Expressing yourself: ways of giving your opinion

Overview: In this lesson learners revise, consolidate and practise ways of giving opinions.
Total time for activities: 35 – 40 minutes
Level: upper intermediate to advanced

1. Before class, cut up the Student’s Copy so that you have two individual worksheets for each learner.

2. Distribute Worksheet A. Learners work in pairs, saying the phrases and trying to agree which syllables carry the main stresses. Point out that in some of the phrases there are two stressed syllables. You could do the first two as a whole class.

3. Elicit and confirm answers. Drill if necessary.

Answers
1. I think ... / I think ...
2. I reckon ... / I reckon ...
3. Personally, I think ... / Personally, I think ...
4. Personally, I reckon ... / Personally, I reckon ...
5. In my opinion, ...
6. In my view, ...
7. It seems to me (that) ...
8. All things considered, ...
9. If you ask me, ...
10. To tell you the truth, ...
11. To be honest, ...
12. To be frank, ...
13. To my mind, ...
14. As far as I’m concerned, ...

In phrases 1, 2, 3 and 4, stress on “I” emphasises that you are giving an individual opinion which may be different from other people’s.

4. Answer the following questions as a class:
Which of these phrases is rather informal?
Answer: I reckon ...
Which of these phrases are rather formal?
Answer: In my opinion, ... / In my view, ...
Which of these phrases are particularly useful for giving your opinion when you know that other people may not like what you say?
Answers: To tell you the truth, ... / To be honest, ... / To be frank, ...
Which of these phrases can be made negative?
Answers: I think – I don’t think / I reckon – I don’t reckon / It seems to me (that) – It doesn’t seem to me (that)
Why are most of these phrases followed by a comma?
Answer: The comma represents a pause in speech. Notice there are no commas after phrases 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7.
Which of these phrases can be put at the end of a sentence as well as at the beginning?
Answer: All of them. At the beginning of a sentence they often have fall-rise intonation; at the end they often have rising intonation.
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5. Distribute Worksheet B. Learners work in pairs, reading the sentences aloud and paying attention to stress and pausing. Circulate, monitor and help as necessary.

6. Working in pairs again, learners brainstorm:
   - arguments for and against vegetarianism
   - arguments for and against fast food
   - arguments for and against food additives such as preservatives, flavour enhancers, colourings etc.
   - arguments for and against advertisements directed at children for sweets, chocolate, ice cream and other junk food.
   - arguments for and against organically-produced food

They should make notes to refer to later on, but they should not try to write complete sentences.

7. Learners form groups of 4 - 6 and discuss “What should / shouldn’t people eat?” They should make use of the list of phrases for giving opinions, the list of sentences (Worksheet B) and their brainstorming notes from stage 6. They should try to use as many different opinion-giving phrases as possible, especially the ones they are least familiar with.

8. Each group reports briefly to the class. They could report things they agreed on, things they disagreed about and any surprising or unusual views that were expressed.

Follow-up

- Learners can individually make a note of the opinion-giving phrases they are least familiar with or tend not to use, and make a point of trying to use these in subsequent discussion activities.
- Look out for opportunities to invite opinions from the class, e.g. ways of making the classroom more attractive, ways of revising for a test. If necessary, prompt them to use the phrases from this lesson.
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Worksheet A

Underline the main stressed syllables in these phrases.

1. I think ...
2. I reckon ...
3. Personally, I think ...
4. Personally, I reckon ...
5. In my opinion, ...
6. In my view, ...
7. It seems to me (that) ...
8. All things considered, ...
9. If you ask me, ...
10. To tell you the truth, ...
11. To be honest, ...
12. To be frank, ...
13. To my mind, ...
14. As far as I’m concerned, ...

Worksheet B

Practise reading the sentences aloud. Pay attention to pausing and stress.

► If you ask me, sugar and salt are the most dangerous additives in food.
► Children should be taught more about nutrition in school, I reckon.
► Personally, I don’t think human beings made their way to the top of the food chain just to eat vegetables.
► Some people worry far too much about their diet, in my opinion.
► It seems to me that there’s a lot of truth in the old saying “You are what you eat”.
► In my view, it’s actually not that easy to buy healthy food, because everything’s full of pesticides and fertilisers.
► To my mind, the most important thing is to establish good eating habits in childhood.
► All things considered, there’s so much conflicting advice about what you should and shouldn’t eat that the best course of action is just to ignore it all.
► A little bit of what you fancy does you good, if you ask me.
► I think we should all stop eating meat, to be honest.
► As far as I’m concerned, it’s not so important exactly what you eat - the key thing is to have a varied diet and eat regular meals.
► I reckon the only way to eat healthy food is to grow it yourself.
► Most people wouldn’t need to worry about their diet so much if they got enough proper exercise, it seems to me.
► I think the biggest threat to health is from genetically-modified food, personally.
► To tell you the truth, a lot of people are so busy they just don’t have time to think about what they’re eating.
► To be frank, I suppose most people just buy whatever food they can afford.