

RESOURCE LIBRARY  
ACTIVITY : 35 MINS

## Introduction to Earth Day

Students read and discuss a magazine article about Earth Day. They discuss environmental problems that affect their daily lives and brainstorm ways to make every day Earth Day by making small changes that have a big impact on the environment.

### GRADES

3 - 5

### SUBJECTS

*Earth Science, Geography, Human Geography*

### CONTENTS

1 PDF, 1 Link

## OVERVIEW

Students read and discuss a magazine article about Earth Day. They discuss environmental problems that affect their daily lives and brainstorm ways to make every day Earth Day by making small changes that have a big impact on the environment.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/introduction-earth-day/>

## DIRECTIONS

### 1. Activate students' prior knowledge.

Ask students if they have heard of Earth Day. Ask: *What do you already know about Earth Day? What is Earth Day all about?* Have a whole-class discussion about what students already know about Earth Day. Make sure students understand that Earth Day is one specific day every year when countries all over the world focus on protecting the environment.

## 2. Have students read a magazine article about Earth Day.

Have students read the National Geographic *Explorer!* magazine article “Celebrate Earth.”

Then ask the following questions:

- *When did the first Earth Day take place? Why?* (in 1970, because a senator from Wisconsin saw how dirty our air and water were)
- *What did people do at the first Earth Day celebration?* (heard lectures, cleaned up trash, held parades, gave speeches)
- *What laws did the government pass to protect our environment?* (cars must pass pollution tests, the Endangered Species Act protects animals in trouble)
- *What other countries celebrate Earth Day?* (Mexico, Egypt, Russia, China)
- *What information did you learn from the article that was new to you?*

## 3. Discuss environmental problems.

Ask students to name environmental problems that affect their daily lives. Write their responses on the board. Students should provide everyday examples, such as: too much trash, wasting electricity, and wasting water. Ask: *Is it possible to have a big impact on the environment by making small changes?* If students say no or are unsure, provide a concrete example to illustrate, such as taking reusable bags to a store to create less waste.

## 4. Brainstorm ways to make every day Earth Day.

Ask: *Why might it be important to celebrate Earth Day every day?* Elicit from students that we need to think about and protect the environment every day to help it most. As a class, look at the National Geographic Kids [Green Tips](#) article and talk about what it means to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Then have students brainstorm other examples of making small changes that have a big impact and explain their reasoning.

# Extending the Learning

Have the class choose one way they would like to make every day Earth Day in your classroom, such as recycling paper or using less electricity. Ask students to suggest ideas and vote to choose one. Track the small changes your class makes and periodically remind them of the big impact of their daily actions. To celebrate the official Earth Day, have students create a school event. Ask them to partner with other classrooms to create awareness posters and write speeches for the event.

## OBJECTIVES

# Subjects & Disciplines

Earth Science

Geography

- Human Geography

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- explain what Earth Day is all about
- read an article about Earth Day and answer questions
- identify environmental problems that affect their daily lives
- brainstorm ways to make small changes that have big impacts

## Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

## Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Discussions
- Reading

## Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Remembering
- Geographic Skills
  - Acquiring Geographic Information
  - Answering Geographic Questions

# National Standards, Principles, and Practices

## NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- Standard 14:

How human actions modify the physical environment

- Standard 18:

How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

## NATIONAL SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS

- (5-8) Standard F-2:

Populations, resources, and environments

- (K-4) Standard F-4:

Changes in environments

### Preparation

### What You'll Need

## REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector

## PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

## GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

## BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

# Background Information

Earth Day is a day to celebrate the Earth's environment and help raise awareness of threats to our planet's health. Earth Day takes place every year on April 22 in the United States. You can learn about Earth Day in order to figure out how to help protect the Earth every day.

## Prior Knowledge

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## Recommended Prior Activities

- None

## Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
Earth Day	<i>noun</i>	April 22, an international holiday to honor the need to protect the environment.
recycle	<i>verb</i>	to clean or process in order to make suitable for reuse.
reduce	<i>verb</i>	to lower or lessen.
reuse	<i>verb</i>	to use again.

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### For Further Exploration

#### Websites

- [Earth Day Network](#)
- [EPA: Earth Day](#)
- [EPA: Recycle City Game](#)
- [EPA: Environmental Kids Club](#)

