

This activity's goal is to tackle concepts and terms often used in the media when referring to ecology and the environment. Do we really know what these terms mean?



This glossary can be:

- printed as is;
- cut up to create a word/definition association game;
- used as a reference in an activity where the class creates its own glossary.

Other glossaries/ABC's will follow later on this year.

Article I. Environmental ABC's

A

Biofuel

Fuel derived directly from living matter. Liquid that comes from plants and can power cars without emitting greenhouse gases. Beets, which are high in alcohol, can be used. When mixed with gasoline, this alcohol produces fuel for cars.

Blue algae (cyanobacteria)

Micro-organisms invisible to the naked eye that turn into algae. Unfortunately, their proliferation is so quick that they end up suffocating lakes and killing all animal and vegetable life forms. When their numbers become too large, they also become dangerous for human beings.

C

Deforestation

Thousands of trees are being cut down in forests all over the world. The biggest problem is that we are not planting saplings to replace them. The result is a large decrease of surfaces covered with forests.

E

F

Glacier recession

Global warming raises Earth's temperature, which has serious consequences on glaciers. Because it is warm, ice tends to melt, meaning that glaciers are retreating and the quantity of water on Earth is increasing. The effects of glaciers melting are significant because ocean and sea levels are rising, so some inhabited islands will disappear.

Global warming

Phenomenon due to greenhouse gases. The average temperature on Earth is increasing, which multiplies the risk of natural disasters. Sea levels are rising, glaciers and ice on mountains are melting, for instance on Mount Kilimanjaro, on the Himalayas and even in the Alps in Europe.

Greenhouse effect

Natural process that traps the sun's warmth in our atmosphere, thus making the atmosphere warmer. This is due to greenhouse gases (GHGs) present in the atmosphere. It is as if planet Earth were wrapped in an airtight transparent plastic bag.

Ground water

Also called *phreatic surface*, this layer of water is underground and forms by infiltration. Such layers of water provide us with drinking water, so it is crucial that we protect them.

HCFC (hydrochlorofluorocarbon)

Substance in liquefied gas form generally used for cooling (refrigeration). It has replaced CFCs, which are forbidden since the year 2000 because they contribute to the greenhouse effect and the destruction of the ozone layer. HCFCs are less stable than CFCs, meaning they are less destructive; however they have a significant impact on the ozone layer and are powerful greenhouse gases.

In bulk

Phrase used when consumer goods are sold not packaged.

Insecticide

Chemical substance used for killing insects that attack crops. It is dangerous, pollutes water, contaminates the food chain and is toxic for human beings upon contact, ingestion or inhalation.

J

Kyoto

Protocol ratified by various States around the world, which agreed to commit to limiting their emissions of six greenhouse gases considered to be the main cause of global warming over the last 50 years.

L

M

Nuclear power plant

Power station that produces electricity using nuclear power. The problem with nuclear power is that it uses uranium – an extremely dangerous radioactive metal – to release energy in atomic fusion. Waste resulting from this fusion is amongst the most toxic on the entire planet.

Ozone

Chemical greenhouse gas caused by solar radiation. This chemical reaction is partly caused by pollution from cars, trucks and airplanes.

P

Q

R

Sea

In the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, there are large areas covering thousands of square kilometres littered with all kinds of floating waste. All year long, commercial ships pour all their refuse and garbage into the sea.

Smog

Type of fog or haze resulting from the presence of pollutants in the air, intensified by smoke or other atmospheric pollutants. Particularly present during warm and humid days, smog can affect elderly people, children, individuals working outdoors, etc.

Solar panel

Flat device usually placed on a roof designed to absorb the sun's rays as a source of energy for generating electricity or heating.

T

Ultraviolet

Type of rays emitted from the sun that can be dangerous for human beings. Exposure to these rays increases the risk of cancer, skin ageing, superficial burns, conjunctivitis, cataracts, but also the disappearance of plankton, the first link in the marine food chain. The hole in the ozone layer lets more ultraviolet rays through.

V

Waste management

Process consisting in recycling as much waste as possible for later use.

Water primrose

Also known as *primrose creeper*, this aquatic plant is originally from South America and was brought to Europe in the 19th century for decorating ponds. A piece of its leaf is enough to generate a new plant. This species is very invasive. When introduced to an environment it colonises its surroundings, which can be detrimental to local species.

X

Y

Z

Sources:

GLADEL, Cécile. *L'Écolo écono junior*, Montréal, Les Éditions des Intouchables, 2008.

Planète écolo, le grand livre des activités écologiques, Paris, Fleurus Éditions, 2008.