

• What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem is a group of living things and the whole place where they live. They all live together and need each other. For example, one kind of ecosystem is a desert. It has special plants that can live only there, lizards, snakes, vultures, and special insects.

• Are there any environmental problems in your region? What are they caused by?

Yes, there are some problems. The main problem is ... [water pollution/air pollution, etc.] There are many factories in my region, and many people ... [drive cars/burn coal, etc.]

• Are you aware of any global environmental issues? Which is most serious and why?

Yes, I know a bit about global warming. This is a very serious problem. Most scientists agree that it could seriously harm our lives, unless we stop it. Glaciers and polar ice are melting, rain forests are dying, and farms are turning into desert.

• Tell me a bit more about global warming. What is it?

This is the general increase in air and water temperatures around the world. It's normal for temperatures to sometimes be cooler for many hundreds of years, and then sometimes to be warmer. But this time, humans have caused the increase, with carbon from cars and factories.

• What is the Greenhouse Effect? What is it caused by?

The Greenhouse Effect is when the air or atmosphere gets too hot. Air warmed by the sun gets trapped close to the ground. It can't escape. It is caused by too much carbon in the air, from factories, electricity plants, and cars.

• What is the ozone layer and what is its function?

The ozone layer protects us from the harmful rays of the sun. It is in the atmosphere and surrounds the Earth like a clear blanket.

• Now there is a hole in the ozone layer. How did it get there? Is it dangerous?

I don't think scientists are sure how it got there. They only think that maybe too much carbon has destroyed part of it. It is very dangerous for us because it lets the strong sunlight through to the Earth's surface. This can cause cancer in humans.

• Why is it dangerous to cut down the rainforests?

This is dangerous for many reasons. We need the oxygen that comes from rainforests. Rainforests are the homes of many insects, plants, and animals that we need for medicine and other reasons. Rainforests help catch water and give it back to the Earth in the form of clouds, which bring us water. The

roots of trees and plants in the rainforest keep water and soil in place; without the rainforest, there are many problems like floods and mudslides.

• What types of extreme weather have you been in? Is it connected with environmental problems?

I've seen/been in/ a flood in ... [place, year]. It was scary – water came down our street like it was a river. ... There was a lot of wind damage in our town in [year/month] when there was a [tornado/hurricane/gale-force wind]. Extreme weather is a part of nature but I don't think / and I do think / it is connected with environmental problems because ...

• Which chemicals or chemical products do you use at home? Are they harmful to the environment?

Well, we have a refrigerator, of course. It contains the gas called "freon," which is very harmful to the atmosphere. We also have some things for cleaning, which contain strong chemicals.

• How can you tell that a product you buy is 'environmentally friendly'?

I can look on the package and see if it has the symbols for this: information on how to recycle the package, whether the product uses some recycled materials, and so on. I can read about different products on the internet, and find out where I can buy recycled things like ink cartridges for my printer.

• What can you do to help our environment as a single individual?

There are many ways I can help the environment: I can use special light bulbs, turn off the TV or radio when I'm not really paying attention to it, and put my computer on stand-by mode, all to save electricity. I can ride my bike or walk instead of taking the car or the bus, to save petrol. And I can recycle all my paper, glass, and plastic.

• What is the difference between 'recycled,' 'recycling,' and 'recyclable'?

"Recycled" means that some or all of the materials in something have been cleaned and can be used again – for example, a glass bottle. "Recycling" is the activity of not throwing something into the garbage, but putting it into a special bin where it will be taken away and used again. "Recyclable" means it's possible to be used again, but it's up to me to put it into the recycling bin for this.

• What are some types of alternative energy? Which do you like best, and why?

There is nuclear energy, water and steam power for electricity, solar energy from the sun, and wind power. Some cars can run on alternative energy like electricity or hydrogen. I like ... [] because ... [] .

Bridge

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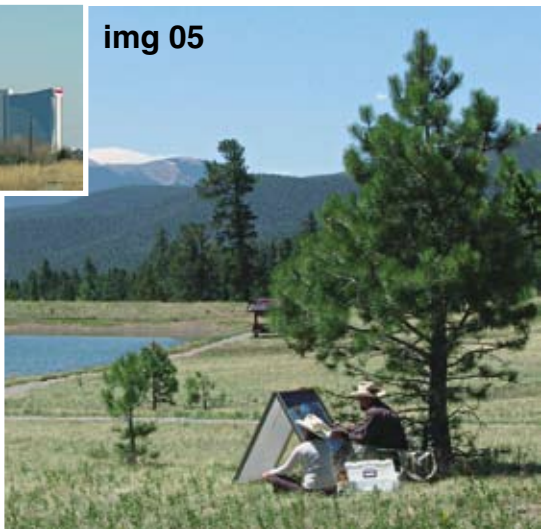
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