

Year of Planet Earth



The United Nations declared 2008 as the International Year of Planet Earth, hoping to capture people's imagination with the exciting world we live in. More importantly, it aims to use that knowledge to make the Earth a safer, healthier and more sustainable place to live. The topic is a big one—from the molten rock deep within the Earth's core to the mountains and oceans around us. The ideas on this Purple Page are only a start.....

It's time to hunt for Treasure

Can you discover the Treasure hidden in the world around you? Set out on a Treasure Hunt, looking for interesting objects and places. Each Guide will need a Record Sheet, where they can draw or describe their treasure. Here are some suggestions for items on the Record Sheet:

- ◆ Something underneath something else
- ◆ Something shiny
- ◆ Something you have never seen before
- ◆ Something in a dark place
- ◆ Something you can only just reach
- ◆ Something that feels bumpy
- ◆ Something in a wet place
- ◆ Something you can't pick up
- ◆ Something above something else
- ◆ Something that is one colour
- ◆ Something than smells nice
- ◆ Something between two things



Pet rocks

Collect a number of different rocks. Use a magnifying glass to look at the surface of each rock. Look for signs of weathering such as cracks, scratches, lines, chips or areas of smoothness.

Pick out one special rock. Give this rock a name. Try to imagine its life history.....where did it live? how old is it? what adventures has it had? how did it get the marks on its surface? has it been through any storms?

Make a home for your pet, or a book entitled "This is Your Life".

Did you know.....

For every garbage bag of waste, about 20kg of carbon dioxide is released into the air

If every office worker in Australia used 1 less staple a day, that would save 88.3 tones of steel every year

Recycling an aluminum can saves 0.7kg of carbon gas emissions compared to making a new one

Draughts can increase your home heating costs by 20%

Leaving a computer an monitor on all the time is like driving your car an extra 3500km every year

Every dollar you spend equates to about 1.6kg of greenhouse gas emissions

Australians throw away on average 165kg per year of packaging (less than half is recycled)

Turning the temperature down 1°C will save about 3% of your heating costs

How energy efficient is your Guide hall?

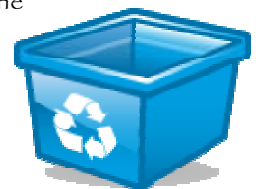
Even though you are only there for a few hours a week, it is worthwhile going on an expedition through your hall to find opportunities to save energy. And with your new found skills, you could then up-size and try it out at home. Share your stories and brainstorm solutions. Here are some simple ideas to get you started....

- ✎ Find draughts, gaps and cracks - use incense sticks because the flowing air will move the smoke (as long as you hold it still) or shine a torch and have someone outside looking to see if the light shines through. The hardware store has crack sealing products that are easy to use
- ✎ Make a door snake (material strip filled with saw dust) to stop draughts under the door
- ✎ Check for water leaks around doors and windows (just after heavy rain is best) – most can be fixed with a silicon sealant (or similar product)
- ✎ Defrost the freezer and clean out the fridge, especially around the seals—so they close properly and work most efficiently
- ✎ Replace burnt out light bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent bulbs
- ✎ Turn off any appliances that are on stand-by and not being used
(please remember to check with the owner before you do anything to the building though!)

As a group, you could also come up with some ideas on how you could save energy, especially in winter when it is cold. Some ideas might be to all bring a warm jumper, keep the door closed to keep the heat in, and turn lights off when they aren't needed.

Waste Relay

Each team needs a set of waste disposal containers (garbage bin, recycling bin, compost bin, items for re-use) and a series of items that would be disposed of in each way. If you haven't got real bins and lots of items, simply make a set of cards with items written on them, and signs for each disposal container. Include some items that are easy (like milk cartons, veggie peelings, plastic, second-hand clothes) and some harder ones (like magazines, plastic take-away food dish). Set up the containers at one end of the hall, and explain each different one. The teams line up at the other end, with the items. Start the relay, with Guides taking turns to dispose of an item. Once all the teams have finished, see how their waste collection compares. Talk about alternatives to garbage that is headed for landfill, including re-using, choosing items that don't have so much packaging, composting.



Back to the Earth

How long does it take for everyday items to decompose? Decomposition is the process that occurs when items are broken down by water and bugs that live in the soil, and their nutrients returned to the earth. Organic items like plants and animals decompose much quicker than man-made objects like plastics.

Find a place outside where you can dig a few holes that will remain undisturbed for several weeks. Collect a range of different household objects like:

- Lettuce leaf (or something else quite thin)
- Apple core (fruit/veg item that is more solid)
- A piece of paper (nothing too shiny)
- A piece of plastic packaging (like a plastic bag or wrapper)
- A piece of Styrofoam (or another larger, artificial item)

Dig a hole for each item about 10cm deep. Place the item in the hole and cover over with soil. Pat the soil down so the item is well covered. Mark each hole with a paddle pop stick with the name on it, so you can find it later.

In about a month, dig up the items and see the changes. The first three items are bio-degradable. Even though the other two are made from things that came from the earth, the building blocks have been changed so much that it takes a long time for them to be broken down in the soil.



Climate Change

Climate Change
is a word we hear almost every day.

The scientists, politicians and economists are continuously talking about it, and trying to decide whether it is real or who is to blame. But while the "grown-ups" argue about whether it is real, or caused by the actions of humans, the younger generation has moved forward and are focused on solutions and building a better world. It is amazing how perceptive children are about what's going on around them. Whether climate change is real or not, most of the things we can do to manage it also help the environment more generally.

How environmentally friendly are you?

There is a Tasmanian website (www.up2me.com.au) that you can download a diary sheet to record your usage over a week, for energy, travel and waste, and then add up how much you use. The results can be surprising. There are then lots of tips about how to reduce your consumption. You could decide on 10 ways to improve, then measure it again and see how much difference it makes.

For older Guides and interested Adults

Calculate your Household Carbon Emissions—this lets you know how much carbon is released in supporting your family, including by energy, transport, food, waste etc

Simple www.climatechange.tas.gov.au

Detailed www.environment.gov.au/settlements/gwci/calculator.html

Calculate your Ecological Footprint—the amount of land and ocean required to sustain your consumption and absorb your waste at www.myfootprint.org

CHALLENGE
Measure your usage for a week. Identify ways to improve your environmental performance. After a month, measure your usage again, and see who has improved the most.

Could you run a Carbon Neutral camp or sleep-over? (or even a Guide meeting) You would need to do a bit of research (try the above websites), but here are some ideas to get you started:

- Transport—walk or cycle to the meeting place, car-pool or catch public transport
- Heating—use extra clothes or blankets rather than lots of heaters
- Water—maybe you could set limits and try to survive on 40 liters per person per day (plus the toilet)
- Food—where does the food come from, how much packaging, how is it cooked (or can it be eaten raw like in a salad)
- Energy—turn off lights when not needed (or have fun in the dark), play games that don't need music, TV or electricity
- Waste—minimize the waste you produce, (you could even weight it) and start a compost heap

What is Climate Change? Is it anything to do with Global Warming?

Scientists have shown that the average global temperature has risen over the last century, and the rate of warming has increased more over the last few decades. This is where the term "global warming" comes from. "Climate change" is just another less scary phrase!



Some human activities release carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide into the atmosphere. The Earth is like a green-house, and these gases form a layer that traps heat near the surface of the earth—making the globe warm up. Most greenhouse gases are released in the burning of fossil fuels—like coal to generate electricity and petrol in cars.

Some of the problems caused by climate change are rising sea levels (which is a problem for small islands), melting of the polar ice caps, changes in weather patterns causing more storms, bushfires and droughts.

The environment, global warming and water conservation featured in the top 6 concerns in the recent "Guides Australia Say....." survey. And now WAGGGS have included "we can save our planet" as a theme too! While as an organization Guiding is representing the concerns of our young women, we also seek to empower girls and young women to speak out for themselves. Advocacy is about people being able to take a stand on issues that are important, in order to influence others and bring about positive action.

So how do we facilitate this?

Get involved

Participate in events like Koala Day, Clean Up Australia Day, National Tree Day

Speak out

Let decision makers know if there is an issue on your mind. Approach your local Council if there is something you feel strongly about.

Celebrate your achievements

If you have done something fantastic, or achieved something great, tell the world. Write to your local politicians and encourage them to support it with further action—you are setting a great example. Get your local media involved. Invite community figures to visit.

Work in partnership

Got a bigger project in mind? Be realistic, and find a partner to help out—maybe a service club, local Council, Scouts, Schools—would be glad to join you. Remember that you can often achieve more together than either of you would have managed alone.

Other resources that you might find useful:

- Previous Purple Pages (eg 2008 Year of Sanitation, Enviro Antics, Exploring the Environment, Ideas for Cans)
- Girl Guides Tasmania Resource Bags
- Program & activity ideas from the Girl Guides Tasmania webpage
- Participate in SunShip Earth or SunShip III camps (girls and leaders are welcome)

Girls Worldwide Say “we can save our planet”

So, what can you do? Well, the adage “think global, act local” really is a good place to start. Why not explore some of the following options.....

-  Create sculptures out of junk—collect items that would otherwise be thrown out, or visit your local tip-shop for inspiration
-  Collect mobile phones for recycling, or aluminum cans that you can cash in and raise money
-  Make environmentally friendly Christmas presents—cards with oddment craft scraps, calico/material bags for shopping, homemade jam or biscuits, a living Christmas tree
-  Make a list of things to do instead of watching TV, or using the computer, MP3 player or other electrical appliances
-  Visit an op-shop, arrange a clothes swap or create your own fashions from junk/environmentally friendly products (eg jewelry from scrap metal, clothes from patchwork)
-  Discover how far your food has traveled. Many items in the supermarket have been transported hundreds or thousands of kilometers, some from overseas. Think about how much petrol is used to get your food from the farm to your plate.
-  Investigate whether there are organic foods available in your local area. Hold a taster session, and see if they are any difference to the products you are use to
-  Set up a car pool or walking bus to travel to and from Guide events
-  Start a garden, grow some plants in pots—home grown fruit and veggies are especially tasty, and things like strawberries, lettuce and tomatoes grow fairly quickly
-  Make a compost bin or worm farm. If a full-size option is not viable, you can make a mini compost in a milk carton. Add a window of clear plastic in one side so you can watch the changes happen
-  Have a vegetarian banquet—meat has a higher impact on the environment than vegetarian food, so try out new recipes, and experiment with some new ingredients