

The Climate Connection



Lesson plan

Our Family Footprint

Environmental impact of family life

Online lesson plan

Suitable for use with secondary learners of English

CEFR level B2 and above

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Our Family Footprint

Topic

The environmental impact of family life

Learning outcomes

- Describe the environmental impact of family life
- Apply critical thinking and collaborative working techniques
- Seek agreement and compromises in group discussions
- Use specific vocabulary related to the family footprint
- Ask sensitive questions about environmentally responsible behaviour

Age group and level

13-17 (B2)

Time

65-70 minutes or two shorter lessons: Lesson 1 – Stage 1; Lesson 2 – Stages 2 & 3

Materials

- Presentation (PowerPoint or PDF)
- Student worksheets 1 and 2
- Vocabulary sheet

Introduction

The climate emergency begins at home, and self-awareness of the impact of home life on the environment is very important. In this lesson, learners will develop their language and 21st-century skills in critical thinking, and reaching agreement and compromise in discussions. They will then



implement a questionnaire with some sensitive questions about home life and its environmental issues.

Procedure

Stage one: What are the environmental impacts of our families and homes?

Before the class	Upload the student worksheet and vocabulary sheet to an online file sharing site (Google Drive, Dropbox, One Drive, etc.). Make sure the documents are shareable to anyone who has the link. Alternatively, you can share the documents via a Messenger application during the lesson.
1. Introduce the topic (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Display slide 1 of the class PowerPoint or PDF. ● Briefly check that learners are comfortable with the term ‘footprint’ as a way of describing an environmental impact. The Cambridge dictionary definition is: ‘the effect that a person, company, activity, etc. has on the environment, for example the amount of natural resources that they use and the amount of harmful gases that they produce.’ ● Ask the learners if they can think of ways their family life impacts the environment. Accept any answers at a class level either orally or as text in the chat function. ● Display slide 2 of the class PowerPoint or PDF and briefly go through the aims of the lesson.
2. Group discussion (20 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Display slide 3 of the class PowerPoint or PDF. Ask learners to copy the vocabulary into their notebooks. If time is short, divide the class into four groups and give each group of learners a different category i.e. transport and travel, waste, energy, food. ● If possible, divide the class into breakout groups of around five learners, or if not, into pairs working with private messaging.



- Ask learners to look at the new vocabulary and discuss the possible meanings within their group or pair.
- After around 5 minutes, bring learners back to the main room.
- **Display slides 4 and 5 of the class PowerPoint or PDF.**
- Go through the definitions with learners to check understanding and help with any new items. Be ready to answer any questions orally or in the chat box.
- **At this point, share the links to student worksheet 1 and the vocabulary sheet with the learners using the chat box.**
- Once learners have the worksheet and vocabulary sheet, tell the learners that they are going to work in groups again, this time to think again about how family life impacts the environment and how the impact can be reduced.
- **Display slide 6 of the class PowerPoint or PDF.** Discuss the comments. How do these actions impact the environment? How can the impact be reduced? For example, driving to the supermarket produces emissions or poisonous gases. We could walk or take a bus.
- Ask learners to make a list of ways families can reduce their environmental impact in their groups or pairs in the breakout rooms. The vocabulary sheet and the examples on the student worksheet should give them ideas.
- After around 5 minutes, bring learners back into the main room as a whole class. Ask each group or pair to appoint a leader to share their ideas with the rest of the class orally or in the chat box when you ask.
- Possible ideas might include the ones below, but accept all ideas:
 - car emissions – using public transport or walking as much as possible
 - impact of electricity use – using solar energy and reducing consumption
 - waste issues – recycling and fixing ‘old’ items
 - food miles – buying locally sourced food.

Stage two: Questionnaire design



3. Writing a questionnaire (15-20 mins)

- Tell the learners they are going to work in their groups or pairs to design a questionnaire about the impact of family life on the environment, and ways of reducing this impact.
- **Display slide 7 of the class PowerPoint or PDF** and explain that sometimes these issues can be sensitive, and people might feel embarrassed or guilty about, for example, how much paper and plastic they waste, when they could reuse and recycle instead. Because of this we may need to use sensitive questions.
- **Display slide 8 of the class PowerPoint or PDF** with examples of questions and ask them to copy them, or share the link to student worksheet 2. Explain that some of the questions are designed to ask about sensitive information.
- Ask the learners to say which questions they think are sensitive.
The sensitive ones are:
 - Is it all right to discuss why you don't buy locally produced food?
 - Do you mind if I ask about your electricity use?
 - How do you feel about trying car-sharing?
- Ask learners how they know which questions are sensitive. Remind them that sensitive questions are less direct.
- **Display slide 9 of the class PowerPoint or PDF.** Briefly remind learners of the three sentence heads that are used for sensitive questions and of their question stems.
- Explain that each group or pair need to discuss and agree six questions, including three new examples, that they could ask a family about their environmental impact. Remind them that this discussion and agreement may require some compromises. They should write down the questions in the form of a questionnaire.
- Put learners into breakout rooms in their groups.
- After 5–10 minutes, bring learners back to the main room. Ask two or three groups or pairs to tell the class about their discussions and if any



compromises were made to help them reach agreement about the questions they chose. Remind them why compromise is important in discussions, as a way to make the best decisions.

Stage three: Using the questionnaire and feedback

4. Using the questionnaire and feedback (20 mins)

- Ask the learners to appoint a representative from their group.
- If you are using the breakout rooms, you should 'move' the representatives to visit one or two other rooms (depending on the time available) and ask their questions to individuals in the group about their family footprint. If they are in private messaging pairs, they should swap with other pairs. Remind them about sensitivity. They should make notes on the outcomes. All groups or pairs should be 'visited' at least once.
- Move all learners back to their original groups or pairs to discuss and choose the three most interesting things they discovered from the other groups. They should be ready to present their ideas to the whole class.
- As a whole class, ask each group or pair to share at least one (more if time permits) of the interesting things they discussed.

Extension activity

- If time permits, learners can go back to their groups and discuss and agree a list of actions that they think their families could take. They can also discuss if they think families would accept the advice they were given. Ask learners to try and discuss the issues with their families at home

Contributed by

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