



I. Taking action towards personal sustainability

Concepts

- ◆ We all need to take responsibility to improve our environment
- ◆ Completing a personal environmental audit is a great way to find out what you can do to work towards sustainability
- ◆ Set yourself environmental goals and work to achieve them
- ◆ Your environmental footprint is a measure of the amount of land required to maintain your lifestyle

Getting started

“There are too many environmental problems.” “I can't make a difference on my own.” “Nobody else cares about the environment!” “Why should I give up my quality of life if others don't?” These are all common reasons why people avoid taking action to help the environment. However, taking action to help the environment can be as simple as making small changes to your daily routine. Educators who work to reduce their own impact on the environment provide a good example to their students.

Identifying environmental problem areas

To find out how you can reduce your impact on the environment, you can complete an environmental audit. An environmental audit is a quick questionnaire that asks you questions about your daily routine. Audits can be used to investigate your water use, electricity use, or the general environmental performance of your home. Try some of the audits that are listed in the resources section of this chapter. After completing an audit you can find out ways that you can reduce your impact on the environment.

Completing an environmental audit

One of the simplest environmental audits has been included with this chapter and comes from the Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Boards web site:

http://www.onkaparinga.net/downloads/water_audit.pdf

This water use audit will help you determine ways that you can reduce water use around the home. Detailed instructions are provided with the audit which takes about

one hour to complete. In brief, this audit asks you a range of questions about your water use around the home. As you answer each question you add up your score. If you scored less than the maximum then you can read through the 'Water smart actions' to identify the steps you can take to reduce your water usage and protect the environment. Once you have identified those goals on which you would like to improve it is time to take action.

Personal action

The most important part of environmental awareness is to turn it into action. This can be as simple as using the results of your environmental audit to set between 5 and 10 environmental goals to achieve over the next 12 months. Environmental goals can be simple statements such as the following:

- ◆ fix all the leaky taps in my house
- ◆ use an egg timer to help limit my showers to 5 minutes
- ◆ buy and install a water saver shower head

Set your goals and work to achieve them. This simple process will reduce your impact on the environment. As you set new environmental goals each year, you will come closer to living sustainably.

Environmental footprint

When browsing some environmental audit resources you may see the term environmental footprint. An environmental footprint is the amount of land needed to sustain your individual lifestyle indefinitely. People that consume more resources will have a larger environmental footprint. Aim to reduce your environmental footprint and you will help to improve our environment. More details on environmental footprints can be found at:

http://www.abc.net.au/science/planetslayer/greenhouse_use_calc.htm

Lesson ideas

- ◆ Visit the planet slayer web page: http://www.abc.net.au/science/planetslayer/greenhouse_use_calc.htm Students can use this environmental audit web page to calculate their greenhouse environmental footprint. Students can use the results of this audit to set environmental goals for the coming year. At the end of the year encourage students to evaluate their progress and to set new goals for the following year



- ♦ Ask your students to complete the home water audit at:
http://www.onkaparinga.net/downloads/water_audit.pdf
- ♦ Students can complete the eco spider web activity (*How sustainable are we?*) included in this chapter. This is a simple family environmental audit activity that involves graphing answers on a web shaped graph. A large web indicates that the student has an eco friendly family. Students should consider a range of ways to increase their 'Eco spider web'.
- ♦ Students can use their water audit results to come up with 5 goals for their family to save water. Ask them to work with their parents to develop the water saving goals and then at the end of the year get them to report back to the class on how their water saving goals are going.

Recommended resources

http://www.abc.net.au/science/planetslayer/greenhouse_use_calc.htm

Greenhouse environmental footprint website that would be fun for kids. Warning, there are exploding cartoon pigs on this site.

<http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/Eco-footprint/Calculator.asp>

An online ecological footprint calculator from the EPA in Victoria. Find out how much of the earth you use to sustain your life.

<http://www.donlotter.com/earthaware.html>

Earth Aware, personal environmental audit software. Download this freeware version of this environmental audit program and find out your environmental rating. This program will help you identify areas of your lifestyle that are impacting on the environment and provide you with suggestions to improve your behaviour. You can complete this as a program on your computer. The software is free to individuals, but schools should pay the licence fee.

http://www.onkaparinga.net/downloads/water_audit.pdf

Home water audit to find out how water efficient your home is. Downloadable paper version.

http://www.agl.com.au/content/athome/energy_advice/sa/index.html

The AGL home energy use Audit. Full of tips to save on energy bills and help the environment.

