

EARTH'S KIDS

Educational & support resources for parents, teachers, and kids

## Activities & Ideas for Celebrating Earth Day

# KIDS CLUB

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### Go For a Nature Walk

Celebrate Earth Day by taking a nature walk. Go for a walk around the block or in a local park. Or you may wish to plan a trip to a nearby state or federal park or open space preserve. Would you prefer to enjoy some quiet solitude out in nature, or take family and friends along to share the sights? Be sure to give some thought to conserving fossil fuels today as well. Walk, take public transportation, or carpool to your nature walk location. If you have young kids along, remember that a ride on a bus or train can be an exciting part of the outing, and a chance to talk about conserving gasoline and cutting down on pollution.

If you do have kids along, make sure they stay on the trails during the walk. Tell them that tromping off the path may seem more exciting, but it stomps down the little plants trying to grow. Also, remind kids to be considerate of all wildlife, and to leave things as they were when they arrived. As the saying goes: take only pictures and leave only footprints. Naturally if you visit a gift shop, please purchase environmentally friendly souvenirs only. You can ask where it came from and how it was made.

Nature walks are a great opportunity to promote fitness, improve emotional well being, and learn more about our natural world. Visit us at <http://www.earthskids.com/kidzclub.aspx> for more information about the benefits of getting kids out in nature or to find out more about **starting your own KIDS CLUB chapter**.

**Need ideas for a great nature walk?** Check out our tips and picks for Places To Go with Kids!  
<http://www.earthskids.com/togo.aspx>



### Plant A Tree

Trees give us oxygen to breathe. They clean our air and help slow global warming. They shade our homes and help shelter them from wind and rain. They cut down on soil erosion, preserving the good topsoil we need for farming and preventing landslides. They provide homes for birds and other animals. And they make our homes, schools, and neighborhoods more beautiful and enjoyable. Planting a tree is a great thing to do for yourself and for the earth. Plant a tree today!



## Grow Something in the Garden!

Growing something in the garden is a great way to feel closer to nature. It can also be good exercise and a powerful way to reduce stress. Plus gardening is a fun and easy way to access your own organic fruits and vegetables! Did you know that the closer to home your food grows the less fossil fuels are burned to get it to you? What could be closer than your own backyard! But there are a few things to keep in mind: select drought tolerant plants whenever possible to

cut down on water use, mulch to further conserve water, never use herbicides or pesticides, use organic fertilizers -- or better yet compost to create your own soil enhancer! Be aware that the manufacturing of non-organic fertilizers (like Miracle-Gro) creates vast quantities of toxic waste byproducts that poison the environment. For more family gardening information, check out the E.K. Gardening Page: <http://www.earthskids.com/garden.aspx>



## Conserve Water

At present, humans use about 30% of the world's total supply of clean **accessible water**. By 2025, that value may reach 70%. Many areas are already experiencing a water deficit. The time to adopt water conservation habits is *now*. You can do your part by watering your garden in the evening to allow maximum absorption and minimal evaporation. Install a water-saving shower head to use about 30% less water. Fix leaky faucets and install sink aerators. Install a low flush toilet that saves water with each flush. Wash only full loads of clothes. And don't wash your clothes unless they actually need it. Wearing them a few hours may not make them soiled enough to require washing, so don't be a water waster! And never leave water running from the hose or tap unless absolutely necessary. For example, when brushing your teeth, turn the water off once you've wet your toothbrush.



## Learn About Insects

Over use of pesticide is becoming a big problem. Scientists are even worried that we might have future food shortages because so many bees and other pollinating insects have been died due to something called "colony collapse". As early as 1996 the U.S. Department of Agriculture was reporting the death of as much as 90% of the honey bees in some areas. Wild bees and other pollinators, like butterflies, are also affected. Although scientific debate about the cause of colony collapse continues, it has been proven that at least some hives have died because of pesticide contamination.

So take this day to learn and talk about all the useful jobs that insects do in our world. Then discuss other ways to handle the problems with bugs that often cause us to reach for the insecticide. **Pledge to eliminate or drastically reduce pesticide usage in your home and yard!** See <http://www.vanishingbees.com> to learn why saving our 6 legged friends could be the key to *our* future.



## Conserve Electricity & Fossil Fuels

Electricity is produced primarily by power plants that burn fossil fuels like coal or petroleum. So the more electricity we use, the more Co2 is released into the atmosphere, causing pollution and the Greenhouse Effect - also known as Global Warming. Also, digging or drilling for fossil fuels threatens wild animals and fish and their habitats, as well as human health.

So turn off lights and electronics when you leave the room or otherwise don't need them on. Limit the use of electric space heaters and air conditioning. Put outside spotlights on motion detectors, so they turn on as needed rather than staying on all the time. Replace energy guzzling appliances, like that old refrigerator or water heater, with ones that are energy efficient (look for the energy star rating sticker). And change your light bulbs to high efficiency bulbs. Plan errands done with the car so as to cut down on extra (back and forth) driving miles. How many errands can you pack into your route? Better still, try riding your bike to school or work or take public transportation. To really "green" your home and lessen your eco footprint, have solar panels installed to **reduce your dependency on fossil fuels!**



## Eat less meat

We've all heard that animals that eat high on the food chain need a lot more territory to get their nutritional needs fulfilled. This applies to humans as well. In fact, it takes about twice as much land per ton of food to produce meat. With more than 6 billion of us on the planet now, this is fast becoming a habitat gobbling catastrophe. But luckily **you don't have to become a vegetarian to help out in this area.** Just cut back a bit and try new things. How about starting with "Meatless Mondays"? The simple truth is that a **plant-based diet requires much less energy, land, and other resources** to produce the same protein and calories as a diet based heavily on animal products. So just like we've figured out it's a bad idea to live on fast food value meals, now it's time to pay attention to how much healthier we'd be if we were eating more fresh fruits and veggies, wholesome *complex* carbohydrates, and less meat. It helps our bodies, our pocket books, and the planet. Everybody wins!



## Save Our Oceans

There are many who consider the oceans the largest driving force that makes life possible on Earth. Covering 70% of the Earth's surface, they contain the majority of living things. This makes them a treasure trove of biodiversity. The oceans are a vital part of the water cycle that brings rain to our crops and forests, and drinking water to our cities. Just as importantly the ocean also produces much of the oxygen upon which all human beings, and animals, depend. Also, the oceans provide fish and shellfish and other vital resources as well as jobs for millions. In fact in the United States alone, 1 out of 6 jobs are marine related.

**However, a variety of crises threaten our oceans.** Pollution, over fishing, and global warming are some of the chief threats. And over all these concerns looms the growing problem of **overfishing**, the capture of so many fish that there are not enough left to spawn sufficient *new* fish. Overfishing is creating an alarming downward spiral that is already causing fishing industries in many parts of the world to crash. The end result: not enough fish and shellfish to feed humans or the other creatures that take food from the ocean. We're talking about whales, seals, sea lions, dolphins, birds, and of course polar bears, all which depend on the ocean for food. Spend some time thinking about the seas today through books, documentaries, or a visit to the ocean. Then visit the Earth's Kids Marine Science page to find out what you can do to help marine life now: [http://www.earthskids.com/ek\\_science-marine.htm](http://www.earthskids.com/ek_science-marine.htm)



## Re-use, Repurpose, Recycle, and Buy Recycled!

We all know about putting plastic bottles and aluminum cans in the recycling bin, to go eventually to the recycling center where it will be shredded up or melted down to be used again. But there are other ways to recycle too. Packing peanuts can be used over and over again, or even turned into something new, like an art collage. In addition, donating things we're not using anymore (clothes, toys, furniture and etc.) to those who will use them is also a kind of recycling. We can also take something that's worn out and fix it up so we, or someone else, can still use it. Recycling, re-using, and repurposing causes us to use fewer raw resources like timber, petroleum, and metals. It also generally uses less energy to harvest and process them than starting over with new materials. And of course, it cuts down on the amount of stuff piling up in landfills - and that helps the environment and ourselves.

Try to think of ways to cut down on how much stuff you throw out each day, each week, each year. One way is to avoid buying things you don't really need in the first place, or that are flimsy, because they tend to get thrown within a few years. When you do shop, choose products that don't come with a lot of extra packaging or that has packaging which can be easily recycled. Look around your home, or in your garbage pail, and consider how to expand your recycling. For example, junk mail can be recycled. Or better yet write to bulk mail senders and ask them to remove you from their mailing lists. Produce scraps from fruits and vegetables can be recycled, through composting. Plastic grocery bags can also be recycled. But since there's only so little demand for low grade recycled plastic, go one step better and switch to reusable shopping bags. And lastly, before you toss something in the garbage, ask yourself: "Could this be recycled? Repaired? Repurposed?" What other garbage cutting tips can you think of? Mail your idea to: [earthskids@earthlink.net](mailto:earthskids@earthlink.net)



## Tune In!

**Learn to meditate!** Did you know: meditation isn't some "new age" thing, nor is it just something for particular religions. For starters, meditation has been practiced in some form or another in just about *every* religion on Earth. But when it comes to meditation it doesn't matter what your spiritual tradition is -- or if you have one.

All you *really* have to do is be caring enough to sit down, quiet down, and practice tuning into your inner being in a way that fosters calm and allows your own deepest inspiration to come forth. You can use a traditional technique that makes sense to you. For example, many people like some form of breath counting or silently repeating a soothing phrase. Or you can develop your own practice, such as sitting or walking quietly in nature.

For information about **upcoming mediation classes for parents**, email [earthskids@earthlink.net](mailto:earthskids@earthlink.net). Or visit <http://www.earthskids.com/compassion.aspx>

## Challenges!

- **Ask your family what you can do together to make your home more environmentally friendly!** Review this handout for ideas.
- **Go grocery shopping and see if what goes in the cart is eco-friendly:** i.e. very little packaging, containers can be recycled, food stuff grown or raised organically, much more plant-based food than animal products, etc.
- **Think about how much gasoline is used to fuel your car each week using this formula:** miles per week multiplied by your car's miles per gallon fuel efficiency. How many gallons of gasoline does your car consume each week? What could you do to reduce that figure?
- **Figure out how much garbage your family throws out and target ways to reduce your output:** [http://www.ecokids.ca/pub/fun\\_n\\_games/printables/activities/assets/envionmental/garbage.pdf](http://www.ecokids.ca/pub/fun_n_games/printables/activities/assets/envionmental/garbage.pdf)

## Online Activities

- Calculate your Eco Footprint at <http://www.lowimpactliving.com/pages/impact-calculator/impact-calculator> and get ideas for awesome home eco projects that you can do to reduce your ecological footprint.
- **Help kids learn more about Fossil Fuels:** [http://www.ecokids.ca/pub/eco\\_info/topics/energy/ecostats/index.cfm](http://www.ecokids.ca/pub/eco_info/topics/energy/ecostats/index.cfm)
- **Earth Day Games for Kids.**
  - <http://resources.kaboose.com/games/earthday.html>
  - <http://www.seussville.com/games/lorax/>
- **Visit Earth's Kids online for even more Earth Day ideas:** <http://www.earthskids.com/earthday.htm>
- **Share *your* ideas with *us* on FACEBOOK!** Just search for Earth's Kids or the Earth's Kids KIDS CLUB and post your ideas for greening your lifestyle, helping kids connect with nature, or making positive change for the environment. Parents, ask us how you can **join us on our next family nature walk!**