

LINE UPS

This whole class activity is designed to help students understand the environmental and societal impact of choices they make in everyday life.

Description of activity

Choose an everyday activity that brings out the existence of environmental, social and economic issues, e.g. making a cup of tea or coffee.

Ask students to think about how much the following influence the choice of ingredients in their house:

- Where the tea or coffee came from and who was involved in its production – has it travelled a long distance, was it traded fairly, who picked the tea, coffee?
- Where the milk came from – milkman, supermarket, local farm, a central depot?
- Where the sugar came from – distance travelled, amount of processing involved?

Now ask them to stand at different points from one end of the room to the other depending on how much they think about each of the issues above. For example, if they buy fair-traded tea, local milk and unprocessed sugar, they should go to one end of room. If they never consider any of those points they go to the other end of the room. If they buy fair-traded tea but don't consider milk or sugar they should stand somewhere between.

Repeat the line-up activity but now thinking about the energy used in making phase:

- Do they measure the amount of water that they put into the kettle according to the number of cups that are to be made?
- Do they leave the kettle and have to re-boil it again because the water has cooled?
- Do they use a pot or percolator?

Complete a third line-up using the end of life-cycle, asking students to assess:

- What they do with any leftover water?
- What they do with coffee filters or tea bags/leaves?
- What they do with the packets the tea or coffee came in?
- What do they do with the dirty cups?

Review the activity to bring out the point that there are sustainability issues in most of the everyday choices we make.

Learning objectives

To help students understand at a simple level the impact of an everyday product they would use regularly throughout its life cycle from manufacture to disposal.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to understand and describe the impact of an everyday product.

PLTS

1. Independent enquirers – students think about how everyday products they use themselves produce wide environmental, economic and social results.
2. Effective participators – students will be encouraged to reflect on the positions others have taken and to discuss how accurately they have positioned themselves.



SUGGESTIONS FOR QUESTIONS

You can decide on your own questions, according to the issues you want to bring out. We usually look at the issues involved in buying, using and disposing of products. If you wanted to discuss the impact of mobile phones, you might use the following questions:

Buying – have you thought about...

- Where the product was manufactured?
- How far it has had to travel?
- Different methods of transporting the product to the retailer?
- The age and type of person who has made the product?
- Conditions for the workers that made the product?
- The raw materials used to make the product and where they came from and how they have been obtained?
- The manufacturing processes needed to make it?
- Energy used in the manufacturing process?
- Whether there was any waste involved in manufacture?
- Does it have any reused or 'green' components?

Using – do you think about...

- Energy used to charge it?
- Leaving charger on unnecessarily?
- Where you use it?
- How loud you speak when you are using it?
- How many functions it has that you will use?
- How much energy is used by different functions, e.g. use of camera (including flash), internet
- How long you will keep it for?
- How durable it is?

Disposal – do you think about...

- What happens to your phone when you get rid of it?
- Where the phone will go when you dispose of it?
- Will the phone be recycled or parts reused?

- Could anyone else use the phone when you've finished with it?
- Would you get rid of it because a new model has come out but it can still be used?
- The effect on the environment if the phone is sent to landfill?
- Who might reuse or recycle it?

