

A Curriculum Checklist for Sustainability in ECEC



In early childhood education for sustainable citizenship, children learn mostly through Play, and the adult role is to encourage and model sustainable actions and sustainable values. A wide range of preschool practices may be promoted to contribute towards this. When children are supported to prepare their own snacks for example, they can learn to avoid waste, and to share and care for others. Caring for the environment and for wildlife supports their development of responsibility, empathy and social justice. Play resources such as dressing up clothes, wild bird boxes and feeders and wild life observation/identification pictures encourage sustainable play.

*The following checklist is offered as a first step towards developing wider curriculum development planning. The **Early Years Foundational Knowledge** that we recommend in column three will provide foundations for later learning in school. Columns one and two are drawn from the UNESCO Greening Curriculum Guidance for children aged 5 and above. For more information see:*

<https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/greening-future?>

UNESCO Greening Schools Curriculum	UNESCO Objective for 5-8 year olds	Early Years Foundational Knowledge	Curriculum Addressed?
Climate Science			
1.1. Weather, Climate and Climate Change	Key idea: “Weather” describes daily experience, while “climate” describes weather patterns over many years	e.g. Identifying different local seasonal weather conditions, and also the different climates of countries around the world.	
1.2. Greenhouse Gases	Key idea: Sunshine heats the earth’s surface.	<i>e.g. Identifying the effect of the sun heating playground furniture, surfaces, trees etc., and the extra warmth that we feel when entering a conservatory or greenhouse.</i>	
1.3 The Carbon Cycle	Key idea: The plants and animal life need clean air to help them grow.	e.g. Observing reduced variety and damage to leaves in different locations.	
1.4 The Water Cycle	Key idea: Life for humans, animals and plants depends on clean water.	e.g. identifying when plants need watering. Caring for the needs of animals and wildlife such as water for birds.	
1.5 Avoiding Pollution and Conserving Resources	Key idea: Human activity affects air quality and water quality.	e.g. Identifying vehicle soot on street signs, Involving the children in litter picking activities.	
1.6 Renewable Energy	Key idea: Fossil fuels and renewable energy	e.g. identifying fossil fuels and alternative renewable energy supplies from wind and water	
Ecosystems and Biodiversity			
2.1. Natural Environments: Ecosystems and Biodiversity (Land and Ocean)	Key idea: Ecosystems are animals and plants in interaction with each other.	e.g. identifying animals that eat other animals, and some that eat plants.	

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2.2 The Evolution of Biodiversity Through Time and in the Future	Key idea: Some animals used to live on our planet and are now no longer here (such as dinosaurs)	e.g. Learning about dinosaurs and more recently extinct and threatened species near where they live.	
2.3. Ecosystems, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	Key idea: We need nature	e.g. learning how the natural environment provides resources for food, clothes, houses, etc.	
2.4. Human Relation to Nature: Domestication and Agriculture	Key idea: The food we eat comes from plants and animals.	e.g. Identifying different sources and production methods of food.	
2.5. Human-Induced Biodiversity Loss and its Consequences	Key idea: The impact of humans on biodiversity	e.g. Comparing the wild life populations of cities, rural and wilderness areas.	
2.6. Reconnecting with Nature and Protecting Nature	Key idea: Human protection of nature is essential	e.g. Stewardship activities in support of local wildlife, providing bird tables, bat and bird boxes, bug hotels etc.	
Resilience Building			
3.1. Social Impacts of Climate Change	Key idea: Weather patterns and climate affects us	e.g. identifying the actions to be taken in different weather conditions, e.g. seeking shade and providing extra drinking water during a heat wave, or holding our hat tightly, or tying it around the neck in a strong wind.	
3.2. Navigating Climate Impacts: Strategies for Safety and Resilience	Key idea: Climate change causes extreme weather	e.g. Making preparations before a storm, and participating as a team in emergency drills for fire and floods	
3.3. Climate Anxiety and Constructive Coping	Key idea: It is important to express our emotions	e.g. Learning to share feelings with family, teacher and friends, learning to identify and label basic emotions (happy, sad, scared, angry) in story books and in others.	
3.4. Strength in Interconnectedness	Key idea: Humans and other living things are dependent on the natural world	e.g. participating in conservation and sustainability activities that connect students with nature such as making compost and examining the interaction of living organisms under the soil.	

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3.5. Urgency and Community Action	Key idea: Taking climate action is urgent.	e.g. Invite community leaders into the preschool to explain their climate actions. Create real or pretend sustainable bazaars, action plans, silent marches, etc	
3.6. Tackling Climate Mis/Disinformation	Key idea: We learn from many different information sources	e.g. Support the child in their critical awareness of the adult world: Teach them, if they are ever lost, that they should ask another parent with a child for help, and that they should give them their full name.	
Climate Justice			
4.1. Contemporary Manifestations	Key idea: Climate events different groups in different ways	e.g. encouraging support and empathy for different groups such as the elderly, those in more vulnerable environments locally and abroad	
4.2. Social Determinants	Key idea: Who we are and the circumstances that we live in can create more negative experiences	e.g. encouraging support and empathy for groups and individuals treated unfairly	
4.3. Historical Economic and Political Processes	Key idea: Human actions in the past have long-lasting positive or negative impacts	e.g. Celebrating past actions such as when all the countries came together and agreed to tackle climate change, and local actions such as the day solar panels were installed on the public library.	
4.4. Transformed Futures	Key idea: We all have a role to play	e.g. involving the children in awareness raising or practical campaigns in supporting environmental sustainability	
Post-Carbon Economies			
5.1. Economic Growth and Development	Key idea: Resources are essential and often scarce	e.g. Identifying the difference between needs and wants and the importance of sharing.	
5.2. Circular Economy and Everyday Life	Key idea: There are better ways to deal with things that you no longer need	e.g. Involve the children in recycling, upcycling, reuse, repair, giving, and sharing activities.	
5.3. Climate Change and Economics	Key idea: Different weather conditions can affect people's daily lives.	e.g. identifying the effects of extreme weather on the availability of food items.	

5.4. Energy Consumption and Carbon Emissions	Key idea: Energy is required in everyday life	e.g. Learning about energy sources and the importance of reducing electricity consumption.	
5.5. Our Roles in a Post-Carbon Economy	Key idea: Care for our environment will contribute to our individual and social wellbeing	e.g. Celebrating the sustainable actions of the preschool, local. National and international community.	
Sustainable Lifestyles			
6.1. Engagement with Nature	Key idea: Human beings have an innate need to connect with nature	e.g. Promoting a love of nature and regular experience of its positive impact.	
6.2. Renewable Energy Use	Key idea: There are different sources of renewable energy existing naturally (such as solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, marine and bioenergy) as an effective alternative to fossil fuels	e.g. Identifying, painting, drawing and modelling renewable energy technologies.	
6.3. Responsible Consumption	Key idea: Material possessions do not bring a lifetime of happiness.	e.g. Making lists of needs and wants, learning about overconsumption. Playing with upcycled and recycled items	
6.4. Sustainable Living Spaces	Key idea: Everyone needs sustainable living spaces	e.g. Learning about clever indigenous housing designs from around the world	
6.5. Sustainable Mobility	Key idea: There are different forms of transportation.	e.g. Producing a tally of the forms of transport used by children and staff, identifying more sustainable alternatives	
6.6. Sustainable Diets	Key idea: Some people do not have enough food while others eat too much.	e.g. Supporting campaigns for healthy diets and for famine relief, donating food to food banks, at harvest festival.	
6.7. Sustainable Waste Practices	Key idea: Sustainable waste practices aim to keep materials in use for as long as possible	e.g. Teach children to reuse things instead of always trying to buy new items. Second-hand swap shops for books, coats, boots, toys. Donating outgrown clothes to others or to charities.	

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