

11-14 – CONTACTING BUSINESSES



This resource is designed in partnership with WWF-UK as part of the *First News* Takeover Challenge. This year the Takeover Challenge is a campaign called 'How Green Can You Go?' which focuses on encouraging children to think about business and sustainability. The final part of the Takeover Challenge involves young people visiting a business to ask them about their sustainability. This resource should help you to lead discussions with pupils about which business to choose, how to prepare and how to contact a business. The resource is not prescriptive, but acts as a guide, providing information to help you navigate conversations with your pupils in whichever format works best. The three sections below go alongside slides 24-30 on the PowerPoint. They list bullet points of the things we recommend you focus on with your pupils. The conversations you have are designed to be flexibly timed, but you should schedule at least 30 minutes for each. It is advised that you use a whiteboard or piece of paper to brainstorm ideas. The resource is designed for ages 11-14.

Choosing a business. Slides 25-26. (30 minutes)

Use the slide and bullet points below to guide a discussion with pupils about what they should think about when choosing a business to contact. If pupils don't suggest any of the below, you can prompt them. Use slide 25 to get pupils to discuss before clicking to reveal the answers on slide 26.

- The main priority should be trying to find a business that is accessible to your pupils, which they are aware of and interested in. You should think about businesses that your pupils can make sense of to keep them engaged. If they don't understand the business or care about it, they will lose interest. You could ask pupils what industries they're interested to learn more about or what job they would like to have when they are older. This will give you a good indication of the businesses they will be most interested in. For example, if one pupil wants to be a fashion designer, you could select a local clothing company. If another pupil wants to be a footballer, you could choose your local football ground. Or if one wants to be a police officer, you could ask your local police station. You can vote on which type of business you'd like to approach as a group. Other great examples of businesses to choose might include but are not limited to, banks, factories, theatres, emergency services, hairdressers, supermarkets, builders, restaurants, etc.
- Pick a business that is local. The reality is that you probably won't be able to travel very far, so pick a business that is close enough to your school that you can get there easily. Think about the most prominent businesses in your city/town/village/community.
- Think about a connection you might have. Does anyone you know own a local business or is a decision maker in a business and would they be willing to let your pupils visit to learn about sustainability? Perhaps a parent owns a shop, or a friend owns a restaurant. The business is probably more likely to say yes if you know them.
- Think about the sectors that can have the biggest environmental impact. We want to learn about the sustainability of a business. Finance, food retail and agriculture, energy, manufacturing, construction and transport sectors might be good to choose if they are available to you.

Preparing to contact a business. Slides 27-28. (30 minutes)

Use the slide and bullet points below to guide a discussion with pupils about what they need to do before contacting their chosen business. If pupils don't suggest any of the below, you can prompt them. Use slide 27 to get pupils to discuss before clicking to reveal the answers on slide 28.

- Do some initial research (you can do further research once a business has confirmed you can visit their workplace). Once you have selected a business/sector you would like to contact, find out what you can about them and their industry. Businesses are much more likely to want to get involved if you show an interest in them and what they do. Does the business have a website? Can you find out any information about them that way?

- Think about how the business and its sector relates to sustainability. If you have picked a supermarket for example, how might they be having an environmental impact (such as their supply chain, including are the products they purchase sustainably sourced and delivered. Also, their own operations such as their energy use, delivery vans, packaging their products and managing their waste)?
- Be aware of greenwashing. When you are researching your business, make sure to think: is the business being transparent, or are they claiming to be more sustainable than they actually are? Remember a good sign of the sustainability of a business is if their products, services or suppliers have sustainable accreditation through an official body, such as Fairtrade.

Contacting a business. Slides 29-30. (30 minutes)

Use the slide and bullet points below to guide a discussion with pupils about how you should contact a business. If pupils don't suggest any of the below, you can prompt them. Use slide 29 to get pupils to discuss before clicking to reveal the answers on slide 30.

- Think about how you are going to contact your chosen business. Would it be best to visit them in person, write a letter, send an email, or make a phone call? Sending an email is usually a good place to start.
- Who is the best person to contact at the business? Based on your research if there's someone with a job title that is likely to lead on their sustainability then this could be a good option. Alternatively, you can try managers, owners or even their contact us page on their website.
- Tell your chosen business what the Takeover Challenge: How green can you go? is and why you are contacting them. You can send them this leaflet, which details what the Takeover Challenge is and what their involvement will be. Explain that your pupils are interested in finding out about the sustainability journey of their business and want to visit to ask some questions to help them with their learning.
- Be positive when you contact the business. Don't pick out all the ways you think the business is not being sustainable. Instead tell them that you are interested to find out about their journey, and that this will be useful whatever stage the company is at. The Takeover Challenge is not about demonising businesses, but about understanding the challenges and importance of sustainability and the journey businesses go on to adopt sustainable practices.
- Don't be upset if the business you initially chose does not reply to you. They are likely to be very busy. It might be worth sending one more follow-up email, but if this is unsuccessful, do not feel disheartened. You could try another business. Persistence is key! Hopefully you came up with a few in your initial brainstorm.
- Visiting a workplace will be the most beneficial way for your pupils to learn about a business's sustainability, but we understand that this might be difficult to organise. If it is too challenging, you can find out about a business and participate in a different way. You could invite a business employee to speak to students in person at the school or virtually.

Next steps:

- Use the template email/letter to employers we have put together for you. You can find this on our webpage, [first.news/takeoverchallenge](https://www.firstnews.com/firstnews/takeoverchallenge)

