

## **Our Responsibility to the Environment**

### **What is the environment and why are we responsible for it?**

When we talk about the environment, we mean the planet and all of its natural resources, like forests, water, food etc. The environment has become more and more important as our awareness of science has increased. For example, the vast majority of experts are now sure that climate change is having an effect on the planet, and that human activity has influenced climate change.

We are responsible for the planet because we are having an impact on what is happening to it. We are also responsible for keeping the planet in a good state so that our children and grandchildren can live healthy and stable lives here, without worrying about flooding, crop failures, earthquakes, food shortages, and other potentially life-destroying effects of climate change.

### **What are the issues facing the environment today?**

Our planet will soon have 8 billion people living on it. This means that there is a lot of pressure for resources like food, water and energy. The global population has tripled in the last 60 years, which has affected the environment in lots of different ways, including the clearing and development of land to keep up with demand for housing. Currently, one third of the entire planet's population do not have access to clean drinking water. Sadly, this figure is predicted to increase to two thirds by 2050, because of increasing demands on water supplies, as well as pollution.

The earth's oceans are currently under strain like never before. Pollution has caused the acidity levels to increase dramatically (by 30% and rising), which means that plankton and shellfish are dying. This is changing the ecosystem of the sea in a way not seen for millions of years. The oceans are also suffering from extreme overfishing, with some experts predicting that by 2050, there will be no fish left. As if that wasn't bad enough, the oceans are also being clogged up with plastic, with 12.7 million tonnes per year ending up in the sea.

Pollution of air, soil and water is having a real impact on the environment. Carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases all contribute to this pollution. Cars, planes, power plants and animal agriculture are all key causes of pollution that have been caused by human activity. To make this even worse, deforestation (cutting down trees) is happening at an alarming rate of 18 million acres per year. This means that there aren't enough trees to absorb the carbon dioxide being produced.

## So what can I do to play my part in looking after the environment?

There are clearly lots of problems facing the environment, and there are lots of things that you can do to help. Here are some suggestions:

### 1. Recycle

It's really important to reduce the amount of waste that you create. By recycling, you save money, energy and resources. Rubbish that is not recycled goes to landfill. This is bad for the environment because it releases harmful chemicals, which can damage plants and pollute water. We are also running out of landfill sites, so recycling is even more important than ever.

### 2. Reduce your use of plastic

Plastic is really bad for the environment. It pollutes oceans and is eaten by sea creatures, causing them great harm and also poisoning the food chain. We currently use more plastic than we can recycle, with one million plastic bottles being bought every minute around the world. You can make lots of little changes in your daily life: use bags made from cloth; don't accept plastic straws for your drinks; switch your bathroom products to things that don't come in plastic bottles.

### 3. Cut down on plane and car travel

It's easier said than done, but it is possible to cut down on your reliance on car travel. If you are able, try using your bike. Alternatively, public transport is better for the environment than using your own car. You can organise car shares so that people travel together rather than in separate cars. Avoid using planes too often; consider taking trains or ferries instead. When you're shopping, buy things that have been made or grown locally.

### 4. Eat less meat and dairy

The meat and dairy industries are responsible for a lot of damage to the environment. Feeding animals, killing them, and transporting them is extremely demanding in terms of energy and resources. Furthermore, forests are cut down in order to create land for animals to be raised. A report published by the Worldwatch Institute estimated that at least 51% of greenhouse gas emissions are a result of animal agriculture. You can help by choosing meat-free options more regularly at meal times.

## Questions

### Functional Skills English Entry Level 3 Questions

1. Name FOUR FACTS which you learn about the environment from the first page of the information sheets.
2. Name ONE reason why people are worried about the environment.
3. Why are plankton and shellfish dying?
4. Highlight all the adjectives in this information sheet.

### Functional Skills Level 1

1. Describe TWO ways we can help protect the environment from the information sheet.
2. Use the information to create a short paragraph using the rule of three.
3. List THREE features of this text that prove that its purpose is to inform the reader.

### Functional Skills Level 2

1. Name FOUR things that you have **inferred** about the urgency of looking after the environment from this information sheet.
2. Create your own paragraph about protecting the environment using three linguistic devices. (remember AFOREST)
3. Look at the organisational features of this text. Is the layout of information effective and what could be done to improve it?