

Accidentally Green

Thinking about the environmental impact of our lifestyles and life choices is getting to be second nature for many of us. Everywhere we turn – in the classroom, in the media, on billboards and posters, even tucked in with our utility bills – there are reminders to turn off the lights, leave our cars at home, fix the drips in our faucets, and seal the air leaks in our windows and doors. There isn't much of a chance that we'll forget about what our living here on Earth means to the planet and its future.

Yet many people, especially young people, are living their lives with a low environmental impact without even knowing it, much less actually planning to do it. Take music, for example. A few years ago, young people were buying millions of CDs, unthinkingly creating industrial pollution and tons of plastic waste in the process. Now, a large proportion of music is downloaded digitally from computers, meaning that there are far fewer plastic discs being produced – not to mention those flimsy plastic cases that break the second time you open them. It's instant environmentalism – and convenience, too! It's even possible to recycle your MP3 player when it stops working, so the whole shift to digital music is an environmental boon.

Transportation is another area where young people have a positive impact – again, not entirely by choice. Cars are expensive to buy and increasingly expensive to run, and as a result most young people can't afford to drive. Inadvertently, they are forced to do all the things the environmentalists are insisting they should do anyway: walk, use public transportation or zip around on bicycles or motorbikes with very low fuel consumption and – in the best cases – low carbon emissions as well. If only we could get most of the population to stick to these forms of

transportation, global warming would be much less of an issue than it is now.

Housing is another area where lack of money has very positive environmental effects. Several students who share a small apartment are doing a lot more than they know to save resources and make the world a greener place. They use a lot less energy for heat and light, save on raw materials by living in older accommodation, and even help to protect the environment by using fewer chemicals to clean the place – if they bother to clean it at all.

Speaking of cleaning – young people who like to wear the same clothes day after day are doing the environment a favor as well. Washing machines use up huge amounts of energy and water, and the fewer clothes we wash, the better off the environment will be. So maybe you can add that to your arsenal of arguments as you grab that favorite sweatshirt out of the laundry room. "I'm doing my part to reduce waste and global warming!" sounds a lot more persuasive than, "Don't wash it now, Mom! I need to wear it tonight."



Read the article again and choose the correct answer.

1 According to the writer, most people ...

- are constantly being reminded of environmental issues.
- don't know much about environmental issues.
- aren't interested in environmental issues.
- are trying to improve the environment.

2 Many young people ...

- purposely try to reduce their environmental impact.
- have very wasteful lifestyles.
- are unaware of the positive consequences of their lifestyles.
- talk a lot about the environment.

3 According to the writer, the advantage of digital music players is that ...
a they are cheap.
b they produce better sound.
c they are easy to carry.
d their use produces less waste.

4 The writer suggests that young people ...
a would own cars if they could.
b prefer to drive smaller cars.
c make a conscious decision not to own cars.
d aren't very good drivers.

5 What main factor makes it unlikely that young people will own a car?
a environmental concerns
b expense
c lack of interest
d disapproval of peers

6 Why does the writer see student accommodation as a positive environmental factor?
a It is cheap to build.
b The rents are low.
c More people live in less space.
d It is easy to clean.

7 What does *they* (line 46) refer to?
a environmental impacts
b houses
c students in shared housing
d resources

8 What does the writer suggest about students' cleaning habits?
a Cleaning is not a priority.
b They prefer to clean without chemicals.
c They share cleaning duties.
d They clean regularly.

9 What is true about washing clothes?
a It uses a lot of energy.
b Young people don't like doing it.
c Young people do it too much.
d It uses little energy.

Find the words in the article and match them to the meanings.

impact second nature unthinkingly proportion
flimsy shift boon consumption arsenal persuasive

1 without considering beforehand *unthinkingly*
2 effect
3 convincing
4 part
5 not strong
6 advantage
7 collection (of weapons)
8 change
9 natural / instinctive
10 use of something

Complete the sentences with the words in 1.

1 We need to reduce our of gasoline – we use far too much.

2 He tried to convince me, but his arguments were not very

3 A large of the population now uses the Internet on a daily basis.

4 The CD case was so that it broke as soon as I opened it.

5 A from watching videos to watching DVDs took place in the 1990s.

6 It is for young people to be concerned about the environment because they have heard so much about it.

7 When she asked him if she looked tired, he said that she did.

8 The of global warming is still unclear, but it is almost certain that it will be serious.

9 Having the new car factory built here was a real to the town as it created hundreds of new jobs.

10 He has such a large of convincing arguments that he can get his parents to agree to almost anything.