion. Livestock **emissions** for example – are gases produced by animals.

Catherine

We can also add a word that describes a kind of **emissions**, like methane **emissions** or greenhouse gas **emissions**.

Neil

Next up we had **in this day and age** – which means 'these days'.

Catherine

I still can't believe you still don't have a smartphone in this day and age, Neil.

Neil

Well, maybe I just object to smartphones for **ethical** reasons!

Catherine

So you have for moral reasons to smartphones?

Neil

Yeah, for me it's important to understand the conditions of the workers in the factory where the smartphone is made.

Catherine

That's fair enough then. But, Neil, you haven't become vegan yet for **ethical** reasons, have you?

Neil

You've got me there – I admire **veganism** but I still like cheese too much to do it!
Veganism is the noun.

Catherine

That's right. So two more words to go – we have **arid** and **livestock**. **Arid** describes land that is too dry to support many crops or plants.

Neil

But **arid** regions can sometimes support **livestock** – **livestock** means farm animals. If you think of the 'stock' as being the assets of a business, then animals are 'living' or 'live' stock.

Catherine

And that brings us to the end of today's programme. Join us on our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube pages for lots more! Let us know what you think of **veganism**!

Neil

Bye for now.

Catherine

Bye!