

SPOTLIGHT ACTIVITY 5: HOW ARE CHILDREN TAKING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE?

AIM: Children consider how their daily actions can contribute towards climate change or the efforts to mitigate it for the future and explore how they can take personal action as well as influence government action.

Preparation:

- Review Unicef Q&A Video for World Environment Day
- Prepare a sample of the footprint worksheets to demonstrate

Facilitator Materials & Resources

- Activity PowerPoint 5: Tracking Your Footprint
- Unicef [Q&A Video for World Environment Day](https://www.unicef.org/WorldEnvironmentDay)
[unicef.org/WorldEnvironmentDay](https://www.unicef.org/WorldEnvironmentDay)

Facilitator Materials & Resources

- 2 pieces of A4 paper
- Pen or pencil for tracing

Facilitator Introduction

Climate change is a very complex issue that many scientists have been studying and tracking over time in order to learn more about what is causing global heating and how we create solutions. These solutions can be both big actions that the government must take, as well as small actions that we can take as individuals.

When scientists talk about the CO₂ that is released into the atmosphere because of one person's energy needs, they call this a "carbon footprint". Every one of us leaves a footprint on the climate through our daily actions. We can also take actions that may contribute to climate change, or we can take actions that offset more harmful actions.

These actions affect our own environment. Our actions also affect the environments of others around the world because of the interactions and links between climate and ecosystems and people, which we learned about in the last activity.

For example, pollution that we create from all of the cars on the road not only affects us locally, this pollution collects in the atmosphere with other greenhouse gases and contributes to the global heating that causes problems in faraway parts of the world. Small actions like riding your bicycle to the shops instead of going in the car are small steps that you can take to decrease your own footprint. While it may not seem like a very big change, imagine if everyone in the world stopped driving their cars on short trips.

What are some actions that you do that impact the environment?

Prompt children to think about using plastics, recycling, walking or cycling instead of driving in a car, saving energy by turning off lights and the television when we aren't using them. Explain that the things that we do that contribute to global warming aren't always bad things – but we should be aware of what alternatives exist and be conscious of our own actions.



SPOTLIGHT ACTIVITY 5: PART 1: TRACKING YOUR CLIMATE FOOTPRINT

1. Explain to the children that we are going to spend the next 2-3 days (depending upon how much time there is between sessions) paying attention to the actions we take every day that can either add to or help offset the climate problems we have been learning about.
2. Using one piece of paper, instruct each child to use a pen or pencil to trace their left foot (shoes on or off is okay); on a second piece of paper have children trace their right foot. (In a classroom, children can complete this in pairs. For virtual learning, children can do the activity with a sibling or a trusted adult if they need help). If a child has a disability and is not able to trace their foot, they can draw a foot, or draw a Paddington paw print.
3. Have the children label one footprint page with a plus (+) and one with a (-).
4. Instruct the children that they will use these two footprints to track the actions that they do every day – like riding their bike, riding in a car, leaving the lights or the television on when they aren't in use.

On the footprint with the +, children should write a list every day of the actions that they take that help improve the environment.

On the page with the -, children should write actions they take that are not good for the environment and are good for our health.

Remind children that the negative actions aren't all bad things – but we want to be aware of how much we are doing these things and try to replace these actions with positive alternatives as much as possible because this improves the environment and helps protect the health of children around the world.

5. After tracking activities for 2-3 days (or completing a mindmap as a one class activity option), have the children report back on their learnings using the following discussion questions:

- Which list was bigger: your + footprint or your - footprint? What are some of the actions that were recorded on each one of the footprints?
- What actions could you take to move items from your - footprint to your + footprint?
- How do the actions you listed in your + footprint improve your health and the environment?
- How are/were your actions on this list different during the time you've spent at home during the coronavirus pandemic? e.g. Did you ride your bicycle more and drive your car less?





Children taking part in a Unicef UK Clean Air Action Day. © Unicef

SPOTLIGHT ACTIVITY 5: PART 2: IMAGINING SOLUTIONS

1. Building on the discussion from Part 1, explain that the actions we can each take to help keep our environment healthy are very important, but small actions alone are not enough. Explain that there is a spectrum of solutions required to combat climate change and ensure future generations have a healthy planet. Demonstrate (using the footprint analogy on the spectrum) that positive personal actions help to ensure that we don't contribute to making the climate situation worse. However, we also need big innovative ideas for alternative ways of living, and we need governments to take serious action to reduce global heating and ensure the rights of children in the longer term.
2. Children can contribute to these solutions in two ways: 1) by continuing to take action to keep our environment healthy and improve it as much as possible; and 2) by using your voice and your right to have your opinion taken seriously by government (Article 12) to call on governments and businesses to tackle climate change and put children's rights first.
3. Finish the activity by showing the [Unicef Q&A Video for World Environment Day](https://www.unicef.org/uk/clean-air-action-day) [unicef.org/WorldEnvironmentDay](https://www.unicef.org/uk/WorldEnvironmentDay)
4. Reflect on the young people who spoke in the video about reimagining the future post-coronavirus. Thinking about what changes you could make locally or changes you would ask the UK government to commit to nationally or internationally, come up with ten climate solutions (individually or in a group).