

The human factor

Ask yourself this question: If we were given a new planet, would we treat it better than this one? Hopefully, your answer would be 'yes'. But there is no Planet B. So what's the next best thing? Well, probably to take a long, hard look at how human activity has affected the Earth. We urgently need to look for ways to avoid the negative impact of our activity and to make **conservation** and sustainability a priority. Reducing our carbon footprint is a crucial part of that. Let's start by taking a look at some of the main factors involved.

- 1** Around 15% of man-made CO₂ emissions come from road travel, and lots can be done to reduce this impact. For example, we can all avoid making short journeys by car – a cold engine uses almost double the amount of fuel. If you can, cycle, walk or use public transport instead.



- 2** Compared to other modes of transport, air travel has a bigger environmental impact. To help the environment, fly less and take the train, which produces less CO₂, or you can **offset** the **greenhouse gases** you emit as a result of your flight, for example, by giving money to replant trees, which will then absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere.



- 3** Avoid buying food grown on the other side of the world. Buying food which has been grown and sourced locally creates a much smaller carbon footprint because less transport is needed to get it to us. Similarly, eating more vegetables and less meat will mean that less CO₂ is released into the atmosphere.

- 4** With 'fast fashion', clothes are made as quickly and cheaply as possible. People buy more clothes because they are cheaper without expecting to wear them for as long. Global textile production produces 1.2 billion tonnes of CO₂ every year. Next time you see some jeans you really want, ask yourself: should I buy a more expensive pair that will last longer and help to keep my carbon footprint down?

- 5** At home, you can reduce your carbon footprint and save money on your bills too. Switch off or unplug any device you are not using. Shower instead of taking a bath, and turn off the tap while cleaning your teeth. Use shorter programmes on your washing machine and hang your clothes outside to dry.

PROJECT

A plan to reduce your carbon footprint

Work in groups to create a plan to reduce your carbon footprint. Use these steps and the *Useful language* to help you.

- 1 Look up the average carbon footprint for someone in your country.
- 2 Find a good online carbon footprint calculator in English and use it to calculate your carbon footprint.
- 3 Use the calculations and results to identify ways to reduce your carbon footprint. Think about food, travel, fashion, recycling, etc.
- 4 Create a plan of how your group members can reduce their carbon footprints.
- 5 Decide how you want to present your plan: a presentation, poster, etc.

Present your plan to the class.



- 2** Read the texts on the following page. Match choices (A–H) to (1–5). There are three choices you do not need to use.



Which text suggests ...

- A never taking a plane to travel anywhere?
- B choosing regional farm products?
- C ways of reducing your expenses?
- D taking positive action to compensate for your carbon footprint?
- E recycling the clothes you no longer wear?
- F making important choices that will affect your wardrobe?
- G avoiding driving unless your destination is far away?
- H growing your own food to eat?

- 3** Match the words. Then write them next to the meanings.

renewable	friendly
carbon	power
fossil	warming
solar	energy
global	fuels
carbon	dioxide
environmentally	footprint

- 0 a type of power that can be used again and again and never runs out: renewable energy
- 1 energy sources produced under the ground over millions of years, e.g. oil and gas: _____
- 2 a gradual increase in world temperatures caused by polluting gases: _____
- 3 the amount of carbon dioxide that someone produces from using energy: _____
- 4 a gas that humans breathe out: _____
- 5 in a way that doesn't damage the air, land or water: _____
- 6 energy produced from sunshine: _____

