

Vape, nicotine, and tobacco education

Key Stage 3 Lesson 2: Don't be fooled Lesson Plan

Learning objective

To learn how to refuse offers to vape and decode tobacco and vape company's marketing strategies.

Resources required

1. PowerPoint slide deck 'Lesson 2 Don't be fooled'
2. Resource 2: Deconstructing ads worksheet
3. Ads

Learning outcomes

Climate for learning

Encourage respectful listening and sharing of opinions. Promote empathy and understanding - avoid shaming or stereotyping.

Ground rules should be made at the start of the lesson. Suggested agreements are:

- One person talking, no interrupting
- If speaking a lot, take time to listen to others. If holding onto your thoughts, speak up and share
- Use 'I' statements ('I think' or 'I feel' rather than 'you don't care what I think or feel')
- Respect others and be understanding of different experiences, opinions, and levels of knowledge

Introduction (Slides 1-3, 5 minutes)

- Explain that students are continuing the vaping, nicotine, and tobacco unit today.
- Establish the ground rules for the lesson. Use your own or the suggested rules.
- Recap the take aways from Lesson 1: Be nicotine free
- Explain that students will develop their own approach to refusing offers to vape and how to decode marketing strategies that vape companies use to hook young people on nicotine products

Starter activity: Think-pair-share or full class discussion (Slides 4-5, 5 minutes)

Ask students why some people their age choose to vape. They might give answers like ‘because they like the taste’, ‘they want to try it because they’re curious, and/or because other people use them’. Allow for discussion between students. Use questions below to facilitate discussion if desired.

Q1. What are some examples of myths or misinformation about vapes that are truly affecting teens' health? Some myths that might come up and suggestions for how to respond are:

Myth 1: “It’s just water vapour.” **Truth:** What comes out of a vape isn’t water—it’s an aerosol that contains nicotine, heavy metals, and toxic chemicals like formaldehyde. These can damage lungs and affect brain development.

 Teacher Tip: “Imagine breathing in hairspray or car exhaust every day—that’s closer to what vape aerosol is like than water.”

Myth 2: “Vaping is safer than smoking, so it’s fine.” **Truth:** Vaping might be less harmful than smoking, but that doesn’t mean it’s safe. It still causes nicotine addiction, lung damage, and can affect memory, mood, and concentration.

 Teacher Tip: “If something is ‘less dangerous’ than poison, would you still want to eat it?”

Myth 3: “There’s no nicotine in the ones I use.” **Truth:** Studies show that 99% of vapes contain nicotine, even when the label says they don’t. Nicotine is highly addictive, especially for young brains.

 Teacher Tip: “It’s like drinking a soda that secretly has caffeine—even if it says ‘caffeine-free,’ it can still affect your body.”

Myth 4: “Everyone is doing it.” Truth: Most teens don’t vape. This myth creates pressure, but the reality is that many young people choose to stay vape-free.

 **Teacher Tip:** “Just because something is popular online doesn’t mean it’s the norm in real life.”

Q2. Do you think many flavour options make it hard for teens to be conscious of the harmful effects vapes to young people?

- **Yes**—flavours play a big role in making vaping seem fun and harmless, especially to young people. Why flavours are a problem:
 - They mask the harshness of chemicals, making it easier to start vaping.
 - They make vapes feel like sweets or desserts, which tricks the brain into thinking they’re safe.
 - They lower the perception of risk, so teens are more likely to try them and less likely to quit.
 -  **Teacher Tip:** “If something smells like bubble gum or tastes like mango, it’s easy to forget it’s full of chemicals. But just because it tastes nice doesn’t mean it’s safe.”

Then ask students why they think people their age don’t vape. Allow for discussion between students. Not all the responses/talking points have to be given/used. These are here for guidance.

Potential student response	Suggested teacher talking point
Because it’s illegal	Yes, it’s illegal for under-18s. Why do you think the law exists? What is it trying to protect?
Don’t like the taste	Interesting! Flavours are designed to appeal to people, but not everyone enjoys them. What do you think that says about how vapes are marketed?
Nicotine is addictive	Absolutely. You know from lesson 1 that nicotine can change how your brain works, especially while it’s still developing.
Play sports/Care about fitness	Great point. Vaping can reduce lung capacity and stamina. How might that affect someone’s performance in sports or dance?
It’s expensive	Yes, the cost adds up quickly. What else could someone spend that money on instead?
No one knows the long-term effects	Exactly. Vaping is still new, and we’re only beginning to understand the risks. Why might that be a reason to avoid it?
It can contain spice	That’s a serious concern. Some illegal vapes have been found to contain dangerous drugs. How can that put people at risk without them even knowing?”

Q: Do you think there is a stigma against people your age who vape?

 **Suggested teacher talking point:** It's a thoughtful question, and it's something worth exploring together.

What is stigma? Stigma means a negative label or judgment placed on someone because of something they do or are associated with. It can lead to people being treated unfairly or feeling ashamed.

How might stigma show up with vaping? Some young people who vape might be judged as 'troublemakers' or 'attention-seekers'. Others might feel pressure to hide it or lie about it. On the flip side, some might feel pressure to vape to fit in with a certain group.

Why does this matter? Stigma can stop people from asking for help or making healthy choices. If someone feels judged, they might not talk to a trusted adult about their worries or how to quit.

What can we do instead? In PSHE, we talk about making informed choices and supporting others. That means:

- Not judging people who vape but understanding the reasons behind it.
- Encouraging open conversations.
- Helping each other make decisions that protect our health and wellbeing.

Core activity: Refusal skills (Slides 6-8, 15 minutes)

Ask students to think about how they would respond to the offer in one or two of the four scenes and to create different ways people would respond to the offer in that situation. They can do this as pairs or in small groups. The students can either present the conversations through a 1–2-minute skit or tell the class their ideas for how to refuse.

Timeline of tobacco and vape advertising (Slides 9-14, 5 minutes)

Summary of learning: Cigarettes became popular in the 1880s, but their health risks weren't widely known until the 1950s. For decades, tobacco companies misled the public with ads—even claiming doctors recommended smoking—and targeted specific groups like soldiers, women, and Black communities. Despite growing evidence of harm, Big Tobacco used themes like adventure and glamour to keep smoking appealing. UK laws gradually restricted tobacco advertising, leading to a full ban in 2002 and plain

packaging rules in 2016. Today, many tobacco companies also sell vapes, using similar tactics to attract young people and maintain profits.

Decoding marketing strategies and tactics (Slides 15-29, 15 minutes)

Summary of learning: Vape and tobacco companies use manipulative advertising tactics—like emotional appeal, celebrity endorsements, bright colours, and fun flavours—to target young people, especially on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram. These ads often disguise themselves to look harmless or cool, making vaping seem safe and trendy while hiding the risks. Just like with cigarettes, these companies target specific groups and use psychological tricks to get people addicted. Understanding these tactics helps young people see through the marketing and make informed choices.

Extension activity: De/reconstruct ads (Slide 30, 5-10 minutes)

Hand out ads if having students work in groups (1 ad per group) or choose one ad to display on the screen if doing activity as a class. Hand out Resource 2: Deconstructing Ads Worksheet. Time permitting, provide each group with poster paper and markers and ask them to rewrite/design their ad, based on their new 110% honest slogan.

Ask students to work in groups or work together as a class to rewrite the ad if the company was being 110% honest about what it is selling. Encourage students to consider: 1) who paid for the ad, 2) who are they targeting with the ad and why, 3) how did they make the ad appealing, and 4) what would be a completely honest slogan for the ad?

Depending on how much time you have, either **have each group present** their ad to the class (this will take longer) or have each group hang their ad around the room so everyone can do a gallery walk to view all the ads.

Possible Discussion Questions: Today we focused on print advertising. This is only one type of advertising that companies use to get our attention. What are some other types of advertising that we encounter in our daily lives? (social media, TV/radio commercials, online ads, product placement, posters at stores, event sponsorship, etc.). Ask specifically about ads that are marketed towards youth on places such as TikTok or Instagram, or through Google searches. Ask them why is it important for us to be aware of and understand advertising strategies and messages.