



Tree of Change

What can kids do about climate change? Read through the options given here with a friend, and talk about the ones that mean the most to you. Then choose one, or come up with your own. Write your pledge on the leaf provided, and decorate it! Together with your classmates, you'll create a Tree of Change.

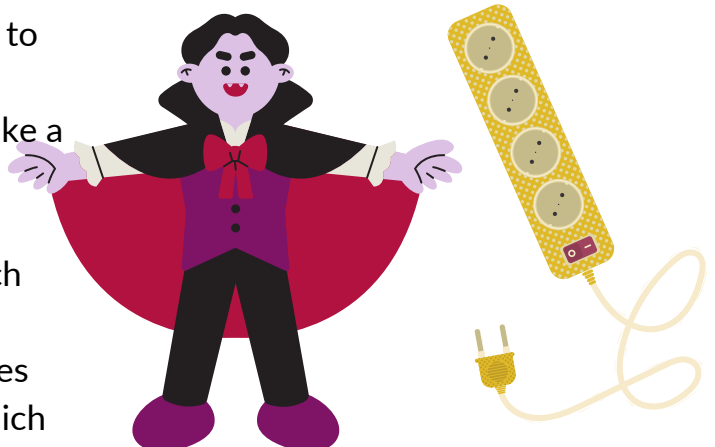
Walk or bike to school



Fifty years ago, 84% of all Australian kids walked or biked to school. Now, it's more like 30%—and the rest are being driven. The average Australian family car puts out about 6 tonnes of greenhouse gas every year—it would take about 170 trees to absorb all that! And if you do have to drive, climate experts recommend turning the car off when waiting, and parking to pick up takeaway, instead of leaving the motor running in a drive-through.

Vanquish the vampire

Experts call them "vampire" appliances: things like phone and laptop chargers that continue to suck energy once the device has finished charging. Things that have a standby mode, like a TV waiting to be turned on by remote, also suck energy. You can unplug them, or use an energy strip with a switch, and turn the switch off when not in use. How does this help the planet? Well, most of our electricity still comes from power plants that are fired by coal... which emits greenhouse gases.



Reduce, reuse, recycle



There's a reason that "recycle" comes last... it takes energy to recycle things! The best thing to do is reduce the amount of stuff we have; fix things that are broken, instead of throwing them away; and reuse things (shopping bags, packaging for school lunches... you get the idea). Lots of countries have introduced "right to repair" rules, so that instead of having to buy a new phone or washing machine, you can fix it!

Compost is made up of decaying plants and foods (yum!) and is used as fertiliser. What does that have to do with climate change? Well, if that food and garden waste is put in the waste bin instead of being composted, it produces methane gas, which is much more powerful than carbon dioxide. Only about one third of Australians compost their garden and kitchen waste.

Compost is King



Pester power!



We all know that parents don't love it when you beg and nag. But they might be impressed if you calmly present them with evidence about the benefits of switching over to LED light bulbs, or energy efficient appliances. (Hint: it'll save them money! LED bulbs last up to 40 times as long as a regular bulb, and cost much less to run.) Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg started at home—she presented her parents with information and asked them to make changes.

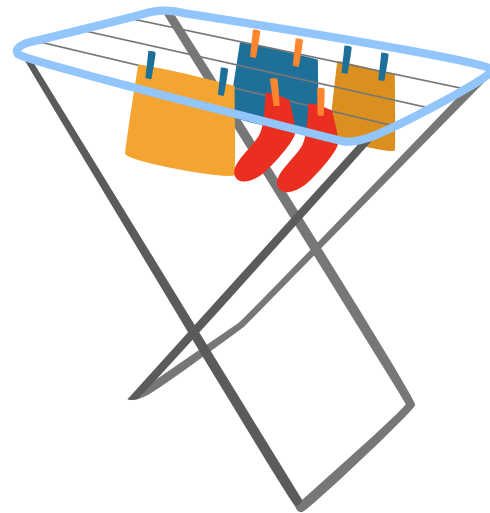
Help the hotel



If you're lucky enough to travel and stay at a hotel for more than one night, you might notice a sign asking you to hang your towel up after using it. This helps save the water and energy involved in replacing and washing towels every day. Every 10kg load of towels uses 50 litres of water and electricity, not to mention the dryer. Let's face it, you probably don't use a new towel every day at home.

Speaking of washing... an electric clothes dryer is one of the most energy-sucking appliances in the house! And there's a reason the Hills Hoist was invented in Australia—we have lots of lovely free sunshine. So why not help hang out the laundry? You just have to remember to do it a day or two *before* you need it.

Let the sun do the work

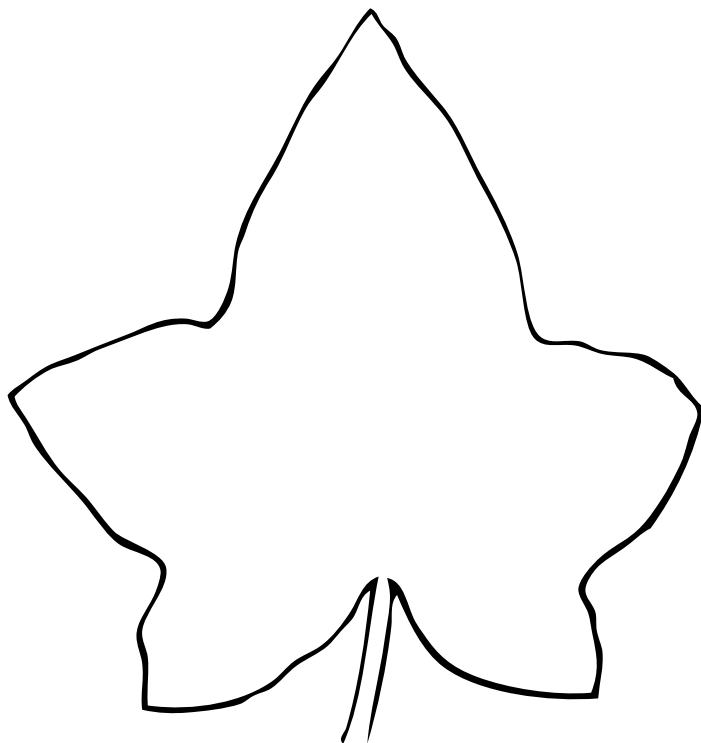


Get educated



Even though adulthood is a long way off, have a think about what kinds of "green jobs" you might work towards. You could plant trees for a living; become a solar energy expert; come up with ways to scrub carbon from our skies; run a compost company; invent a solar passenger jet. The sky is the limit!

1. Write your pledge: "My Climate Pledge is to...."
2. Write your name!
3. Colour and decorate your leaf so that when all the leaves are put together, you'll have a beautiful classroom tree.



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