

# What Is Sustainability?

## What Sustainability Means

When talking about the environment, the dictionary defines the term 'sustainability' as: 'avoidance of the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance'.

**avoidance:** The action of keeping away from or not doing something.

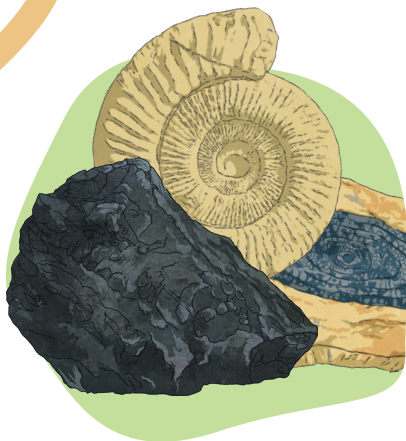
**depletion:** Making the number or quantity of something smaller.

**maintain:** To keep at the same level.

**ecological:** Living organisms and their surroundings.

This means that humans must interact with the environment in a way that does not use so many of Earth's resources that there are no more left for people in the future.

## Infinite VS Finite?



Some of Earth's resources are infinite. This means that we have an unlimited supply of them because they can always be made again. Solar panels supply us with infinite, renewable energy because the Sun will shine for as long as humans exist.

Some of the resources on Earth are finite. This means that we will never be able to replace them once they have been used up. **Fossil fuels** are not sustainable because there is no way that they can be made again while humans are alive.

## Living Sustainably

Sustainability is important in lots of different parts of our lives and every person has a part to play in being more sustainable.

## Electricity



Currently, less than 30% of the electricity created worldwide is made from renewable sources. This means that the majority of energy still comes from fossil fuels like coal and natural gas but it is estimated that there will be none left by 2060.

### Stop and Think

- What kind of energy does your home or school use? How could you find out?
- What renewable energy sources are being explored in your country?

The number of humans on Earth continues to rise so more and more land is continually needed for producing the food we need to survive. Growing or rearing food takes a lot of space and this is leading to rapid deforestation. It is thought that humans cut down 1.3 million square kilometres of forest between 1990 and 2016. Not only have many rare types of plants and animals become extinct, supplies of clean water to some countries have been seriously affected.

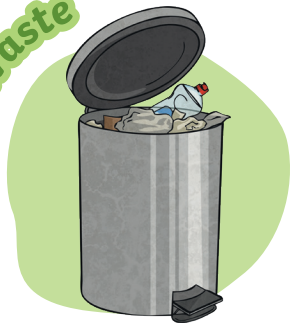
### Stop and Think

- Think about your local area and its green spaces. Are more homes being built on fields or forests near you?
- What could the impact be if people stop being able to access clean water?

## Deforestation



## Waste



With so many people living on Earth, a huge amount of waste is produced every day. Despite up to 75% of waste being recyclable, only around 30% of it is actually recycled. Waste items that are not recycled go to landfill, where they can remain forever.

### Stop and Think

- When you throw things away at home or at school, are they recycled?
- What is one change that you could make to reduce the amount of waste that you create?

## Glossary

**deforestation:** The action of clearing a wide area of trees.

**extinct:** No longer in existence.

**fossil fuels:** Fuels like coal and gas that were formed from plants and animals that lived millions of years ago.

# Questions

1. **Some of Earth's resources are infinite.**

What does this mean? Tick one.

- We have an unlimited supply of them.
- We will never be able to replace them.
- They are important in lots of different parts of our lives.
- They come from fossil fuels.

2. What percentage of electricity created worldwide currently comes from renewable sources? Tick one.

- less than 30%
- less than 40%
- less than 50%
- less than 60%

3. Look at the section called **Electricity**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'thought'.

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4. Fill in the missing words.

Not only have many rare types of plants and animals become \_\_\_\_\_, supplies of clean water to some countries have been seriously \_\_\_\_\_.

5. What percentage of waste is recyclable?

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# Questions

6. Summarise why using fossil fuels to produce electricity is not sustainable.

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7. Choose one question from a **Stop and Think** box and answer it fully.

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8. Imagine what Earth could be like in the future if humans do not start living more sustainably. How do you think Earth will differ from how it is now?

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