

# Sustainability activities for the classroom

Based on the Cambridge Sustainability Framework for ELT

**Sustainability**

**Framework**

for ELT

# Introduction

We hope you enjoyed the *Cambridge Sustainability Framework for ELT* sessions at *Eaquals Online 2025*.

We'd love for you to try out some of the activities from the sessions and let us know your reflections.

This will help us to continue to learn about how sustainability skills can be developed in the English classroom and how we can better support teachers and learners.

Thank you for your participation and we look forward to hearing from you!

# Usage notes

- Choose an activity card you'd like to try out in your classroom.
- Run the activity with your learners.
- Answer our quick questionnaire to tell us about your reflections (scan QR code or follow link to access).

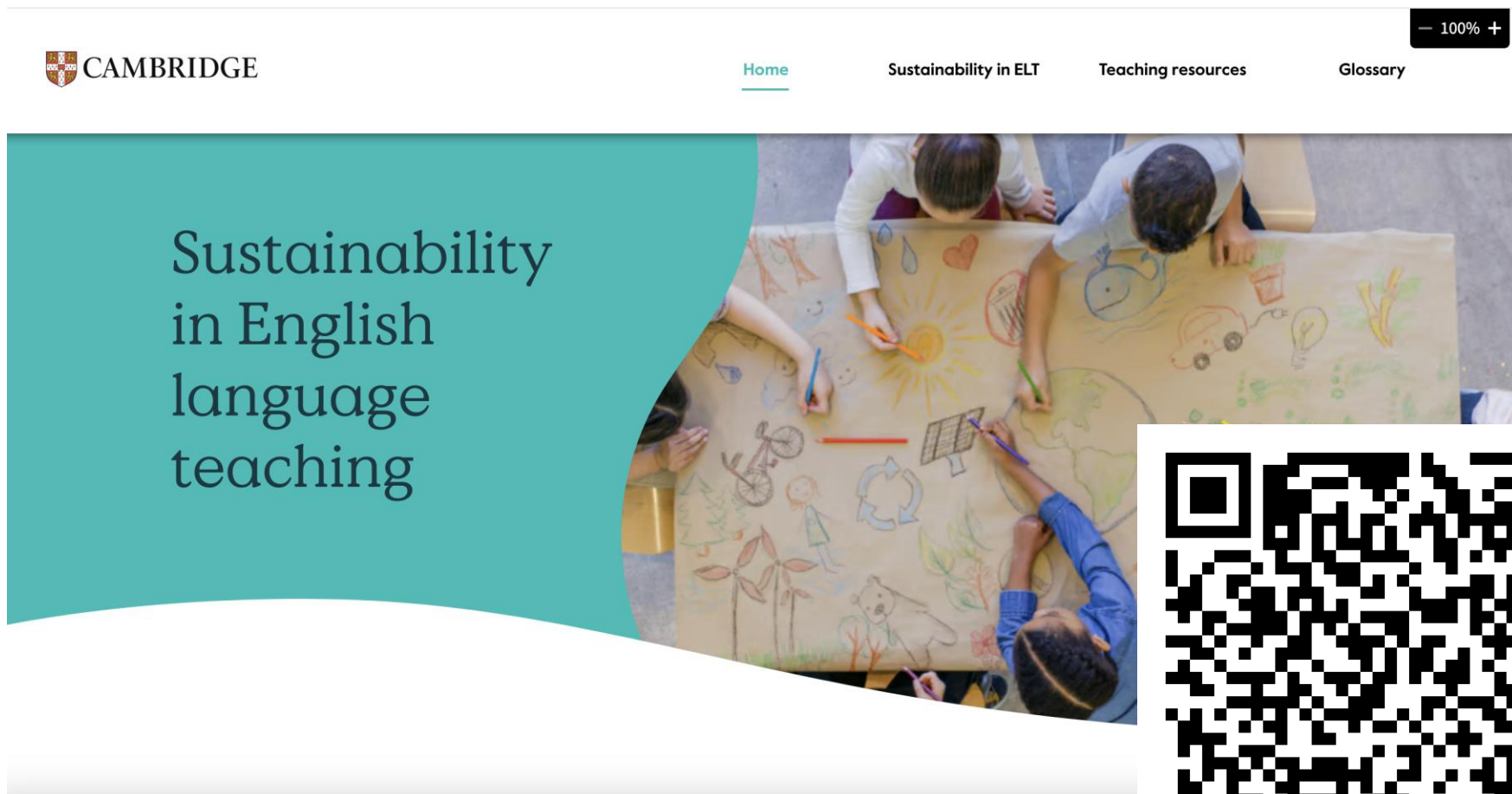


<https://tinyurl.com/5n9bmnd7>

# Useful information

- The activity cards included here are from the Teenage Learner pack of the *Sustainability Activity Cards for ELT*.
- You'll find alternative versions of the cards for young learners and adults in the appendix, although you may find that the teenage activity cards work for other age groups too.
- If you teach lower-level classes, the Young Learner cards in the appendix may be suitable, even for older learners.
- Instructions can be found on each activity card. The cards are also accompanied by usage notes and an example.
- Feel free to adapt the activities to suit your context.

# For further activities and information:



— 100% +

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Sustainability  
in English  
language  
teaching



<https://tinyurl.com/m5zkm6bz>

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# Activity card 1:

# PEOPLE; PLANET; PROFIT

Aim: Recognising the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability



# Knowledge

Understanding  
sustainability

## Recognising the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability

### PEOPLE; PLANET; PROFIT

When learners encounter situations in coursebook texts (e.g. someone drinking coffee, someone buying a new mobile phone), ask them to think about the situation in relation to people, planet, and profit. Draw a table on the board with three columns, as in the example shown, and write one or two questions in each column (choose from the examples shown, or write your own). Allow time for learners to discuss the questions in groups, and then do some research to find out if their ideas are correct.

 people	 planet	 profit
<p>Who are the people involved in this? How are they impacted by the situation? What about other people in the local/national/global community? Is the situation fair for everyone involved?</p>	<p>What manufacturing might have taken place? What natural resources might have been used? How does this impact on the local and global environment?</p>	<p>Is anyone profiting from this financially? Does this profit impact positively or negatively on local and global communities?</p>

Teenage

# Usage notes

**Use with:** pictures, reading/listening texts, videos

**Considerations:** Choose between 1-3 questions which best suit the material and your learners' language level. You can adapt the questions on the card or create your own.

There may not be simple answers to all the questions, and you are not expected to 'have the answers' as the teacher. Use the research phase to discover more and come to your own conclusions as a class.



# Example



**From the Sun to your scooter and school**

**The solar scooter is a fun new product that teenagers will love!**

It does not use any fuel because it uses solar power. The batteries are in the part where you stand. Every day, the batteries need at least two hours of light from the sun and they last for one to two hours. The scooter can go up to 20 km per hour. You'll save lots of money on bus fares, and you'll never need to queue for public transport or ask for a lift again! Your parents will be happy too, because you won't add to their electricity bill!

The solar scooter is very quiet, so it won't annoy your neighbours in the morning or late at night. Another good reason to buy one is that solar power is a very clean form of energy. This means that the solar scooter is very green. It's even greener than travelling on electric buses! In fact, it's also greener than cycling to school because when you do exercise, you breathe faster and produce more CO<sub>2</sub> than you do if you are walking or just standing on a scooter.

**Buy one today for only \$999!**

**Search online for 'solar scooter' or visit our online store.**

Shining Lights, B1, pg 29

## Possible questions:

- Do you think this product is sustainable? Why (not)?
- Who can use this product? Who can't?
- Are there any social or environmental costs of this scooter?

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# Activity card 2:

## ‘IF I COULD SPEAK’ VIDEOS

Aim: Showing empathy and compassion for all forms of life

# Values

Valuing people  
and the wider  
natural world

## Showing empathy and compassion for all forms of life

### 'IF I COULD SPEAK' VIDEOS

When learners encounter different life forms (e.g. animals and plants) in the coursebook, invite them to imagine what that life form could say if it could speak. Ask learners to work in pairs or small groups to make a short video representing their ideas (e.g. a monologue by their chosen life form). Allow learners to choose or create images to include in their video and to record the audio using their phones.

Teenage

# Usage notes

**Use with:** pictures, reading/listening texts, videos of different forms of life, e.g. animals, plants, people

**Considerations:** Alternatives to creating a video could be to write a caption for a picture, create a meme with a picture, or write a monologue/dialogue.

It can be helpful to allow time for learners to research the life form they are writing about. This helps them gain a better understanding of it and what it might 'say'.



# Example

2 Now read the first paragraph quickly to check your ideas. Ignore the gap for now.

## Why do animals laugh and make friends?

Scientists believe that some intelligent animals laugh and have fun with each other. Think about the sound that chimpanzees make when they are having fun together. "Also, videos show that, like humans, some rats play and 'laugh' more than others. They do this to make friends.

3 Which sentence best summarises the paragraph? Choose the correct answer.

- A Studies show that many clever animals have a sense of humour, make friends and can be shy.
- B Animals can be fun and funny, like humans, and there are different ways to study this.
- C Animals are funnier and more intelligent than humans, and scientists study them with videos.

EXAM TRAINING READING PART 4



6 Read the rest of the article. Two sentences have been removed. Look at options A-E in Exercise 4 and, for each question, choose the correct answer. There are two extra sentences which you do not need to use.

Q1 2.3

Animals need friends when one of the group is hurt. This is because a group is safer when everyone can run away together. This is so the group of friends can stay strong and healthy. In some groups of animals, more babies survive because the animals help one another. For example, giraffes and elephants have older friends that can be babysitters.

So why do we see online videos of strange friendships, like sheep and ducks making friends? When there are no other sheep around them, they make friends with the other animal they live with so that they are not alone. Animals are amazing, just like us!

STRETCH! Choose a personality adjective from page 18. Do any animals have this characteristic? Use the internet to find out. Write a short paragraph with your findings.

What would they say if they could speak?

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# Activity card 3:

# FACTS; FEELINGS; RESPONSE

Aim: Demonstrating resilience and adapting to change



# Values

Caring for oneself  
and others

## Demonstrating resilience and adapting to change

### FACTS; FEELINGS; RESPONSE

When discussing sustainability issues in class, ask learners to describe how the world has changed and is changing as a result of the issue, and how these changes affects them.

Write the following questions on the board:

- What are the facts about this issue?
- What does this issue make me feel?
- How can I respond to this?

Ask learners to discuss the questions in pairs or groups, and share their ideas with the class.

Teenage

# Usage notes

**Use with:** reading/listening texts related to sustainability issues, or sustainability discussion tasks

**Considerations:** It is important to allow learners to express any negative feelings they have about the issue and to make sure they feel heard.

Although it might feel helpful to say things like ‘Don’t worry’ when learners express sustainability concerns, this can actually make learners feel frustrated and not understood. Giving them space to express emotions, validating them and encouraging them to think of how they could respond may be more helpful.

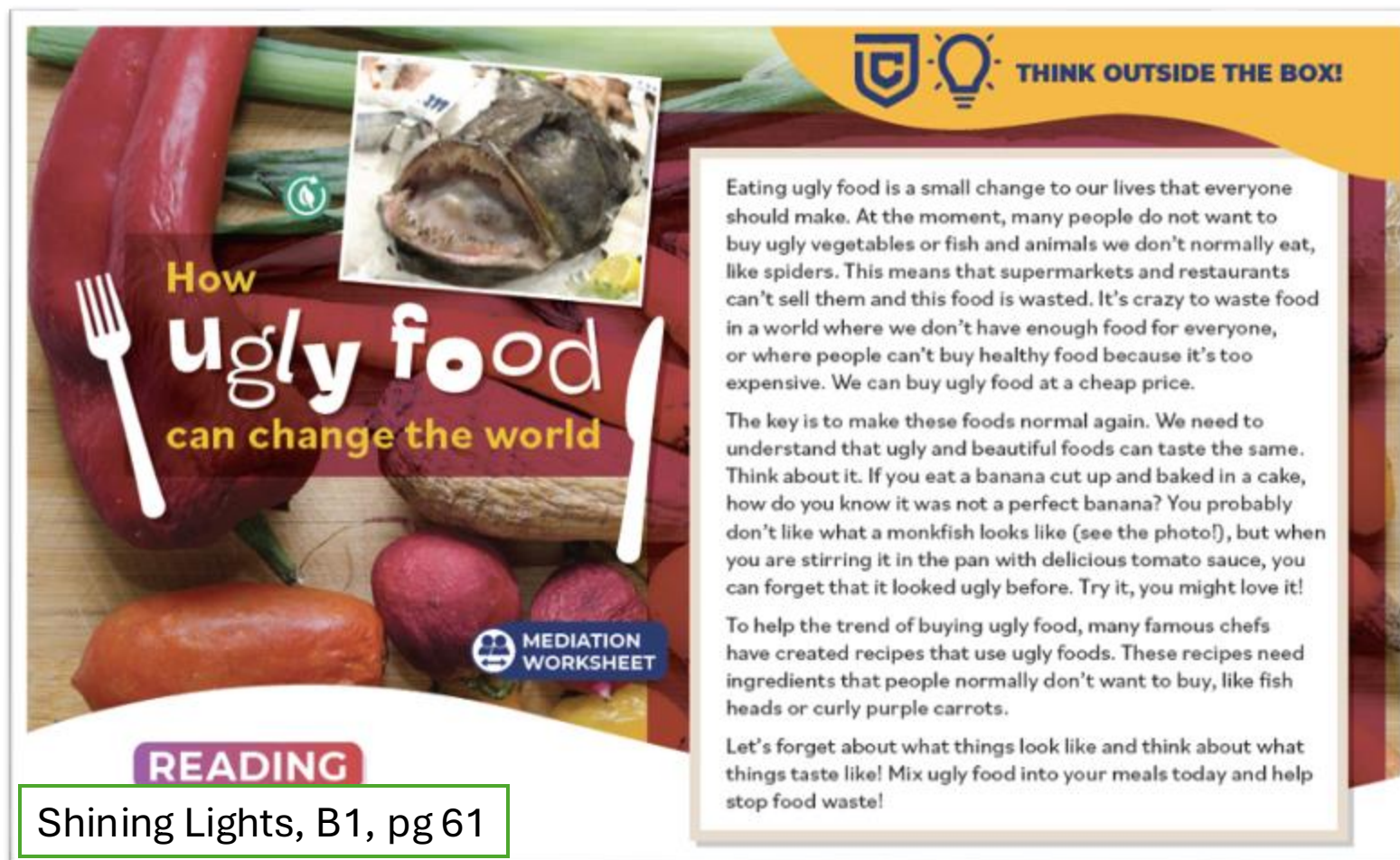
When using texts that contain shocking statistics or have a bleak outlook, consider presenting stories of sustainability successes or stories of hope alongside. This can be very powerful in providing balance and may help reduce eco-anxiety.

# Example

The WRAP report on [household food and drink waste from 2021-22](#) estimates the greenhouse gas impact of food waste in the UK. This report finds that the greenhouse gas emissions associated with wasted food and drink in the UK accounted for approximately 18 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in 2021-22 (compared to total emissions of 417.1 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent greenhouse gas emissions in 2022).<sup>16</sup> It found that the food waste with the highest household greenhouse gas impacts were meat and fish, followed by whole meals, fresh vegetables and salads, and dairy and eggs.<sup>17</sup>

- What are the facts about this issue?
- What does this issue make me feel?
- How can I respond to this?

# Example of a story of hope



**THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!**

**How ugly food can change the world**

**READING**

Eating ugly food is a small change to our lives that everyone should make. At the moment, many people do not want to buy ugly vegetables or fish and animals we don't normally eat, like spiders. This means that supermarkets and restaurants can't sell them and this food is wasted. It's crazy to waste food in a world where we don't have enough food for everyone, or where people can't buy healthy food because it's too expensive. We can buy ugly food at a cheap price.

The key is to make these foods normal again. We need to understand that ugly and beautiful foods can taste the same. Think about it. If you eat a banana cut up and baked in a cake, how do you know it was not a perfect banana? You probably don't like what a monkfish looks like (see the photo!), but when you are stirring it in the pan with delicious tomato sauce, you can forget that it looked ugly before. Try it, you might love it!

To help the trend of buying ugly food, many famous chefs have created recipes that use ugly foods. These recipes need ingredients that people normally don't want to buy, like fish heads or curly purple carrots.

Let's forget about what things look like and think about what things taste like! Mix ugly food into your meals today and help stop food waste!

**MEDIATION WORKSHEET**

Shining Lights, B1, pg 61



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# Activity card 4:

# DIFFERENT IMPACTS

Aim: Promoting equality, non-discrimination, and equity in sustainability solutions

# Innovation

Exploring  
solutions

## Promoting equality, non-discrimination, and equity in sustainability solutions

### DIFFERENT IMPACTS

When discussing sustainability solutions in class, write the following words on the board: Race, Gender, Age and Ability. Extend this list as appropriate for your class with other categories from [the Equality Act](#). Put learners into pairs and ask them to think of different types of people in these categories (e.g. Ability: a blind person / a deaf person / someone in a wheelchair).

Focus again on the sustainability solution being discussed. Ask pairs to choose one of the people from the board – someone who they think the solution would affect positively. Different pairs should choose different people. Ask pairs to write a few sentences from the perspective of that person, explaining how the solution affects them. Next, ask learners to choose another person who they think the solution would affect negatively; they then write a few sentences from the perspective of that person. Finally, invite pairs to read their texts aloud, and discuss as a class whether the solution is fair for all.

Teenage



# Usage notes

**Use with:** problem-solving tasks or texts which talk about solutions to sustainability problems

**Considerations:** Encourage learners to research the barriers faced by people with the characteristics they have chosen. This will deepen their understanding of these lived experiences.

When learners write their short texts, encourage them to reference any research they have used.

# Example

**WRITING**

A FORMAL LETTER

4 **Creative Thinking** Work in groups. Make a list of things you would like to have in your school but haven't got. For example, you can think about classrooms, space for relaxing, food, computer facilities, etc. Decide on the most important things.

We are writing to you about our school's outdoor play area. We are sorry to say that it is not a good place for us to spend time.


After eating lunch, we have to go outside, but there is nothing for us to do there. We have just one old basketball hoop and a lot of empty space. Here are our ideas about how to improve the space.

Firstly, we need places to sit. Just a few seats for students would be nice and would make the area look much better. Secondly, we should have more sports facilities. We need a second basketball hoop and two goal posts for playing football. Thirdly, the outside area looks ugly, and we are asking you for more plants and trees to make it more attractive.

Please respond as soon as possible. We very much hope to see these changes this school year.

Best regards,  
The students of year 10

and write a second draft of your letter.



Shining Lights, B1, pg 53

Would your solution have a positive or negative affect on these people? How?

- a wheelchair user
- a person with a hearing impairment
- someone with social anxiety
- someone with ADHD

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# Activity card 5: PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Aim: Taking action towards a sustainable future for all

# Transformation

Making  
positive  
change

## Taking action towards a sustainable future for all

### PRACTICAL ACTIONS

When discussing environmental, social and/or economic sustainability issues in class, write the words 'Practical actions' on the board. Ask learners to brainstorm ideas for how they themselves can contribute to a more sustainable solution.

When learners have brainstormed several ideas, ask them to choose one and discuss how they might implement this, by breaking the action down into a series of practical steps. Invite learners to actually carry out these steps and report back on how successful they were.

Teenage

# Usage notes

**Use with:** sustainability-focused texts or discussions

**Considerations:** If it is not practically possible to carry out all of the steps learners have identified, they could choose just some, or even just one, of the steps to do.



# Example



**STOP SHOPPING! SWAP INSTEAD**

It's time to stop shopping, especially shopping for clothes. It is a negative activity in so many ways. You spend money and you buy things that you don't really need or don't like for long. What a waste!

Lots of the clothes we buy might be overpriced and probably aren't worth the money. Even good-value clothes are a problem if we throw them away after wearing them only a few times. The people who make cheap clothes are often very badly paid, too.

Luckily, there's a great alternative. Try a clothes swap! More and more teenagers are organising a fun event to give away clothes they don't want any more and get their friends' clothes instead. It's easy to do. If you've got a room with enough space, some food and drinks, you'll be able to hold a clothes swap! Here are our suggestions.

- Wash the clothes first!
- Bring only clothes that are in good condition.
- For every item that a person takes, he or she must also give one item away.
- People should take away the clothes that they can't swap. It's not fair if the host ends up with a mountain of old clothes on his or her living room floor.

Try a clothes swap! You'll do something to reduce waste, you'll save money and, hopefully, you'll have fun and get some great new clothes!

Imagine you are arranging a clothes swap. What practical steps do you need to take?

Let's do it!

Shining Lights, B1, pg 91



# Appendix

Activities for other age groups

# Young Learners

Alternative activities for young learners

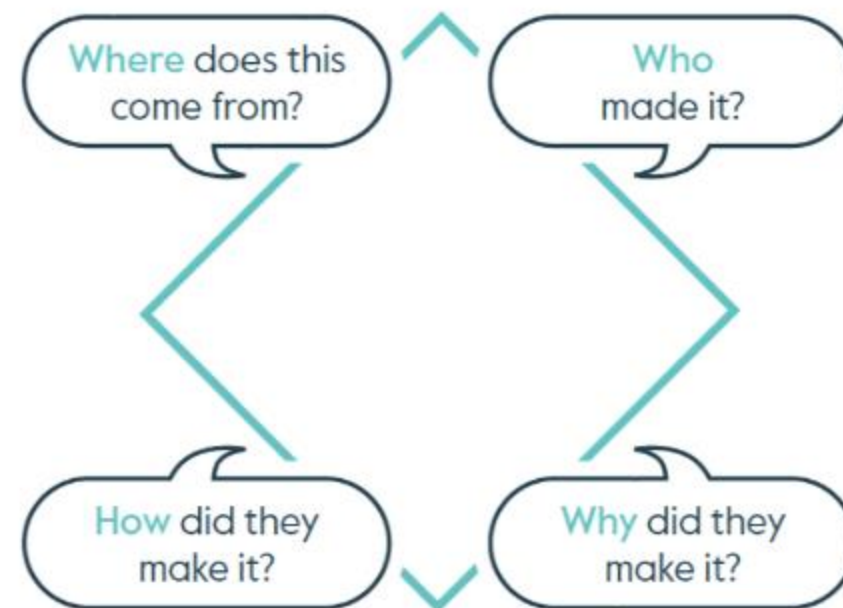
# Knowledge

Understanding  
sustainability

## Recognising the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability

### WHERE, WHO, HOW, WHY?

When learners encounter food items or objects in the coursebook, encourage them to think about their origin and their impact on the world by using a 'Where, Who, How, Why?' framework (as shown). Put learners into groups, draw or project the framework with the questions on the board, and give each group a blank copy of the framework. Ask learners to write or draw the object in the centre, and then discuss and draw their ideas for each question in the speech bubbles. Finally, ask groups to compare their ideas with the class.



Young

# Values

Valuing people  
and the wider  
natural world

## Showing empathy and compassion for all forms of life

### MY WEEKEND WITH NATURE

At the start of the week, invite learners to share any experiences they had with the natural world over their weekend. Perhaps they walked in the park and looked at plants and trees; perhaps they played with an animal or swam in the sea. Making this a regular class discussion will motivate learners to notice and engage with the natural world more frequently. Use the questions below to aid discussion:

- What did you see/hear/smell/feel?
- What did it make you think about?
- How did it make you feel?

Young

# Values

Caring for oneself  
and others

## Demonstrating resilience and adapting to change

### WHAT'S CHANGED?

When discussing topics in the coursebook, invite learners to identify big changes that have happened or are happening in relation to the topic (e.g. Food – more people are becoming vegetarian / The Environment – climate change). Write the following questions on the board for learners to discuss:

- How does this change affect my everyday life?
- How do I feel about this change?

Explain that sometimes change can make people feel stressed or unhappy. Elicit some ways in which people can feel okay about big changes in their lives (e.g. talking to friends, focusing on positive things).

Young



# Innovation

Exploring  
solutions

## Promoting equality, non-discrimination, and equity in sustainability solutions

### IS THIS FAIR?

When discussing solutions in class, write the following words on the board: race, gender, age and ability. Elicit or explain the meaning and ask learners to give you examples of different types of people in these categories (e.g. Ability: a blind person / a deaf person / someone in a wheelchair). Then, ask learners to think about the sustainability solution you have been discussing, and to decide whether the solution is fair for all of the different types of people.

Young



# Transformation

Making  
positive  
change

## Taking action towards a sustainable future for all

### PLEDGES POSTERS

After discussing sustainability solutions and actions in class, invite learners to think about what positive actions they themselves can take. Elicit or explain the meaning of 'pledge' (a serious or formal promise), and have learners choose an action that will be their pledge. Next, ask learners to design and make a poster, with their pledge written at the top, and a picture of themselves honouring their pledge (i.e. doing the action they pledged to do).

Young

# Adult Learners

Alternative activities for adult learners

# Knowledge

Understanding  
sustainability

## Recognising the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability

### THREE DIMENSIONS

When introducing a new coursebook topic, ask learners to research and identify environmental, social and economic aspects relating to the topic and consider how sustainable these are. Use a framework like the one here to help organise learners' ideas. (You can write or project it on the board.) Encourage learners to identify how the different aspects are linked and how they impact on each other.



Adult

# Values

Valuing people  
and the wider  
natural world

## Showing empathy and compassion for all forms of life

### IF I COULD SPEAK

When learners discuss sustainability-related topics in class, invite them to think about what other life forms apart from humans are affected by the issue. Invite learners to imagine what that life form could say if it could speak. Ask them to write a short speech from the perspective of that life form.

Adult



# Values

Caring for oneself  
and others


## Demonstrating resilience and adapting to change

### CHANGE AND ME

When discussing sustainability issues in class, ask learners to describe how the world is changing as a result of the issue and how this change affects them. Draw/project the table shown here on the board.

Ask learners to make notes about what has changed in the world as a result of this issue in the column on the left and get feedback from the class. Next, ask learners to think about what has changed in themselves as a result. Use these questions to help guide them:

- How has this issue changed my life?
- How has it changed how I feel?
- How have I adapted to this change?

 <p>Change in the world</p>	 <p>Change in me</p>

Adult



# Innovation

Exploring  
solutions

## Promoting equality, non-discrimination, and equity in sustainability solutions

### PROMOTING EQUALITY

When learners discuss sustainability solutions, ask them to consider the extent to which the solution is equitable ('equitable' means treating everyone fairly or in the same way) for all. Ask them to discuss and share their ideas, and then identify and discuss further practical ways in which the solution might promote equality, non-discrimination, and equity.

Adult

# Transformation

Making  
positive  
change

## Taking action towards a sustainable future for all

### PRACTICAL ACTIONS

When discussing environmental, social and/or economic sustainability issues in class, write the words 'Practical actions' on the board. Ask learners to brainstorm ideas for how they themselves can contribute to a more sustainable solution, either within their personal lives or in their study/work contexts.

When learners have brainstormed several ideas, ask them to choose one and discuss how they might implement this by breaking the action down into practical steps. Invite learners to do these actions and report back on how successful they are.

Adult