

How to Talk to Kids About...

THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

A Quick Reference Guide for Conversations and Activities with Kids

Key Points

- * A healthy planet is important for all life on earth.
- * Humans need to take good care of the earth.
- * While the earth's temperatures have gone up and down throughout history, the most extreme changes occurred a long time ago, before we had electricity and modern things, like cars, indoor plumbing, television and video games!
- * Some like to say the science is "settled" on climate change. But that's just not true. Science is never settled on any subject. Scientists are always making new discoveries and challenging old theories. That's no different with climate change.
- * Some even say that climate change is so dangerous that life on earth could end. That sounds scary. But consider that fact that since 1850, global temperatures have only increased around 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit.
- * Despite this low number, it's still important to do what's best for the earth and to make energy production as clean as possible.
- * Sadly, some lawmakers want to pass new laws that would make food, heating your home, driving cars, and making the things your parents buy at the store (like toys!) more expensive while failing to help the earth.

- * That's happening! Coal plants are much cleaner than they were decades ago, which has led to huge reductions in pollution.
- * And America is developing new and smarter ways to produce affordable, reliable energy for our homes, cars, and businesses.
- * Instead of making life harder for people, lawmakers should encourage smart people to keep discovering and inventing clean energy sources that keep our planet healthy.

Did You Hear the Good News?

- * Americans invented nuclear power, a clean form of energy that uses nuclear reactions to power steam engines that produce electricity.
- * Americans invented hydraulic fracturing (usually called fracking), another clean energy method that produces natural gas.
- * Americans have also been at the forefront of developing wind and solar power.
- * American energy companies have reduced emissions by more than 80 percent. Because of this, the air you are breathing is 74 percent cleaner today than it was when your parents were little!
- * The United States even meets the World Health Organization's strictest rules on air quality.

- * While carbon emissions continue to drop in the United States, China and India have increased carbon emissions, despite telling everyone they would reduce emissions.
- * Across the globe, people are working to protect natural resources. For example, while 20 percent of the Amazon rainforest has been cut down, 50 percent of the remaining forest is federally protected, which means the trees and bushes cannot be cut down.
- * Globally, forest fires have declined by 25 percent since 2003, and between 1981 and 2016, 40 percent of the planet experienced more "greening," meaning more trees, shrubs and other plants have been able to grow. This helps reduce the carbon in the atmosphere.
- * Thanks to modern farming practices, the percentage of people who are malnourished went from 20 percent in 1990 to 11 percent today. And from 1981 to 2015, the global population of people living in extreme poverty fell from 44 percent to 10 percent.
- * Modern farming has allowed more crops to be grown using less land and fewer pesticides.
- * And contrary to what you might hear people say, weather conditions are not getting worse. According to the 2014 report from the [United Nations](#), there has been no increase in hurricanes, floods, droughts or tornadoes within the past 30 years.
- * In the United States, there has been [no increase in the average frequency or severity of hurricanes](#) for more than a century.

Fun Activities to Teach About the Earth and Conservation

- * Have your children do a book report on Teddy Roosevelt, the father of the nation's National Parks.
- * Visit the National Parks or even your local parks. Ask a park ranger questions about what makes that park unique.
- * Visit local museums, aquariums, and zoos. Ask the aquarium and zoo keepers about what they do to help rescue and rehabilitate animals.
- * Watch the PBS series on the National Parks. It's a great way to visit from home!
- * Teach your children to fish or hunt and explain why these activities ultimately help wildlife and the earth.
- * Catch fireflies (and release them after your children have observed them).
- * Ask your kids to make a leaf or rock collection. Check out leaf and rock books at the local library to have your kids identify what they've collected.
- * Go hiking and camping! Teach kids to "leave no trace," which is a term the Boy Scouts use that means clean the area where you've camped and leave it the way you found it.
- * If your city has a botanical garden, go visit and take a tour to learn more about the plants on display. Check if they have a children's program.
- * Explore natural areas and natural wonders in your community—swimming holes, mountain and coastal areas, hiking trails, bird watching areas, nature preserves, beach dunes, and wetlands. See this helpful [list of the natural wonders](#) in each of the 50 States.
- * Organize a casual park clean up with friends. Just pick up any trash that others have left behind. Help teach your kids about the personal responsibility of keeping our earth clean for ourselves and others.
- * Have your kids visit a farm. Talk to the farmer about ways in which he cares for his land and animals.
- * Start a garden in your backyard and cook the food you grow!
- * If you have a place for a new tree, get your kids involved in planting a tree with you.
- * Have your child do a report on their favorite animal to learn about its habits and habitats.
- * Teach your kids the importance of conservation by modeling good habits at home, like turning off lights and devices when you aren't using them. Put kids in charge of turning off the lights in their rooms!
- * For older kids who want to learn more about hydraulic fracturing, try this fun [learning activity with Jello](#).

Further Reading for Kids

- * ***Freddie the Frogcaster series***—A delightful series of books written by Fox News chief meteorologist Janice Dean about a frog who loves the weather. This series is a fun way to introduce your kids to a scientific area without any political messages. Bonus: it will help kids who are scared of thunderstorms!
- * ***Who was Teddy Roosevelt***—A short, easy-to read biography of Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States who was also a naturalist, conservationist, hunter, author, and soldier. After becoming president in 1904, he created five national parks, 150 national forests, 51 federal bird reserves, four national game preserves, and 18 national monuments over 230 million acres of public land.
- * ***Magic School Bus Series***—Ms. Frizzle is a favorite among kids of all ages. Her goofy antics will make kids laugh as they learn important science lessons about the water cycle, the ocean floor, the solar system, and the human body, among many topics. *One caveat: skip the Magic School Bus book on climate change, where Ms. Frizzle's class gets very upset and the children are clearly having anxiety about climate change, which could unnecessarily scare kids.*

- * ***Boys Life Magazine***—The official magazine of the Scouts, *Boys Life* magazine is a treasure trove of fun activities and tips for camping, hiking and all sorts of outdoor activities. One way to teach your kids to enjoy nature is to actually get them out in it. *Boys Life* magazine offers kids the guidance they need to feel comfortable exploring the great outdoors. And don't let the name fool you; girls can enjoy this book too!!
- * ***Atlas of Adventure: A collection of natural wonders, exciting experiences and fun festivities from the four corners of the globe***—This thrilling guide from Rachel Williams offers complex and colorful maps of the continents along with activities and challenges to test their skills and knowledge. Beautiful illustrations will keep kids interested as they learn while having fun.
- * ***National Geographic Kids Magazine***—A fun and interactive magazine for kids focused on science and exploration. Some climate change issues are discussed but in a more calm tone.

For more



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