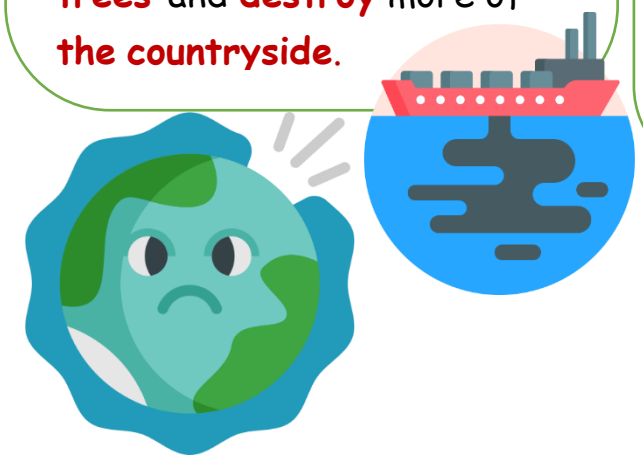
Environmental problems

Many people believe that the way we live our lives today is having an extremely bad effect on the environment. Here are some examples of environmental problems and the vocabulary we need to talk about them.

CARS

The biggest **polluter** today is the car. **Exhaust fumes** are the main cause of bad **air quality**, which can make people feel ill and have difficulty breathing. This problem is especially bad in some cities, where, on days when there is not much wind, a brown layer of **smog** hangs in the air. The number of cars is increasing every year. Governments then build new roads to try to improve the situation, but this means that they **cut down the trees** and **destroy** more of **the countryside**.

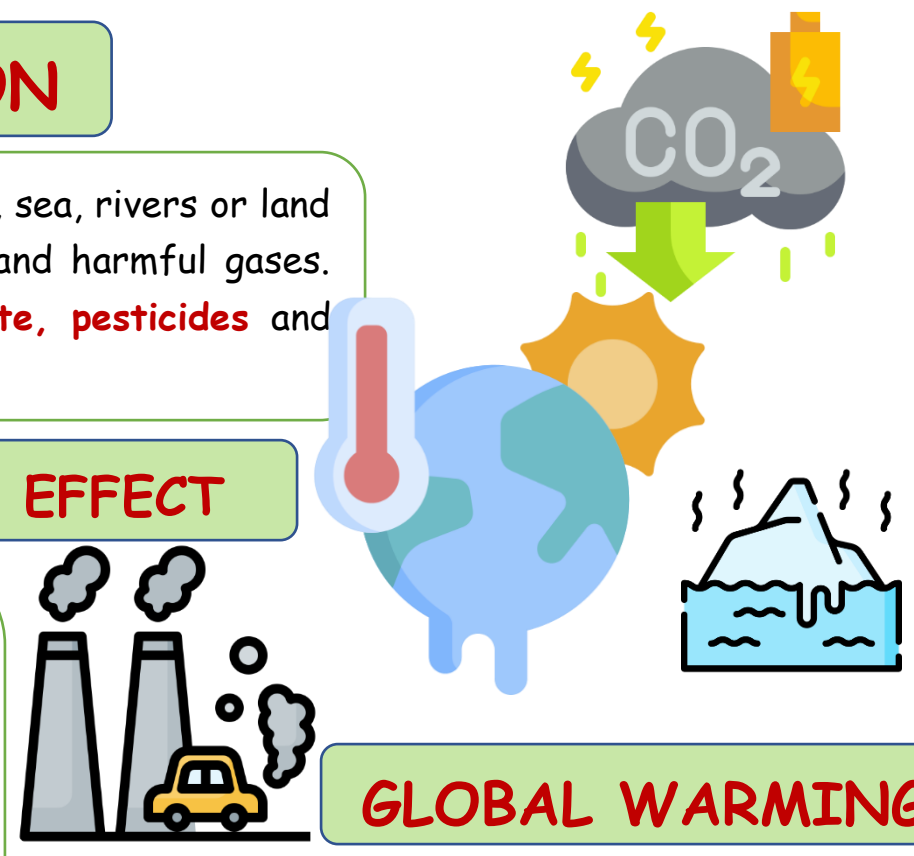


POLLUTION

Pollution is damage to the air, sea, rivers or land caused by chemicals, waste and harmful gases. **Pollutants** include toxic **waste, pesticides** and **fertilizers.**

THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

is caused by harmful gases known as greenhouse gases. These gases are produced when we burn fuels, especially coal burned in power stations to make electricity. These gases go up into the Earth's atmosphere and stop heat from leaving the Earth.



GLOBAL WARMING

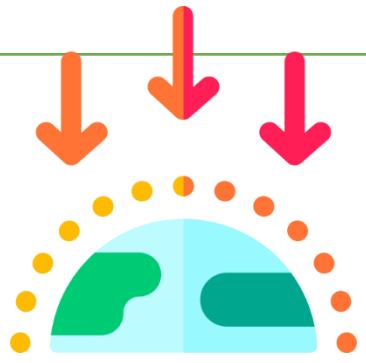
Because the heat cannot escape, the Earth is getting warmer. This is known as **GLOBAL WARMING**. Global warming may cause the **ice** at the North Pole and South Pole to **melt** and **sea levels** to **rise**, leading to serious flooding in many parts of the world. In other places temperature will rise and there will be less rain, turning more of the land into desert.

ACID RAIN

Acid rain is rain that is harmful to the environment because it contains **acids** from factory smoke. **Acid rain causes damage to** trees, rivers and buildings.

HOLES IN THE OZONE LAYER

The ozone layer is a layer of gases that protects us from the **ultraviolet light** from the sun, which can have a **harmful effect** on animals, and **causes skin cancer** in humans. The ozone layer is being damaged by chemicals and when the holes appear in the ozone layer, harmful light from the sun reaches the Earth.



THE DESTRUCTION OF HABITATS

All over the world, wildlife is being **threatened** because **habitats** and **woodlands** are being destroyed. **Rainforests** are being cut down so that people can use the land to grow crops. Many **species** of animals have become **extinct** and many more are **endangered**.

SAVE OUR PLANET

WASTE

Recycle it!

Every day we throw away millions of tonnes of rubbish. Half of this is paper that we can use again. A typical family in Europe and America throws away more than one tonne of rubbish each year, but we can recycle most of this. If we recycle things, we can save money, energy and natural resources. We can recycle paper, glass, plastic, cans, metals, …

Reduce it!

A lot of rubbish that we throw away is not biodegradable. Plastic, metals and chemicals will not disappear for hundreds of years. We also produce a lot of unnecessary things, such as packaging. All of this pollutes the air, the land and the water. Pollution will be a very big problem in the future. We must avoid using non-biodegradable material. We must also reduce the amount of unnecessary things that we produce and use. In shops, for example, we can say "No, thanks!" to plastic bags.

Save it!

Many natural resources are not renewable. Coal, gas, oil, metals and minerals, for example, will finish one day. Other resources take a long time to grow, such as trees, or they are not always available, such as water. We have to reduce the amount of resources and energy that we use. We also have to find alternative ways to make energy. We can use the sun, the wind, the sea and the heat of the Earth.