

1 In pairs, discuss these questions.

- Have you ever taken part in celebrating Earth Day? What activities did you do? How did you contribute?
- If you haven't, would you like to take part in the future? Why / Why not?
- What activities would you do to help the environment?



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EARTH DAY

It may be hard to imagine that before 1970, a factory could spew black clouds of toxic smoke into the air or dump tons of toxic waste into a nearby stream and that was perfectly legal. They could not be taken to court to stop it. How was that possible? Because there was no environmental agency to prevent it, no Clean Air Act, no Clean Water Act. There were no legal or regulatory mechanisms to protect the environment. In spring 1970, in the USA, Senator Gaylord Nelson created Earth Day as a way to force this issue onto America's national agenda. Twenty million Americans demonstrated in different cities across the USA and it worked! In December 1970, the American Congress authorized the creation of a new federal agency

to tackle environmental issues called the US Environmental Protection Agency. From then on, similar agencies were established in other countries around the world. Earth Day was first organized to promote ecology and respect for life on the planet as well as to encourage awareness of the growing problems of air, water and soil pollution. People made promises to help the environment and make positive changes in their community.

Since its creation, over a billion people in 190 countries have taken action for Earth Day. From San Francisco to San Juan, Beijing to Brussels, Moscow to Marrakesh, people plant trees, clean up their communities, contact their elected officials and more - all on behalf of the environment. The day focuses on the unique environmental challenges of our time.

Just some of the ways of observing Earth Day include planting trees, picking up rubbish, conducting various programmes for recycling and conservation, using recyclable containers for snacks and lunches or reusable shopping bags. Some people are encouraged to sign petitions to governments, calling for stronger or immediate action to stop global warming and to reverse environmental destruction. TV stations frequently air programmes dealing with environmental issues. Of course, everything we do to help the planet counts, whether we walk instead of taking transport or help to clean up our local parks.

Go Green! Some Key Facts

Recycling one aluminium can saves enough energy to watch three hours of TV. It takes less energy (90% less) to recycle aluminium cans than to manufacture new ones. The average person tosses out about four pounds of rubbish every day.

Only 27% of newspapers are recycled. If they were all recycled, it would save one quarter of a billion trees every year.

Every year there are 14 billion pounds of rubbish thrown into the oceans. Plastic rubbish kills at least one million creatures in the ocean each year.

2 Read the text and write what the following relates to.

- 1 1970 _____
- 2 Senator Gaylord Nelson _____
- 3 the American Congress _____
- 4 190 _____

3 In pairs, discuss what people do in your country to help protect the environment. Are there any organizations that help tackle environmental issues? What do they do to look after the environment?