

# Language for ...

## the environment

**Age:** Young adult / Adult

**Level:** Intermediate

**Length:** 45–60 minutes

**Language Focus:** key vocabulary associated with environmental issues

**Skills:** speaking, listening

**Materials:** one copy of the worksheet per student, the audio file (downloaded in advance, or played via onestopenglish), laptops or devices for the warmer (if done in class)

**Aims:** to provide students with the language needed for talking about environmental issues and recycling habits



**Teaching tip:** Students could be invited to share their work on a class blog/website and create a word bank for use in the lesson. Some possible key words: *action, behaviour, damage, educate, environment, global, organization, planet, plastic, poison, pollute/pollution, protect/protection, recycle, reduce, sustainable/sustainability, waste*

### What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

- 1 The following can be done either before class (set as homework in the previous lesson) or as a warmer at the start of class. Divide the class in half. Tell one half that they are going to find out about World Environment Day and the other that they will find out about Earth Day. Students should then pair up with another member from the other group and share their findings. As a final part of this exercise, ask students to write down four key words that they think summarize the idea of Earth Day or World Environment Day.
- 2 Explain to students that they are now going to listen to a man (Derek) and a woman (Lizzie) answering questions on their recycling habits and thoughts about protecting the environment. Ensure that students understand the term *ecological footprint* (= the amount of energy, water, etc a person uses). Ask them to listen out for a particular eco-friendly thing that both speakers say that they don't do. Play the audio, and check the answer as a class. You may need to explain the meaning of *compost* (= to make soil from decaying vegetable/food waste). Do any students do this? What sort of things can be composted? Why is it not always practical? Elicit a brief discussion as a class.
- 3 Ask students to read the questions in exercise 2b in preparation. Play the audio. Give students time to complete the exercise and then check answers as a class.
- 4 Before completing exercise 2c, explain that you're going to play the audio a final time and that students will need to listen out for the correct words to complete each of the extracts. Ask them to read the sentences and briefly think about what the words might be. Play the audio, pausing if necessary. Once all students have completed the exercise, check the answers as a class.

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- 5 Exercise 2d highlights some further useful vocabulary from the audio. Tell students to complete it individually and compare answers. If they need extra support, allow them to use the audio transcript so that they can see words 1–6 in context (they are in the order that they appear – 1 and 2 are in the speakers' answers to the fourth question, 3–6 are in their answers to the final question). Check answers.
- 6 Ask students to carefully read the comments in exercise 3a and work individually to complete the exercise below it, comparing their answers with a partner. Check answers as a class.
- 7 Who do the class think has the biggest environmental footprint? (= Silvia). Ask them to think carefully about their everyday lives and then share with a partner an honest answer about who, right now, they are most like, Silvia or Beth. Is there anything about their own attitude or habits that they would like to change?
- 8 Exercise 3c highlights some common collocations associated with discussing environmental issues. Ask students to complete it in pairs, suggesting that they first complete any matches they immediately see so that they can be eliminated. Invite the fastest finishers to give their answers and check answers.
- 9 Exercise 3d puts the phrases in 3c in context. Ask them to complete it individually, giving less confident students explanations of any phrases they are unsure about, or allowing them to use the Macmillan Dictionary for help. Check answers as a class.
- 10 Ask students to interview two other class members using questions based on the audio. Tell them to note down their answers but remind them they don't need to write down everything they say, just make notes of the key words to help them remember for when they report back later. They should then also answer the questions for themselves, comparing their own habits with those of the people they interviewed. When they have done this, ask them to find a partner (preferably not someone they interviewed), and share their results and ideas. They should then work together to create a presentation on 'green living'. Give out paper for students to write down their ideas if they don't have any themselves. Remind them to look at vocabulary featured in earlier exercises and their lesson preparation to help them.
- 11 If time permits, or in a follow-up lesson, invite students to give their presentations to the rest of the class.
- 12 As a wind-up activity, ask students if they know what *upcycling* is. Does anyone in the class have an *upcycled* product? What is it, and what is it made from? Has anyone ever *upcycled* anything? Share ideas and experiences as a class.



**Teaching tip:** Students can read more about *upcycling* in a Macmillan Dictionary BuzzWord article at: [www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/upcycle.html](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/upcycle.html)

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### KEY:

**1a.** *Earth Day*, occurring annually on 22nd April, is a day on which events are held worldwide to support the protection of the environment. The first Earth day was in 1970. The theme in 2018 was 'end plastic pollution'.

*World Environment Day* is the UN's most important day for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the protection of the environment. In 2018, it was on 5th June. The first World Environment Day was in 1974. The theme in 2018 was 'beating plastic pollution'.

**1b.** students' own answers

**2a.** Neither of them compost their food waste.

- 2b.**
1. T
  2. F – he lives in a first-floor flat (2nd floor in US English)
  3. F – they both think it is difficult
  4. F – he uses public transport
  5. T
  6. T
  7. F – she thinks it will take a long time

- 2c.**
1. separate out
  2. plastic bags
  3. bin, recycling
  4. general waste
  5. packaging
  6. throwing, away

- 2d.**
1. b
  2. f
  3. d
  4. a
  5. c
  6. e

- 3a.**
1. Silvia
  2. Beth
  3. Beth
  4. Beth
  5. Silvia
  6. Silvia
  7. Beth

**3b.** Silvia; students' own answers

- 3c.**
1. e
  2. d
  3. f
  4. g
  5. a
  6. c
  7. b

- 3d.**
1. landfill site
  2. household waste
  3. natural resources
  4. renewable energy
  5. ozone layer
  6. global warming / climate change

**4.** students' own answers

**5.** *upcycling* = reusing objects or materials to create something with a higher value than the original object or materials

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### 1. Do you recycle your rubbish?

Derek: I do try. I separate out my typical food waste from paper, and that sort of thing.

Lizzie: I try to recycle as much as I can, but sometimes it's confusing about what can be recycled and what can't be recycled. But, mainly plastics and glass, yeah.

### 2. Are you happy with what you're doing or could you do more?

Lizzie: I'm quite happy with what I do. When I go to the supermarket I try not to take those little plastic bags if you're selecting fruit and vegetables, I try not to use them.

### 3. Do you 'compost' your food waste?

Derek: The short answer is no. I think it might be easier if you're, say, living in a house with a garden – I live in a first-floor flat, so I think that's not the ideal environment for composting. I don't think my neighbours would particularly like me for that!

Lizzie: I don't compost my food waste. There's nowhere to do it.

### 4. Where you live, is it easy or difficult to recycle?

Derek: I think it's difficult. In the block of flats where I live there's just one bin for recycling and everything goes in that. I think it should be separated out, but there's no provision for that. I don't think the area where I live in is particularly good at promoting recycling.

Lizzie: I think on the surface it's quite easy to recycle. You've got a separate bin for your recycling products to your general waste, so from that aspect it's relatively straightforward and simple.

### 5. Do you ever think about your ecological footprint? Does this affect what you buy? Or what you do?

Derek: I do think about it, yes. I think about it in terms of travelling into work – I use public transport. I like to walk, so I would probably walk rather than, say, take a taxi or something like that. I think companies can do a lot to try and help us, as well. And I'm thinking about some companies who when they do send you products that you've bought online there's a huge amount of packaging. I think they could do a bit more to reduce that.

Lizzie: I certainly don't make big life changes, so for example I will continue to travel by plane, but I do think about it on an everyday scale. I try not to waste food, for example. I try not to take loads of plastic bags at a supermarket. I try not to waste water. I try not to do all of those things.

### 6. Do you think attitudes to recycling are changing, and why? Are we doing enough?

Derek: I think attitudes are changing. There's the whole debate around the amount of plastic that ends up in the oceans now as well, and there's a *lot* being said about that. There's a lot still to be done, though, I think. Like, local councils in the UK need to step up and be more mindful of their recycling policies and helping residents to recycle better. So it needs to be a combined effort. I think people are more concerned about it and trying to do more about it, but we need help.

Lizzie: I think there are lots of things that are happening, we've got the revolution against coffee cups and continual throwaway plastic that's used every day. But it will, I think, obviously take a long time to kind of mitigate any of the negative effects that we've seen over the previous years where we've happily used plastic and not really thought about the impact of throwing that away every day.

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### 1 Warmer



**a.** You are going to find out about either Earth Day or World Environment Day. Use the internet to find answers to the following questions:

- What is Earth Day / World Environment Day, and when is it?

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- In what year was the first Earth Day / World Environment Day?

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- What is the theme of Earth Day / World Environment Day this year?

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Now partner with someone from the other group and tell them what you have found out.

**b.** What four words do you think best summarize *Earth Day / World Environment Day*?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

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### 2 Listening

- a. ☉ Listen to Derek and Lizzie talking about what they do to protect the environment. What do neither of them do?

\_\_\_\_\_

- b. ☉ Listen again and decide if the following sentences are true (T) or false (F).

1. Lizzie is sometimes unsure about what can and can't be recycled.
2. Derek lives in a house with a garden.
3. Derek and Lizzie both think recycling is easy where they live.
4. Derek drives to work.
5. Lizzie will book flights in the future.
6. Derek thinks that local governments should do more to help people recycle.
7. Lizzie thinks that the effects of plastic pollution can be dealt with quickly.

- c. ☉ Listen again and complete what the speakers say with the correct words.

1. Derek: 'I \_\_\_\_\_ my typical food waste from paper, and that sort of thing.'
2. Lizzie: 'When I go to the supermarket I try not to take those little \_\_\_\_\_ ...'
3. Derek: '... there's just one \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ and everything goes in that.'
4. Lizzie: 'You've got a separate bin for your recycling products to your \_\_\_\_\_.'
5. Derek: '... when they do send you products that you've bought online there's a huge amount of \_\_\_\_\_.'
6. Lizzie: '... we've happily used plastic and not really thought about the impact of \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ every day.'

- d. Match these words from the audio (1-6) with the words with a similar meaning (a-f).

- |                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. promote         | a. plan       |
| 2. straightforward | b. encourage  |
| 3. debate          | c. reduce     |
| 4. policy          | d. discussion |
| 5. mitigate        | e. effect     |
| 6. impact          | f. easy       |

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### 3 Language in use

- a. Read the comments from Silvia and Beth and then choose the best option to complete the statements below.

**Sylvia:**

I love going on holiday abroad, and all that stuff about climate change is not going to stop me buying cheap flights. There's also no way I would cycle or walk to work – I live quite near to the office but a five-minute journey by car is so much quicker and more convenient. I also buy exactly what I want from the supermarket. I really enjoy cooking, so I just get the things I need, whatever the time of year – the fact that a vegetable travelled right across the world really doesn't worry me. I do my best to recycle stuff but, I have to be honest, sometimes I'm lazy and things end up in the bin. One thing I really must do though is stop leaving lights on everywhere ...

**Beth:**

My flatmate and I are trying to be much greener. We're throwing much less food and rubbish away and trying to recycle and reuse as much as possible. We're also trying to remember to switch lights and our laptops off when we're not using them, which saves us money, too! When I go to the supermarket, I try not to use plastic bags and I've started to think a bit more carefully about packaging and where food comes from. It's too far for me to walk to work, so I usually cycle, and if the weather is bad I get the bus – in fact I'm thinking of selling my car because I don't use it very much these days.



1. Beth / Silvia has to buy petrol regularly.
2. Beth / Silvia has reduced her electricity bill.
3. Beth / Silvia takes her own shopping bags to the supermarket.
4. Beth / Silvia often uses public transport.
5. Beth / Silvia thinks that air travel is more important than the environment.
6. Beth / Silvia buys vegetables that are grown in other countries.
7. Beth / Silvia doesn't usually throw reusable things, like plastic bottles, away.

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**b Who has the biggest environmental footprint, Silvia or Beth? Think about what you did in the past month – who were you most like?**

**c Match the words to make phrases often used when talking about the environment.**

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. landfill  | a. layer     |
| 2. global    | b. resources |
| 3. renewable | c. change    |
| 4. household | d. warming   |
| 5. ozone     | e. site      |
| 6. climate   | f. energy    |
| 7. natural   | g. waste     |

**d Now complete the sentences below with phrases from exercise c. In one sentence, two answers are possible.**

- More than 80 per cent of the city's plastics, paper and general rubbish is still dumped in the local \_\_\_\_\_.
- We've made a real effort to be more green and are now recycling almost all of our \_\_\_\_\_.
- Wood, oil and other \_\_\_\_\_ are rapidly running out and cannot easily be replaced.
- Could \_\_\_\_\_ such as wind and solar power be the solution to the problem?
- Pollution in the air has caused holes to appear in the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Scientists universally agree that carbon dioxide pollution is a major cause of \_\_\_\_\_.

### 4 Communicate - 'green living'





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### Research and prepare a presentation.

Look again at these questions from the audio. Now use them to interview two of your classmates about their environmental footprints. How do their recycling and other habits compare with your own? Are there things that others do that you don't? Or vice versa?

Do you recycle your rubbish?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Do you compost your food waste?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Where you live, is it easy or difficult to recycle?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think about your environmental footprint? Does this affect what you buy or do?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think we're doing enough to protect the environment?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Share your survey results with someone else in the class. Together, create a presentation about 'green living' – what are some members of the class doing to protect the environment? Include a summary of useful tips, and add your thoughts on what more could be done by yourselves, people generally, or governments, organizations, etc.

### 5 Discuss - upcycling

Do you know what *upcycling* is? Have you ever bought an *upcycled* product?

#### Red Words

attitude***	behaviour***	damage***	environment***
environmental***	green***	plastic***	pollution***
protect**	recycle*	reduce***	waste***