

True Cost



Overview

Investigate the full life cycle of a product and explore its environmental and social impacts. Consider alternatives and share a more sustainable way to meet the same need.

Learning outcomes

- Investigate the environmental and social impacts of everyday products over their full life cycle (from resource extraction to disposal).
- Evaluate alternatives to buying new (e.g., buying second-hand, leasing, sharing) and identify lower-carbon options.
- Develop skills in research, analysis and communication.

Materials

- Access to the internet or reference materials
- Worksheet for product life cycle analysis
- Optional: visual tools for presenting findings

Proof to submit

Sample product analyses or “life stories” (poster, infographic, video* or written piece).

Activity

Grades K to 6

Students choose a familiar item (e.g., toy, school supply, plastic bottle) and create a poster or written piece showing its “life story” — where it comes from, how it’s used, and what happens when it’s thrown away. As a class, talk about more sustainable options, such as trading with a friend, buying second-hand, or choosing an item that uses fewer materials or lasts longer.

* Important: Please ensure that any videos submitted as proof do not include student names or clearly identifiable faces.

True Cost



Grades 7 to 12

Students research the full life cycle of a single product (e.g., item of clothing, headphones, school supply) including materials, energy use and disposal. They evaluate its impact, presenting their findings in a poster, infographic, video* or short report. If relevant, they identify a company offering a more sustainable version of that product, or propose a lower-carbon way to meet the same need (e.g., thrift the t-shirt rather than buy it; rent the tool rather than own it).

Resources for teachers

Visit the [Live Net Zero Classroom Challenge website](#) for additional resources and information.