Healthy Eating, Healthy Planet

by ReadWorks



BEING HUMAN

Humans are unlike any other animal on Earth. Our unique brains and bodies allow us to use the world's **resources** in ways no other animal can. No other animal can claim it's been to the bottom of the deepest ocean, to the top of the tallest mountain, *and* even up and out of Earth to the moon. On a simpler level, do you know of any animal that can build a two-story, single-family brick home with an attached garage?

Or just make one of the toilets in the house?

While exercising our profound abilities (like making toilet bowls), we have fundamentally changed our planet and, in many ways, we've made it *our* planet. We've cut down entire forests to construct towns and cities. We've replaced the trees and plants with buildings, and

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paved over the forest floor with roads. These activities help us live, but they also create pollution that affects the air we breathe and the water we drink.

EATING FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

Luckily, we can reduce the **impact** our activities have on the planet. One such activity is growing food. Think of all the land, equipment and work that go into a potato farm, an apple orchard or a cattle operation. By eating the right foods grown in the right way, we can limit the effects our farms and ranches have on the environment and eat our way to a healthier planet!

EAT LIKE SQUIRRELS

A great way to limit your **impact** on the planet is to follow other animals' way of eating. Squirrels, for instance, eat nuts found close to their tree house. Elephants eat the trees and bushes that grow around them. Killer whales eat the fish swimming with (and away!) from them. What these animals are doing is eating in-season and locally. We can do the same.

EAT IN-SEASON

Most of our favorite fruits and vegetables don't grow year-round and have their own **natural** season. Modern farming techniques have changed that, and we can have almost anything any time of the year. But when this produce is grown during its **natural** off-season, it may not taste the same. If we eat with our foods' **natural** seasons, we are eating in sync with nature.

EAT LOCALLY

Eating locally means consuming produce that is grown close to your home. It will definitely limit your choices, but it will ultimately lower the **impact** you and your eating habits have on the environment. An easy way to get local produce is to shop at a nearby farmer's market.

Love to eat grapes? Well, you can eat them in-season and locally...if you moved around the world a lot to follow the seasons! Grapes are a summer fruit so during the winter, many northern American supermarkets buy them from farmers in Chile, which is more than 4,000 miles away!

GROW YOUR OWN

One of the best things you can do to be a lower-impact animal is grow your own food. It may seem like a lot of work but people and communities all over the country grow some or all of

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their own food. There are many **benefits** to growing your own food.

One **benefit** is just learning about where your food comes from. Most produce found in your grocery store has stickers or signs that tell you where it was grown. Let's say you pick up a tomato and learn the tomato was grown hundreds of miles away before getting into your hand. If you grew a tomato in your backyard, school or local community garden, not only would you save a trip to the grocery store, you would save that tomato a long trip, and the planet a lot of **resources**.

Another **benefit** of growing your own food is that your food is fresher. It can take weeks for produce to get from the farm to your supermarket. By growing your own food, those weeks become just days, hours or even seconds. Now that's fresh!

COMMUNITY

When you buy food that is grown locally, you're also supporting your own community. The money you spend goes toward your neighbors' jobs and businesses and keeps your community strong and unique.

HEALTHY EATING, HEALTHY PLANET

Although human activities alter the planet, there are many things we can do to limit our **impact**. The **impact** of growing and raising our food on the planet is high but by eating locally, in-season, and even growing our own food, we can make the planet a better place while eating great food!

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Vocabulary

benefit

noun

definition: anything that does someone good or gives an advantage.

It is to your benefit to get a college education.

Spanish: beneficio, bien

impact

noun

definition: The impact of something is its effect or influence. If a movie has a strong impact on you, it does something to you. It makes you feel something strongly or it makes you think very much.

My dad said that his high school chemistry teacher had a strong impact on him. Because of this teacher, my dad learned to love chemistry, and that's why he became a teacher of chemistry himself.

Spanish: impacto

natural

adjective

definition: When something is natural, it has to do with nature or is part of the way nature works. When we talk about natural things, we are usually talking about things that are not made by humans.

Some bears live in zoos, but the forest is their natural home.

Plants growing from seeds is a natural process.

The label says that this bread is made with natural ingredients only.

Spanish: natural

resource

noun

definition: (plural) all of a country's wealth and its ways of producing wealth.

Oil is one of Iraq's most important natural resources.

Spanish: recurso

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1. Before you start reading...

Here are the vocabulary words that will be in this reading. Let's see how well you already know them.

Check the box that shows how well you know each word. It's ok if you don't know them yet (this is not graded)!

	Don't know it	Have heard of it but not sure of its meaning	Know something about its meaning	Know it well
benefit				
impact				

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2. Word Matcher

Every word has other words that have similar meanings or even the exact same meaning (these are called synonyms!). Draw a line from each similar word or synonym to the vocabulary word that it matches!

advantage boon use

benefit **impact**

effect influence consequence

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3. After reading and exploring the words through some activities...

Do you know these words better? Check the box that shows how well you know each word. It's ok if you don't know them yet (this is not graded)!

	Don't know it	Have heard of it but not sure of its meaning	Know something about its meaning	Know it well
benefit				
impact				

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Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. Why are humans unlike other animals?

A. because we only eat in-season and local food

B. because we do not use the earth's resources as much as other animals

C. because we can use the earth's resources in ways other animals cannot

D. because we do not have to grow our own food

2. The author tries to persuade the reader of what?

A. Eating locally and in-season is good for the planet.

B. Eating locally and in-season is dangerous for the planet.

C. Humans are the most resourceful animal on earth.

D. Humans should mimic killer whales and only eat fish.

3. We are able to eat many foods year-round thanks to modern farming techniques. What evidence supports this conclusion?

A. When produce is grown during its natural off-season, it may not taste the same.

B. If we eat with our foods' natural seasons, we are eating in sync with nature.

C. Most fruits and vegetables don't grow year-round and have their own natural season.

D. Many fruits and vegetables can be made to grow during their natural off-season.

4. . Read the following sentence: "Grapes are a summer fruit so during the winter, many northern American supermarkets buy them from farmers in Chile, which is more than 4,000 miles away!"

Based on this evidence, what conclusion can be made about grapes that are bought in the winter?

A. American supermarket owners must travel to Chile to buy the grapes in the winter.

B. The grapes bought in the winter must be shipped from Chile to America.

C. The grapes bought in the winter are less expensive than the grapes bought in the summer.

D. The grapes bought in the winter taste better than the grapes bought in the summer.

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5. What is this passage mostly about?

A. how humans can help the planet by growing food in big, industrial farms

B. the importance of shopping at your local farmer's market

C. how we can help the planet by growing our own food and eating locally and in-season

D. the ways in which humans are hurting the earth with their farming practices

6. Read the following sentences: "We've replaced the trees and plants with buildings, and paved over the forest floor with roads. These activities help us live, but they also create pollution that affects the air we breathe and the water we drink. Luckily, we can reduce the **impact** our activities have on the planet."

What does "**impact**" mean as used in the passage?

A. an effect

B. a type of food

C. a cause

D. a natural resource

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Humans alter the planet more than any other animal; _____, we should do our best to lessen our impact and keep the planet healthy.

A. especially

B. finally

C. on the other hand

D. therefore

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8. What does "eating locally" mean? Give an example of one way to eat locally.

9. What are the benefits of growing your own food? List two benefits from the passage.

10. What might happen to us, our communities, and the planet if we did not eat locally or in-season? Support your answer with details from the passage.

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