

MY CARBON FOOTPRINT

Summary: A simple activity to start the group thinking about their personal daily energy use and how this affects the environment.

Aim: To raise awareness of how we contribute to climate change in our daily lives by understanding how our everyday actions are associated with releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Equipment: Question cards, green, orange and red answer cards. The answer cards should be in three different sizes. The red cards must be the biggest and the green cards the smallest.

Preparation: Prepare question cards and answer cards. Use the questions provided and if appropriate prepare additional questions that are relevant to your local environment.

Duration: Thirty minutes

Setting: Scout meeting place

Age Range: 15+



LARCH HILL

INTERNATIONAL SCOUT CENTRE

eco adventure

Aim

Scouts are working towards a world where the risk of harmful substances to people and the environment are minimised.

Educational objectives

Explain the local impact of harmful substances to people and the broader environment and what can be done by individuals, groups and the community to reduce the risk. Understand the global impact of harmful substances and how local actions can change the global environment.

Background

Our planet is surrounded by a blanket of gases. This is our atmosphere. As the sun shines on the earth it sends us heat. Some of this is absorbed by the earth's surface and some of it bounces back into the atmosphere. The reflected heat is trapped by the atmosphere and this keeps our planet warm. This is known as the greenhouse effect. The blanket of gases is getting thicker as we release greenhouse gases by burning fossil fuels for energy and as we cut down forests for timber and agriculture. Greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane and nitrous oxide. As the blanket gets thicker, the temperature rises. As a result of this, our climate is starting to change. This activity explores how we contribute to climate change in our daily lives by understanding how our everyday actions are associated with releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Step by step guide to activity

1. Set the question cards out in a circle and place the answer cards in the middle in three piles (a green pile, an orange pile and a red pile).
2. Each question has three answers a green answer, an orange answer and a red answer. When making the answer cards, think about the number of participants and what their likely answers will be to the questions. This will determine how many answer cards of each colour are made. The answer cards can be made smaller if necessary. The important point is that the red cards are the largest and the green cards are the smallest.
3. Explain the activity. Each participant moves around the circle answering the questions and taking the correct coloured answer card at each question. Once they have answered all the questions they find a space and lay out their answer cards on the floor to make a patterned mat.
4. Once the Scouts have laid out their mat explain what it means. The mat demonstrates their day to day energy use, which actually represents their day to day carbon footprint. It will vary between participants. The greater your energy use the bigger and redder the mat will be and the less your energy use the smaller and greener your mat will be.

Evaluation

Once everyone has finished their mat have a discussion using the ideas below.

Who has the smallest, greenest mat and who has the biggest reddest mat? How do they feel about it?

How green are the group in general? Are there big differences between the participants or does everyone have a similar energy use?

Ask the group how the questions relate to energy. Some of the questions have obvious, direct connections to energy, for example, do you switch off the lights when you leave a room? Other questions need some thought to connect them to energy, for example, how often do you buy new things?

How relevant were the questions to their daily life?

What can they do to reduce their carbon footprint? What would be easy to do and what would be hard to do?

What are the group doing already to help the environment? Are they doing this on purpose or by accident?

Further activities

1. Learn about renewable energy.
2. Visit a renewable energy facility in your local area.
3. Ask the Scouts to think about how they would do their daily actions if they had no energy. Run a weekly meeting using no energy.
4. Ask the Scouts to write a list of ten things they can do to reduce their carbon footprint. They should think about things that are easy to achieve and things that are more challenging. After a few weeks, find out whether they have reduced their carbon footprint.

My Carbon Footprint Questions

How do you get to school/work?

By car	Red Card
By bus or train	Orange Card
By bike or on foot	Green Card

Do you switch off the lights when you leave a room?

Always	Green Card
Sometimes	Orange Card
Never	Red Card

Do you leave your television on standby/in sleep mode?

Always	Red Card
Sometimes	Orange Card
Never	Green Card

Do you recycle?

Never	Red Card
Sometimes	Orange Card
As much as possible	Green Card

Do you buy locally produced food?

As often as possible	Green Card
Sometimes	Orange Card
No/Don't know	Red Card

How often do you buy new things?(e.g., clothes, cd's, computer games etc)

More than once a week	Red Card
Once a week	Orange Card
Once a month or less	Green Card

Do you use renewable energy?

Yes, a lot	Green Card
Yes, but not often	Orange Card
No/Don't know	Red Card

Have you ever planted a tree?

Yes, several trees	Green Card
Yes, one tree	Orange Card
No	Red Card