

ENVIRONMENT

ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR AGES 7-14

Introduction

Many young people want to know more about their world and how they can take action to make it a better place. We may not know what the future holds for today's young people, but we can help them to develop the knowledge, skills and values they need to understand and engage with the world.

It's the 50th anniversary of [Earth Day](#) this week. Whilst in the immediate term we need to act together to tackle the devastating impacts of the coronavirus, particularly on the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, the climate emergency remains a huge and urgent threat to people around the world.

The theme for Earth Day 2020 is 'Climate action'. Climate change is affecting millions of the world's poorest people, right now. More frequent and extreme weather – such as storms and droughts – are destroying homes, and wrecking lives and livelihoods. We can all play a vital role in saving our planet and its people.

Inspired by some of the communities Oxfam works with around the globe, we've put together five ideas for action that you and your child might like to take at home to join others in tackling the climate crisis.



Photo: Alixandra Buck/Oxfam

A Learn-Think-Act approach

Oxfam suggests a **Learn-Think-Act** approach to give young people the opportunity to learn about issues, think about how to solve them, and act as responsible global citizens. This approach includes opportunities for young people to foster new skills, develop and express their own values and opinions, and recognise the viewpoints of others.

There are numerous ways to take action and it is up to young people themselves to choose how they wish to respond. However, you will probably find that your child will want to respond to issues such as the climate emergency in active ways. Taking action can be an appropriate and empowering response for young people as they experience being part of bringing about change that improves the lives of people and our planet.

See the **Further learning** section for links to Oxfam Education resources to help young people to explore the causes and human impact of the climate crisis and consider what action can be taken in response.

Set your recycling creativity free

- Here's a fun activity to channel children's creativity at the same time as helping them to learn about the importance of reducing, reusing and recycling.
- Ask your child to go on a hunt for any empty packaging at home – cardboard boxes, bottle tops, foil – make sure that items are clean and free from sharp points and edges. Then let them loose on making their own waste masterpieces – toys, games, musical instruments... the opportunities are endless!
- For a bit of inspiration, check out this [video](#) from a refugee camp in Jordan where children have been busy designing and making toys from waste. It was part of a wider recycling project to keep waste out of landfill and provide a small income to some camp residents. Some of these amazing creations were entered in an international competition!
- Encourage your child to think about the environmental issues of waste and packaging:
 - Reduce – How could people avoid using packaging like this in the first place? Repairing rather than replacing things is one way of buying less 'stuff'. Buying bulk items rather than lots of smaller ones is another option.
 - Reuse – What else could empty packaging be used for? For example, plastic bottles and rolls of newspaper could be used as plant pots; empty glass jars could be used as food containers.
 - Recycle – What packaging can be recycled and what can't? How much of your household's weekly waste is non-recyclable? Older children could research what the different recycling symbols on household packaging mean.
- What will your child create from the 'rubbish' they find?

Harness the power of worms

- Science shows that there have been changes in the global climate since the early 1900s, and that these changes, alongside future climate change predicted over the next century, are largely due to human activities and excessive emissions of greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide) which are warming up the Earth. This is climate change, often referred to as 'global warming'.

- [Global food wastage causes more carbon emissions than the majority of countries in the world. 37% of carbon emissions from food waste](#) happen at consumption stage (when we eat our food), so we can all make a big difference by wasting less food at home.
- One way you and your child could take action is by composting your food waste. Most gardens have space for a compost heap and you don't need much equipment to get going. If you don't have a garden, you could always use an indoor worm composting bin or try [building your own mini wormery](#).
- There are lots of online sources of useful information, practical tips and fun activities for teaching children about the importance of composting. Here is [a link from the RSPB](#) to get you started.
- Micro-organisms are an essential part of the composting process but other creatures such as worms also play an important role. Oxfam knows that worms are capable of amazing things. We have been working with communities to provide specially designed toilets which use worms to decompose human waste and turn it into clean, safe fertiliser. Toilets have been installed in Sierra Leone and adapted for use in communal camps in Myanmar, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, with the aim of building hundreds more. See this [video](#) to find out more.

Carry out a home energy audit

- With links to science and maths, here's an activity to help your child to think about possible ways to reduce our environmental impact at home.
- Ask your child to go around the home and make a list of the different ways in which energy is used, for example to turn on lights, heat the home, cook or power a phone or tablet. You could print off the **Home energy audit** activity sheet for them to use or else they could create their own table on a piece of paper to record their findings.
- Now ask them to think of ways in which they and everyone in the household could use energy more efficiently. For example, you could look at ways to better insulate the home and keep it cosy with less heating; make little posters to remind people in the household to turn off lights and appliances; or replace less efficient light bulbs with more efficient LED ones. They could write their ideas on the **Home energy audit** activity sheet. The [Energy Saving Trust](#) has lots of useful suggestions.



Photo: Nana Kofi Acquah/Oxfam

- Perhaps you could help them take gas and electricity meter readings and then challenge the household to reduce their usage. Not only will you be helping to reduce your carbon footprints, you'll also save money in the process!

Make do and mend

- 8% of global carbon emissions come from [the clothing and footwear industries](#) (more than aviation and shipping combined). Switching from new to second hand clothes can make a significant difference to your carbon footprint.
- Every new thing we buy has a carbon footprint, so getting furniture, electricals and clothes repaired can give them a longer life and reduce your environmental impact.
- Oxfam has been doing the reusing and reselling thing since the 1940s, when the first Oxfam Shop opened. Then, in 1974, Oxfam became the first national charity to develop its own facility for recycling and reusing clothes that never sends clothes to landfill.



- [Wastesaver](#) now handles 12,000 tonnes of textiles every year. First, they make their way down huge conveyor belts; where our clothing experts sort through it by hand, to decide where it should go next. Next, the things are sent or sold on to the most suitable market - never to landfill. Every item can be used to make money for our poverty-busting work, including being sold on [Oxfam's Online Shop](#), in our Oxfam Festival Shops, or selling them onto fashion designers who restyle garments and reuse fabrics. Damaged or low-grade items can be sold to recycling traders so they can, for instance, be turned into car soundproofing or mattress stuffing.

- Here are a few ideas for reducing the amount of 'stuff' in our world:
 - Have a clear out and put aside the clothes, books and toys you no longer need or want.*
 - Mend, upcycle or repair something to give it a new lease of life. Check out this [video](#) for simple instructions to upcycle a pair of jeans.
 - Reuse some unwanted clothes or fabric by making it into something else. It's easy to search for ideas online, see the **Make your own bunting** resource sheet for some initial inspiration.

*Due to the coronavirus outbreak we have temporarily closed all our high street shops to protect the safety of our staff, volunteers and shoppers. We are unable to accept donations of any items for the time being, so please don't leave anything outside shops or in donation banks. Please hold onto items you wish to donate for now. Once it's safe to do so, we'd love to receive them.

Spread the word

- Finally, one last important way of taking action is by raising awareness of an issue among others.
- Jessy and Isaac are two young people living in Malawi. They are proud to help raise awareness of how climate change is impacting people's lives now and why urgent action is needed. Together with their headteacher, they took part in a visit to the UK in 2019. Jessy and Isaac met with other young people to share experiences and ideas about the impacts of the climate crisis and what action is needed. They also took part in a climate rally in London. Watch the [video](#) to find out more:
- We might all be confined to our homes and gardens right now but there are still ways of spreading the word. Talking to family and friends online or over the phone is one way to start –share some facts about the causes and impacts of the climate crisis; talk about thoughts and feelings about climate change; discuss what action you could take.
- Perhaps your child could talk to an elderly relative about how the environment and our lifestyles have changed during their lifetime. See this [lesson plan from The World's Largest Lesson](#) for some ideas for engaging in a conversation about climate change.
- The Climate Coalition are asking people to take action by making a green heart and putting it in their window to show that they are hopeful for a cleaner, greener future. [Find out more](#).

Further learning

- **Making Sense of the Climate Emergency**

With inspiring case studies and creative ideas for taking action, this cross-curricular resource for ages 8–14 helps learners to: make sense of the climate crisis; reflect on their values in life; discuss thoughts and feelings; and feel empowered to act – both individually and together with others.

www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/making-sense-of-the-climate-emergency

- **Climate Challenge**

These popular Oxfam education resources for ages 7–14 use engaging tools and activities to explore the causes and human impact of climate change and consider what action can be taken in response. Activities link to several curriculum areas including English, science and geography.

www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate-challenge-7-11

www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate-challenge-11-14

- **Stories of Climate Change**

These real-life stories from Malawi and quick activity ideas help learners aged 9–14 to think about who is most vulnerable to climate change and investigate how communities are responding.

www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/stories-of-climate-change

- **Global Citizenship in the Classroom**

This practical guide is filled with tools and ideas to increase participation and develop a global perspective. For example, an ‘Issue tree’ (see p.13) could be a useful way of exploring the causes and impacts of the climate crisis, as well as thinking critically about potential solutions.

www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/global-citizenship-in-the-classroom-a-guide-for-teachers

- **NASA’s Climate Kids**

This website provides information, activities and games to support learning about the science of climate change and sustainability: climatekids.nasa.gov

- **Earth Day at Home**

A collection of ideas to inspire meaningful actions for Earth Day’s 50th anniversary.

www.earthday.org/earth-day-at-home

- **Young Climate Warriors**

Young Climate Warriors provides fun, weekly challenges, that help children tackle climate change. Teachers and families can sign up to receive free resources each week.

www.youngclimatewarriors.org

- Find out more about the action being taken in the UK to campaign against climate change and how individuals and communities can get involved.

The Climate Coalition: www.theclimatecoalition.org

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland: www.stopclimatechaos.scot

Stop Climate Chaos Cymru: stopclimatechaos.cymru

Home energy audit

Activity sheet

Energy use	Your energy saving ideas
Lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make posters to remind people in your household to turn off lights and appliances.• Replace less efficient light bulbs with more efficient LED ones.

Make your own bunting!

Resource sheet

For this activity, you will need scissors, string, a stapler with staples, and some unwanted clothes or fabric.



STEP 1

Cut some stretches of fabric from your unwanted clothes which you can use to make your bunting flags.

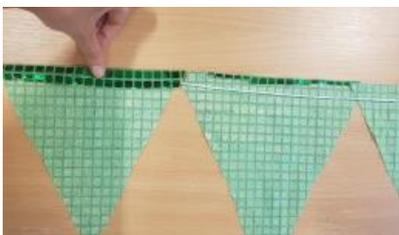


STEP 2

Cut a triangle shape from a piece of card. You can use this as a template for your bunting flags, to ensure they are all the same size. Place the template on top of your fabric and cut around it to create flags for your bunting. The more flags you cut, the longer your bunting will be.

STEP 3

Place your flags in a line, face down. Cut a long piece of string and place it down across the top of your flags.



STEP 4

Fold the top of each flag over the string, so that it is covered.



STEP 5

Staple the folds down, to seal the string across the back of each flag.



...FINISHED!

Your bunting is now ready to hang!