

Sample Research Activity

Students develop ways to reduce their footprint

These activities have students develop strategies for reducing their footprint in terms of food, energy usage, or transportation. The activity has students consider not only changes in their personal actions, but also leverage points in the larger economic, political, and social policies which influence their choices. Completing the activity thus requires that students have sufficient background knowledge about these systemic factors. Given this, this activity is suggested as culminating projects for a unit focused on these issues.

Suggested Procedure

1. Review factors influencing students' footprints that you have studied (such as economic or environmental policies related to food, energy, or transportation.)
2. Tell students that they are going to develop a strategy to reduce their footprint in terms of food, energy usage or transportation. The strategies students develop must include information on:
 - a) changes in their personal actions and
 - b) changes in policies that impact their footprints.

Students' research can be presented in the form of a report, website, presentation, letter to the editor, a pamphlet they can use to educate others, or other appropriate format.

SUGGESTED RESEARCH GUIDELINES

(Teachers may use these guidelines as the basis of an assessment tool)

- Identify a proposed action for reducing your footprint and use the Footprint quiz to identify the impacts of the change.

Suggestion: Take the Footprint quiz twice; answer the first time with your current actions and the second time with your proposed actions. Compare the difference.
- Identify local, state, national, or international influences that affect your proposed change.

Ex. if you propose to take public transportation more often, you could identify the local transportation authority, or state highway funding, as influencing factors.
- Suggest a policy that could make it easier to reduce your footprint.

Ex. Increasing funding for buses to provide more frequent service or better routes

 - Identify who the key decision-makers are for these influences, and at what level of government

Ex. The local city council, Congress, United Nations
 - Identify who would be for the policy, and who might be against it.

Ex. Special interest groups, oil companies
- Describe barriers to achieving the policy.

Ex. Infrastructure, funding, social resistance to change
- Describe ways you and other students can advocate for the policy.

Ex. Promote clean energy through public awareness campaigns
- Finally, identify steps you will commit to as an individual and as a citizen involved in shaping policies.

Ex. Walk to school twice a week, write letters in support of signing Kyoto Protocol

