

# THE ENVIRONMENT

## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

June 5

### WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENT?

Everything that surrounds us is part of the environment. Not just living things like plants and animals, but also beaches and mountains, the air we breathe, the sunlight that provides warmth, and the water that we use in our homes, schools, and businesses.

### PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Humans like ourselves may have lived on Earth for more than 300,000 years. For a long time people thought the Earth was so huge that it could easily absorb human wastes and pollution. And they thought that Earth's natural resources would never be used up.

In prehistoric times, people killed animals for food and built fires to cook food and keep themselves warm. They cut down trees for fuel, and their fires released pollution into the air. But there were so few people that their activities had little impact on the environment.

In modern times, the world's population has been growing very fast. In 1850 there were around a billion people in the world. In 1950 there were around 2.5 billion, and in 2001, there were more than six billion. Their activities have put a strain on the environment.



### SHARING THE EARTH

We share the planet with trees, flowers, insects, fish, whales, dogs, and many other plants and animals. Each species of animal or plant has its place on Earth, and each one is dependent on many others.

Plants give off oxygen that animals need to breathe. Animals pollinate plants and spread their seeds. Animals eat plants and are in turn eaten by larger animals. When plants and animals die, they become part of the soil in which new plants, in their turn, take root and grow.

### GLOBAL WARMING AND THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

Many scientists believe that gases in the air are causing Earth's climate to gradually become warmer. If the climate becomes so warm that a great deal of ice near the North and South Poles melts and more water goes into the oceans, many areas along the coasts may be flooded.

In Earth's atmosphere there are tiny amounts of gases called greenhouse gases. These gases let the rays of the sun pass through to the planet, but they hold in the heat that comes up from the sun-warmed Earth-in much the same way as the glass walls of a greenhouse hold in the warmth of the sun.

As cities have increased in size and population, factories and businesses have also grown. People have needed more and more electricity, cars, and other things that must be manufactured. As industries in the world have grown, more greenhouse gases have been added to the atmosphere. These increase the thickness of the greenhouse "glass," causing more heat to be trapped than in the past. This is called the greenhouse effect.



# HELPING THE ENVIRONMENT BY ENERGY SAVING!

Global warming is the greatest natural threat facing our planet today. This can change weather patterns, water supplies, seasonal growth for plants, and the sustainable way of life for humans and wildlife. Climate change has already started, but we can be part of the solution...

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

#### TURNING THE LIGHTS OFF

This may be one of the most obvious ones, but turning the lights off is easy and anyone can do it! This is very important in saving energy, as artificial lights make up 15% of your home's electricity use. Leaving a light on is like throwing away energy, so it's important to switch off the ones you don't use when you leave the room.

There are some types of light bulbs that are better at saving energy than others, these are called fluorescent lights and they use six times less energy than a standard light bulb. Remember... the most energy efficient light is one that is turned off!



#### USE SMART POWER BOARDS

Even when your home electronics are off, they are still using a small amount of energy unless they are switched off at the power point. Before leaving or going to bed, it's important to switch all of your appliances off at the power point. You can also use smart power boards to take charge of power saving. They detect when a main unit such as a TV or computer has been turned off or placed on standby, and don't deliver any more power to them.

#### CLOSE ALL OF THE DOORS IN YOUR HOUSE...

If your mum or dad have ever yelled at you to 'shut the door', there is a reason why! When you leave doors open, all of the warm (or cool) air that was in the room escapes and leaves the room cold (or hot) again. If you keep the doors shut the heat stays in (or out of) the room, and you don't need to turn the heating up (or cooling down)... energy saving in simplest form!

#### ...INCLUDING THE FRIDGE DOOR

Fridges work similarly to rooms in your house, only you want to keep the fridge cold at all times. When you leave the fridge door open all of the cool air escapes into the kitchen, which means when the door is shut again the fridge has to work harder and use lots of energy to cool itself down again... you don't want your milk going off!

#### USE NATURAL LIGHTING, HEATING AND COOLING

The sun is an incredibly powerful heat source which quickly warms the air up, or cools it down if it's not around. On average, heating or cooling your home is approximately half of your electricity bill, so why not make use of the natural powers of the sun? As any cat knows, sunlight warms up the room a lot, so the key is to let the sunlight in when you want the warmth (like during the winter), and close the blinds or curtains when you don't (like during hot summer months). This is a simple task that could keep your house cool in the summer and warm in the winter without using any electricity.

