



Do you have something to share, reflect on or provoke thinking around?
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Interactive climate learning

We all depend on a healthy planet, so teaching children about climate change is really important. It's knowledge they can use in the classroom and everyday life, and it's something we all – from educators to carers and parents – can help them with. But understanding the ins and outs of it all isn't easy. It's difficult to hold anyone's attention for long with all those new words and concepts, and it's a lot of information to retain.

Interactive learning gives us a shortcut to children's emotions, so they want to look after the planet not just because they should, but because they really care. It inspires their curiosity, sparks questions and helps them explore for themselves what nature does for us and what we can do for it. Here are four interactive activities to help teach children about climate change.

Let children explore their food

Children love getting their hands on freshly picked seasonal produce. They can see the roots and stems and ask questions like 'why did you put mud on it?!' It helps them understand where their food comes from and appreciate the value of it, as well as the value of the farms and farmers who grow it. Food doesn't just magically appear on supermarket shelves, it takes a lot of time, effort and expertise to grow what we eat – and without the right environment, it won't grow at all.

The temperatures aren't ideal in winter, but in summer you can also help children grow their own food. You don't need tools or much



space to do this. Quick crops that develop something children can pick and taste are great for this, like herbs, salad leaves and radishes, as well as fruit plants like strawberries.

Show children how to reduce waste

Getting into why we need to protect the planet can be scary for all of us. By concentrating on the positive choices we can make for the climate, we give children a sense that they can do their bit and make a difference. And one of the biggest positive impacts we can have on tackling climate change (and something young children can help out with) is reducing what we throw away.

Show children what you reuse, recycle and compost. Let them choose who gets their hand-me-down jumper, give them the chance to put the milk carton

in the recycling and the potato peel in the food waste bin. These simple actions help empower children rather than potentially worrying them about the many elements of climate change they aren't yet able to act on.

Planting pants

It's where 95 per cent of all our food is grown, it's key to climate action, storing and capturing carbon, but a lot of us think soil is just dirt. Planting cotton pants is a hands-on way to help children explore the true value of this amazing natural resource. And while it sounds a bit eccentric, it's actually a technique used by scientists to test soil health.

Burying pants reveals the huge variety of life that soil supports, helping children understand how it supports us too, and why we need to look after it. It's a great chance for children to enjoy the

smell and touch of soil, which also has mood-boosting qualities. And when you dig your pants up after a couple of months, you get to test the soil health (more deteriorated pants means healthier soil!).

There are lots of free resources on how to help children explore soil at www.countrytrust.org.uk/plantyourpants. The resources have been created with scientists and teachers and are well worth a look.

Create a mini-weather station

Weather is ever present and perfect for engaging children. A mini weather station (a basic thermometer, handheld toy windmill and pot to collect rainwater) is all that's needed to keep track of the changing weather.

Children can also notice the shorter days and dropping temperature and see how this affects the world around them, and vice versa. They can see the different plants and animals you see in winter compared to summer, or the different food we eat. All this helps children join the dots up of why we need predictable weather to allow us to grow food to eat. And for this, we need to look after the planet.

From **Anna Gordon**

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Find out more:

www.countrytrust.org.uk/

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