

Is it important to care about the environment? Why?

Yes! Think about the word “environment”. It means “surroundings or conditions around you”. If you care about yourself, your health, where you live, then you care about the environment. Nobody wants to live in a dirty, dangerous, or unhealthy place.

Ok, we care about the environment. What can we do?

Your choices and actions have consequences, whether you see the consequences or not. Think about what you buy and use, then... Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Encourage!

“Reduce” means “use less”. Why should we use less?

It saves money. It saves resources that we all share, like air, water, gas, and landfill space. Some examples are:

- Walk or bike for trips close to home to save gas. It's a good way to fit in some exercise and enjoy your neighborhood too!
- Run the water only when you absolutely need to (when you rinse your tooth brush, and not while you are brushing).
- Turn off lights or appliances when you are not using them.
- How else can you use less?

“Reuse” means “use something more than once”. Why should we reuse items?

It reduces waste. It saves money. It saves space in a landfill. Here are examples:

- Use food packaging for your own food, planters.
- Cut up t-shirts to use as cleaning rags.
- What other ideas do you have?

“Recycle” means to “turn into a usable material”. Why should we recycle?

It reduces waste and saves landfill space. It creates a renewable resource for making new products. What is recyclable in Johnson City?

- Cardboard, Aluminum, Glass, Paper
- Some plastics. Find out which ones!
- Compost from food, leaves, and yard trimmings

“Encourage” means give “support, advice, or hope”. How can we encourage others to care about the environment too?

- Set an example. Today you are making a positive difference by planting and picking up litter. Your behavior encourages others like me: I see that you care and I want to help out.
- Ask questions and learn a lot! Learning is the best way to make informed choices. Pay attention to your science lessons in school, read the news, and ask questions from the adults in your life.
- Write to the city, state, and federal government about problems you see in your community. Ask them for help.
- Ask your adult family to think about you and the environment when they vote.

As one kid, you might feel like you don't have a lot of influence. But that's not true. You can encourage other people to care for the environment. And you need their help because one person can't do it alone.

When you encourage others, you multiply your effort and make it last into the future.