

Revise, reuse, recycle: how to be a sustainable student

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

1 Warmer

Which of these activities will help the environment most? Put them in order from 1 (most helpful) to 6 (least helpful).

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1. _____ | a. giving up air travel |
| 2. _____ | b. getting rid of petrol engines |
| 3. _____ | c. stopping the destruction of rainforests |
| 4. _____ | d. eating less meat |
| 5. _____ | e. switching to nuclear energy |
| 6. _____ | f. getting rid of plastic packaging |

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

| | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| campus activism | fossil fuel demonstration | sustainable fresher | deforestation toiletries | leftovers impact |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|

1. A _____ is an occasion when a large group of people protest about something. (para 1)
2. A _____ is a student in their first year at university. (para 1)
3. _____ activities do not harm the environment. (para 1)
4. The _____ of something is the effect or influence it has. (para 2)
5. _____ is the process of removing trees from an area of land. (para 2)
6. A _____ is an area of land containing all the main buildings of a university. (para 3)
7. _____ is the food that remains at the end of a meal after you have finished eating. (para 4)
8. _____ are things such as soap, deodorant and toothpaste that you use to keep yourself clean. (para 7)
9. _____ is the process of participating in activities that try to achieve social or political change. (para 9)
10. A _____ is something such as coal or oil, made from decayed material from plants that lived thousands of years ago. (para 10)

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. How many young people around the world demonstrated for climate action recently?
2. In the UK, what four sectors have the largest environmental impact?
3. How much CO₂ per person does a return flight from Manchester to Berlin produce?
4. In how many countries does the average person produce less CO₂ than that flight?
5. When is Goldsmiths University in London planning to be carbon neutral?
6. What is the 'single-biggest way' a person can reduce their impact on the planet?

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16 October, 2019

- 1 As universities opened in September for a new year, around six million people across the world demonstrated on the streets in a historic week of climate action. The power of these youth-led demonstrations reflected the need for urgent action on the environment. So what now? For freshers just starting at university, deciding how to live your life is vital. Here are some ideas for how you can be sustainable as a student.

Eating

- 2 What you put on your plate is important: nearly a quarter of all greenhouse gases come from agriculture, and most of those are from meat and dairy. Cutting out meat is an easy way to reduce your carbon footprint, and you'll save money, too. A meat-free diet has been recommended as the "single-biggest way" an individual can reduce their impact on the planet. Meat and dairy consumption result in excessive land use, industrial emissions, methane, water use and deforestation.
- 3 Universities are now reacting to this: Goldsmiths in London has stopped the sale of all beef products on its campus as it tries to become carbon neutral by 2025. "The growing global call for organizations to take seriously their responsibilities for stopping climate change is impossible to ignore," a university spokesperson said.
- 4 Whatever you choose to eat, try to shop locally and seasonally. You'll probably avoid the plastic packaging you find in supermarkets, and these products will have a lower carbon footprint. If you have the space, try growing some of your own herbs or vegetables; it's amazing what you can get from just a window box planter. You can also reduce food waste by planning meals in advance, eating leftovers and sharing meals with friends.

Dressing

- 5 Forget fast fashion: keeping your clothes for as long as possible has much more than just monetary value. In the UK, clothing has the fourth-largest environmental impact after housing, transport and food. We throw away more than half of our fast-fashion items within less than a year.

- 6 So recycle your clothes or mend them. If you don't have those skills, go to a repair café where people mend clothes for free. Try clothes swaps with friends, and instead of buying new items, visit a charity or second-hand shop.

Living

- 7 For some freshers, this will be your first time living alone, which means doing your own washing, cooking and cleaning. There are simple ways you can change your habits to live more sustainably. Wash your clothes at a lower temperature, and choose a bamboo toothbrush or more eco-friendly sanitary products. Buy a clothes horse so you stop using a tumble drier (you'll be surprised how much your energy bill goes down). When shopping, use a zero-waste shop – Sheffield University has a shop selling dried food, household products, toiletries and kitchenware with no plastic packaging. Just take your own container.
- 8 Of course, the easiest way to make a difference is to cut out flying. A return trip from Manchester to Berlin produces about 214 kg of CO₂; there are 15 countries where the average person produces less CO₂ in a year. If you're planning a weekend away with new friends, try to travel by train or bus instead.

Campaigning

- 9 Individual actions are important, as they demonstrate commitment and provide an alternative to how we can live. But campaigning and activism are important, too. University campuses can be the perfect place for this: 91% of students are now concerned about climate change, according to a survey from the National Union of Students.
- 10 If you don't know where or how to start, see if there are any societies at your university like Extinction Rebellion or UK Student Climate Network. Look at People and Planet's university league – where is your university in the league table, and what needs to change? Students of the Fossil Free campaign, for example, have brought huge changes by telling their institutions they should stop using fossil fuels – and 76 UK universities have now committed to doing this.

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4 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

1. Students should buy their food in local shops to avoid plastic packaging.
2. They should always eat leftovers with friends.
3. They should throw away new clothes after a year.
4. They should buy clothes at charity or second-hand shops.
5. Washing clothes at a higher temperature is good for the environment.
6. The easiest way to make a difference is to stop flying.

5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *stop eating, using or doing something* (para 2)
2. a two-word adjectival phrase meaning *balancing the amount of greenhouse gases produced with actions designed to protect the environment* (para 3)
3. a two-word noun meaning *a long narrow container for growing plants on the shelf outside a window* (para 4)
4. an adjective meaning *able to be measured in money* (para 5)
5. a noun meaning *the process of giving one thing in exchange for another* (para 6)
6. a noun meaning *things that are used for preparing and eating food, for example knives, dishes and pans* (para 7)
7. a noun meaning *a strong belief that something is good and that you should support it* (para 9)
8. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *promise to do something* (para 10)

6 Two-word phrases

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. greenhouse | a. packaging |
| 2. climate | b. bill |
| 3. plastic | c. change |
| 4. carbon | d. products |
| 5. energy | e. gases |
| 6. household | f. footprint |

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7 Word-building

Complete the table using words from the text.

| | verb | noun |
|----|-------------|-----------|
| 1. | consume | |
| 2. | commit | |
| 3. | emit | |
| | noun | adjective |
| 4. | excess | |
| 5. | industry | |
| 6. | environment | |

8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- I don't see the point in reducing my carbon footprint. After all, what difference can one person make?
- The problem with cutting out meat and dairy is that you can't get all the necessary nutrients from a vegetarian or vegan diet.

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KEY

2 Key words

1. demonstration
2. fresher
3. sustainable
4. impact
5. deforestation
6. campus
7. leftovers
8. toiletries
9. activism
10. fossil fuel

3 Find the information

1. around six million
2. housing, transport, food, clothing
3. 214 kg
4. 15
5. by 2025
6. a meat-free diet

4 Comprehension check

1. T
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. F
6. T

5 Find the word

1. cut out
2. carbon neutral
3. window box
4. monetary
5. swap
6. kitchenware
7. commitment
8. commit to

6 Two-word phrases

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

7 Word-building

1. consumption
2. commitment
3. emission
4. excessive
5. industrial
6. environmental