WHAT IS GREENWASHING?

Level: B2   **Time**: 50-60 minutes

Lesson focus: The class uses BBC authentic material, titled *What is greenwashing and how can you spot it?*, and adapted to a B2 speaking and reading lesson. Start by looking at three greenwashed companies and eliciting what they have in common. Students think of buzzwords associated with *environmentally friendly* and read a text to check if their words appeared. Elicit the meaning of *greenwashing* and read a text to verify the guesses. Talk about different ways of spotting greenwashing, show three boxes and check if students know how to identify five greenwashing strategies. Match the signs of greenwashing with their definitions, and identify them by analysing real-life examples. Discuss why greenwashing may be a problem, read a text and check the answers. Read it again and fill in the gaps with the missing words. Continue the discussion on how greenwashing can be avoided and talk about popular product certifications. Finish by answering opinion-based questions and provide students with feedback.

Materials:
- Presentation (PDF)
- Worksheet (PDF)
- Article: *What is greenwashing and how can you spot it?* by [BBC](BBC)

Learning objectives:
- to read and discuss authentic material
- to learn about greenwashing and identify real-life examples
- to share opinions on greenwashing

Structure:

1. Lead-in (4 mins)

Show pictures of *Ryanair, Coca-Cola Live* and *H&M.* Discuss what the three companies have in common.
Possible answers: green, big companies, eco-conscious.

2. Reading for gist (5 mins)

Put students into pairs or small groups and think about buzzwords that come to mind when hearing *environmentally friendly*.
Possible answers: sustainable, compostable, recycling, eco, bio, organic.
Read the paragraph titled *Why do companies want to appear more eco-friendly?* and check if their words appeared in the text.
Answers: climate, eco-friendly, organic, sustainable.
Students answer in their own words the question posed in the title.

3. Discussion and reading (8 mins)

Write the word *greenwashing* and discuss what comes to mind when hearing this term. Read the paragraph titled *What is greenwashing?* and think of different ways of spotting it in real-life.
Students work in pairs and find five signs of greenwashing shown in the pictures.
In case of completing the class online, you can *click* on the boxes and complete this exercise as a group.

4. Read and match (6 mins)

Read five signs of greenwashing and match them with their descriptions.

Match them with the greenwashing shown in the previous exercise.

Answers: a - companies may try...

b - if you're seeing words like 'sustainable'...

c - one of the biggest signs that a product...

d - lots of companies are working hard...

e - when it's not clear when a product...

5. Identify and discuss examples (6 mins)

Show four real-life examples of greenwashing (Volkswagen, Windex, Walmart and Sun Chips). Students work in pairs to identify and match greenwashing strategies.

Possible answers: Volkswagen (no proof, buzzwords); Windex (green packaging, not fully recyclable, no proof, buzzwords); Walmart (buzzwords, promises); Sun Chips (green packaging, not fully recyclable, no proof, buzzwords).

6. Reading for gist (5 mins)

As a group, discuss why greenwashing may be a problem. Read the paragraph titled *Why is greenwashing a problem?* and check the answers.

Answers: misleading to customers, harmful to the environment.

7. Reading for detail (5 mins)

Read the text again and fill in the gaps with the missing words. Students work individually, read the definitions of words and write the words.

Answers: 1. damaging, 2. unintentionally, 3. weighing up, 4. deliberate, 5. distrust.

8. Post-reading discussion (6 mins)

Ask about different ways of avoiding greenwashing in real life.

Say that one of the ways may be by checking certifications. Read the names of certifications and match them with their descriptions.

Answers: 1.c, 2.a, 3.e, 4.b, 5.d.

9. Discussion (10 mins)

In pairs, groups or as a whole group, answer the opinion-based questions on greenwashing. Did this class convince students to avoid greenwashing?

10. Error correction (5 mins)

Discuss any errors and provide feedback.