

TED Talk: 'Try something new for 30 days'

Level: (Upper Intermediate) B2- (Advanced) C1

Learner Type: Teens& Adults

Aim: to introduce the concept of New Year's Resolutions, practise speaking, listening& writing skills.

Time: 40 minutes

Teacher Guidelines& Answer Key



- **Step 1:** Play **hangman** with the word '**Resolutions**'. When students discover the word, ask them if they are familiar with this concept (= a **promise to yourself to do or to not do something**):

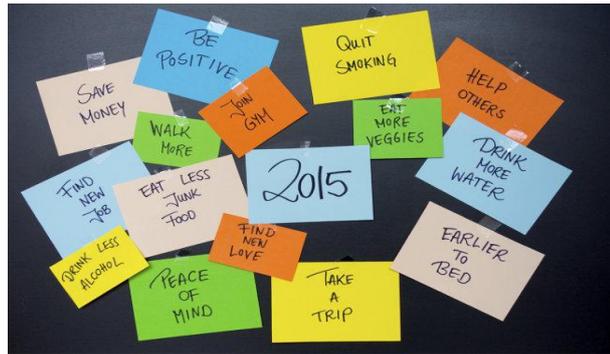
Q1: Do you ever make resolutions at the beginning of the year?

Q2: Have you made any this year? Would you like to share some of them?

Q3: Why do people find it usually hard to keep New Year's Resolutions?

Q4: What are some common resolutions adults/teenagers make?

While students brainstorm their ideas, you may display this or a similar image:



- **Step 2:** Tell students that they are going to listen to Matt Cutts' short TED Talk about his take on setting and achieving goals. Matt Cutts is currently the head of Google's Web spam team. Show the talk once and ask these follow-up questions:
 - Q1: What are your first thoughts on Cutts' talk? Do you think his idea is feasible?
 - Q2: What hobby/activity would you like to take up for the next 30 days?
- **Step 3:** Play the video a second time so that students can do the listening activity on their worksheets. Find the answers below in red:

Activity Worksheet

A. Listening task:

Fill in the blanks of the transcript while listening to Matt Cutts' talk:

'A few years ago, I felt like I was 1/ **stuck** in a rut, so I decided to follow in the 2/ **footsteps** of the great American philosopher, Morgan Spurlock, and try something new for 30 days. The idea is actually pretty simple. Think about something you've always wanted to add to your life and try it for the next 30 days. It turns out 30 days is just about the right amount of time to add a new habit or 3/ **subtract** a habit -- like watching the news -- from your life.

There's a few things I learned while doing these 30-day challenges. The first was, 4/ **instead** of the months flying by, forgotten, the time was much more 5/ **memorable**. This was part of a challenge I did to take a picture every day for a month. And I remember 6/ **exactly** where I was and what I was doing that day. I also noticed that as I started to do more and harder 30-day challenges, my 7/ **self-confidence** grew. I went from desk-dwelling computer nerd to the kind of guy who bikes to work. For fun!

Even last year, I ended up hiking up Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa. I would never have been that 8/ **adventurous** before I started my 30-day challenges.

I also figured out that if you really want something badly enough, you can do anything for 30 days. Have you ever wanted to write a novel? Every November, tens of thousands of

people try to write their own 50,000-word novel, from 9/ **scratch**, in 30 days. It turns out; all you have to do is write 1,667 words a day for a month. So I did. By the way, the secret is not to go to sleep until you've written your words for the day. You might be 10/ **sleep-deprived**, but you'll finish your novel. Now is my book the next great American novel? No. I wrote it in a month. It's awful.

But for the rest of my life, if I meet John Hodgman at a TED party, I don't have to say, "I'm a computer scientist." No, no, if I want to, I can say, "I'm a 11/ **novelist**."

So here's one last thing I'd like to mention. I learned that when I made small, 12/ **sustainable** changes, things I could keep doing, they were more likely to stick. There's nothing wrong with big, crazy challenges. In fact, they're a ton of fun. But they're less likely to 13/ **stick**. When I gave up sugar for 30 days, day 31 looked like this.

So here's my question to you: What are you waiting for? I 14/ **guarantee** you the next 30 days are going to pass whether you like it or not, so why not think about something you have always wanted to try and give it a 15/ **shot**! For the next 30 days.

Thanks.'

- **Step 4:** Check answers with your students and introduce any new words from the text.

B . Can you think of funny or serious resolutions for the following people:

- **Step 5:** Students get in pairs and come up with funny or serious New Year's Resolutions for the celebrities in the pictures.

Alexis Tsipras: Prime Minister of Greece

Barack Obama: President of the USA

Jennifer Aniston: Greek- American Actress

Mark Zuckerberg: Co- founder& CEO of Facebook

Leonardo Di Caprio: American actor and film producer

Maria Sharapova: a Russian professional tennis player, who is ranked world No. 4 by the Women's Tennis Association.

C. Writing task (15')

- **Step 6:** Students free- write about their own New Year's Resolution(s) and a 30-day-challenge they would consider taking.

