



Grade Level: Elementary School

Subject Correlation: Social Studies, Math, Language Arts

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Explain the interdependence between humans and nature.
2. Describe why humans use natural resources and the problems and benefits associated with this use.
3. Appreciate the importance of environmental preservation.

Length of Lesson: One to two class periods

Outline (with times)

10 minutes

Introduction: What We Have Learned About Sustainability

As a class, spend a few minutes reviewing what you have studied and learned about in this unit regarding sustainability. Here are some sample review questions:

1. Name some natural resources used by humans for energy and some we use to support our daily lives.
2. Describe a *sustainable lifestyle*.
3. What are some things you can do on a daily basis in order to live more sustainably?
4. Describe three ways that humans change the environment and three ways that humans rely on the environment.

At least one hour

Activity: There Should Be A Rule!

In this activity, students will brainstorm as a class on environmental issues which are important to them in their daily lives. Do the students see a need for new rules that will help protect the environment and improve their own quality of life?

- Take a few minutes to brainstorm on environmental issues which the students think can be affected by creating new rules. (Topics may include recycling, littering, polluting, wasting materials, wasting electricity or water.) Write these ideas on the board in front of the class.
- Students will decide which topics are the most important to them by voting.

Option 1 recommended for older elementary students 2 days or more

- Divide the class into small groups based on which students want to work on a particular important environmental issue. Students will decide which group they want to be in (or teachers will assign groups).
- Working together, each group will create law designed to protect the environment. Should it be a city, state, or national law? Should the law encourage or discourage a particular action? Is there a penalty or reward to enforce the law? Does this new law amend an existing law or is it an altogether new idea? What is the goal of the law – what does it attempt to achieve? (Some teachers may find it best for students to complete this assignment for homework.)
- For information about how actual national legislation appears, visit the [Thomas Legislation Information](http://thomas.loc.gov) Web site at <http://thomas.loc.gov>. Students may need to research current laws relating to the environment for homework.
- Each group will have a turn presenting its new law to the class.
- As a class, students will decide which laws are appropriate to pursue. Maybe students will be motivated to write letters to their local or school newspaper addressing their concerns. Alternatively, they may write to their representatives on the local, state, or national level. Students may also want to present their ideas to the school administration, parent-teacher association, and/or the student council.

Option 2 best for younger elementary students

- After students have listed environmental issues and decided which are most important to them, the class can brainstorm together new rules for their classroom.
- When creating new rules, there are a few things the students should consider: Should the rule apply to just their class or the entire school? Does the rule discourage or encourage a particular action (positive or negative reinforcement)? Is there a penalty for disobeying the rule or a reward for obeying the new rule? If so, what should it be? What is the goal of the new rule – what does it attempt to achieve?
- Students can vote on whether they want to adopt the rule as a class. Maybe the students will present their ideas to the student council, parent-teacher association, or the school administration to consider adopting the rule for the entire student body of the school.
- The teacher and/or administration may decide to adopt the rule as well.

What else can I do for the Environment?

- Check your Ecological Footprint size (older students) – how does your daily routine effect your environment and the earth's natural resources? Visit the link to the [Ecological Footprint](http://www.earthday.net) from [Earth Day Network](http://www.earthday.net)'s home page, www.earthday.net.
- Retake the [Bobbie Bigfoot exam](#) to see if the results of the kids' quiz are different from before.
- Read the nine things you can do to "[Turn the Tide.](#)"
- Write letters to your local and school newspaper.
- Write letters to government representatives on the local, state, and national level. (To locate contact information for your representatives, visit [Thomas Legislative Information](http://thomas.loc.gov) at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.)
- Inform your friends and family about environmental issues and the simple things they can do on a daily basis to save the environment.
- Form a recycling team in school for paper, cans, plastics, and glass. Join a recycling program for printer cartridges, cell phones, batteries. Some groups even offer money so this program can raise money for your school or class project!

