

5 The Environment

A handbook TEXT

- **A** Read the text about wildfires. What is the author's purpose? Choose all the answers that are true.

The author wants to ...

- 1 share statistical data about the increasing number of wildfires.
- 2 outline some of the negative effects of wildfires.
- 3 warn readers about the dangers of wildfires.



Wildfires: A Growing Problem in a Warming World

Wildfires are uncontrolled fires that spread quickly across forests, grasslands, and other natural areas. These fires are caused by a combination of human activities, such as campfires or arson, and natural events like lightning strikes.

However, the growing problem of global warming and climate change is making fires worse than ever before. Rising temperatures, extended periods without rain, and changing weather patterns create the perfect conditions for these fires to start and spread. And wildfires are becoming more frequent all around the world.

In the short term, wildfires can destroy huge areas of land, burn down buildings, and force entire communities to leave their homes. The smoke these fires produce fills the air, blocking sunlight and making it hard to breathe. This affects both animals and people. The smoke is carried on the wind for miles around, turning clear skies into a heavy, gray blanket.

Long-term effects are just as serious: burned ecosystems take years to recover, if they ever do. Permanent damage to habitats puts many species at risk of extinction. The loss of huge areas of forest combined with the release of carbon as the trees burn, adds even more fuel to the fire of climate change, as carbon levels increase in the atmosphere.

As wildfires creep slowly closer to our doorsteps, their steady spread across the planet serves as a fiery warning about the need for urgent action to slow climate change and protect our environment.

LOST FOR WORDS?

arson (*n*) the crime of starting a fire intentionally

creep (*v*) to move slowly and carefully

doorstep (*n*) used figuratively to talk about someone's home

fiery (*adj*) made of fire

- **B** Read the text again. Which topics does the author include?

- ☐ 1 the main causes of wildfires
- ☐ 2 how fire services deal with wildfires
- ☐ 3 the short-term consequences of wildfires
- ☐ 4 the long-term consequences of wildfires

- **C** Read the extracts. Is the language **F** (figurative) or **L** (literal)?

- 1 Wildfires are becoming more frequent all around the world. F / L
- 2 The smoke is carried on the wind for miles around, turning clear skies into a heavy, gray blanket. F / L
- 3 Permanent damage to habitats puts many species at risk of extinction. F / L
- 4 The loss of huge areas of forest combined with the release of carbon ... adds even more fuel to the fire of climate change. F / L

- **D** Why does the author use figurative language in the text?

- a to create a pleasing, poetic effect and emphasize the beauty of nature
- b to stress the dramatic nature of the situations being described
- c to report neutral scientific facts

GREENWASHING

VOCABULARY

A Choose the correct word or phrase to complete the sentences.

- 1 If a company is guilty of greenwashing, it is **doing research into** / **making false claims about** how environmentally friendly their products are.
- 2 If a plastic container is recyclable, it **can only be used once** / **can be made into new products**.
- 3 If an energy source is renewable, it **depends on** / **doesn't depend on** oil and gas.
- 4 If a material is biodegradable, it **breaks down** / **doesn't break down** into harmless components over time.
- 5 If a process is carbon-neutral, it releases **more** / **no more** carbon into the atmosphere than it removes.
- 6 If chemicals are non-toxic, they are **dangerous** / **safe** for people and animals.
- 7 If products are eco-friendly, they **do** / **don't do** harm to the environment.
- 8 If products are organic, they are grown **with** / **without** chemicals.

B Choose the answer that best completes the sentences.

- 1 All the plastic we use in our packaging is 100% ____.
a greenwashing b renewable c biodegradable
- 2 The ingredients in our new vegan meals are ____.
a organic b recyclable c renewable
- 3 Many organizations invest in tree-planting charities in order to make their businesses ____.
a greenwashing b carbon-neutral c recyclable
- 4 Organic farmers guarantee that all the pesticides they use on their crops are ____.
a renewable b non-toxic c greenwashing
- 5 The local authorities are looking to invest in ____ energy sources in order to reduce their carbon footprint.
a renewable b recyclable c organic

C Complete the conversations with words from the boxes. You don't need all the words.

biodegradable greenwashing renewable

- A: The company claimed that all its plastic products were 100%
1 _____. But it just wasn't true.
- B: You mean they were 2 _____?
- A: Yes, totally!

non-toxic organic recyclable

- A: Excuse me, are these apples 3 _____?
- B: Yes, they are. The farmer uses only natural, 4 _____ pesticides.
- A: Great, thanks. I'll take four.

carbon-neutral eco-friendly recyclable

- A: Excuse me, are these plastic bags 5 _____?
- B: No, I'm afraid they're not biodegradable. But we have paper bags. They're more 6 _____.
- A: OK, yes, I'll take one of those, thanks.



Present and past perfect
PASSIVE

**A Match the sentence halves.**

- 1 Heavy rains had been forecast
 - 2 But floods like these had never been seen before
 - 3 A weather alert had been issued, but it had not been sent out early enough.
 - 4 Hundreds of people had been trapped in their cars; thank goodness they're safe now.
 - 5 Local people have been joined to clean up the streets, homes, and businesses.
 - 6 Environmentalists commented that the intensity of the rain has been impacted
- a by climate change
b by the local authorities
c by the local weather service
d by the people living in the area
e by the rising waters
f by thousands of volunteers

B Choose Pa (past perfect passive) or Pr (present perfect passive).

- 1 Had enough warning been given to local residents before the floods last month? Pa / Pr
- 2 Many trees have been planted in urban areas in recent years to improve air quality. Pa / Pr
- 3 Has sustainable development been promoted enough in your country over the last few years? Pa / Pr
- 4 Local authorities hadn't been warned of the intensity of last year's winter storms. Pa / Pr
- 5 The wetlands had been drained before people realized their importance for wildlife. Pa / Pr
- 6 Environmentalists are warning that national regulations haven't been carried out by local industries. Pa / Pr

C Choose the correct verb form for each sentence.

The recent local wildfires ¹ **have been described / had been described** as some of the most destructive in the area's history. It is well known that wildfires like this can quickly spread and cause widespread damage to wildlife, ecosystems, and communities. So, it is no surprise that by the time firefighters managed to contain the flames, a vast area of land ² **have been totally burned out / had been totally burned out**, more than ³ **has ever been seen / had ever been seen** in previous fires.

In a report made today, local authorities reported that thousands of homes ⁴ **have been damaged / had been damaged** by the flames and many families ⁵ **have been forced / had been forced** to leave the area. Environmentalists claim that their warnings about the increasing intensity of wildfires ⁶ **have been ignored / had been ignored** by local authorities for years previous to this year's terrible fires. It is hoped that authorities will heed these warnings in the future and prioritize prevention efforts.

- **A** 5.1 Listen to an environmentalist giving a talk. Choose the best summary for the term “climate whiplash.”

- 1 a situation where the climate becomes permanently hotter or colder due to human activity
- 2 sudden and extreme changes in weather, such as from drought to heavy rainfall
- 3 a series of gradual and minor changes in weather conditions that happen over decades

- **B** Listen again and complete the journalist’s notes. Use words from the box.

changes communities deforestation effects extreme
fail landslides temperatures

Topic: Climate whiplash

Definition: Rapid and extreme ¹ in weather conditions

Causes:

Human activities (fossil fuels, ² , pollution)

Rising global ³ lead to unpredictable weather.

Examples:

California: long periods of drought followed by intense rain, causing floods and ⁴

Sahel region (Africa): Alternating between drought and unexpected heavy rains, affecting agriculture and ⁵

Impacts:

Agriculture: Crops ⁶ from too much/little water.

Roads, electricity etc.: Problems with flooding after dry spells.

Human lives: Disruptions in daily life and economy.

Solutions:

Reduce carbon emissions.

Build stronger systems to handle ⁷ weather.

Key message: Understanding climate whiplash is essential in preparing for and reducing its ⁸

- **C** Choose the correct answers to complete the journalist’s summary of the event.

An environmentalist gave an interesting talk on rapid and extreme changes in weather conditions, otherwise known as ¹**climate whiplash / global warming**. The speaker explained that ²**heavy rainfall / human activities** and global warming have disrupted the climate’s natural balance, leading to these unpredictable changes. The talk concluded with a call to reduce ³**carbon emissions / extreme weather** and invest in ⁴**new crops / stronger systems** that can stand up to extreme weather events.



LOST FOR WORDS?

deforestation (n) cutting down wide areas of trees

drought (n) a long period without rain

fossil fuels (n) gas, coal, and oil

landslide (n) a large mass of falling earth usually caused by sudden rain

stable (adj) not likely to change

Collocations about the ENVIRONMENT

A Match the sentences halves.

- 1 Conservationists are working hard to protect **endangered**
- 2 Governments need to prioritize investments in **renewable**
- 3 Installing better windows can improve **energy**
- 4 Scientists warn that the continued release of **greenhouse**
- 5 The company is trying to minimize the **environmental**
- 6 The report highlights the importance of **sustainable**
- 7 Urban development is one of the leading causes of **habitat**
- 8 We can significantly reduce our **carbon**

- a **destruction** for wildlife.
- b **development** in tackling environmental challenges.
- c **efficiency** and lower heating costs.
- d **footprint** by using public transportation.
- e **gases** will accelerate climate change.
- f **impact** of its manufacturing processes.
- g **resources** like wind and solar power.
- h **species** like the tiger or orangutan.

B Complete the text using collocations from the box.

carbon footprint energy efficiency endangered species
environmental impact greenhouse gases
habitat destruction renewable resources
sustainable development



As cities grow, the ¹..... of urban development becomes more worrying. ²..... caused by the construction of new homes threatens many ³....., pushing them closer to extinction. To address these challenges, we must focus on ⁴..... that protects ecosystems while meeting human needs. Switching to ⁵..... like wind and solar power can also reduce the emission of ⁶..... Increasing ⁷..... reduces our ⁸..... and helps combat climate change.

A Unscramble the words to make sentences.

- 1 recycle / reduce / in / the / to / amount / landfills / trash / people / of
Many
- 2 prevent / plant / soil / order / trees / erosion / to / in
Farmers
- 3 strategies / preserving / for / on / biodiversity / focus
Conservation projects
- 4 change / that / they / find / study / so / climate / down / slow / it / ways / can / to
Scientists

B Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in parentheses.

- A: Why do people use reusable bags?
B: In order to ¹ (*reduce*) plastic waste and protect the environment.
A: And why do supermarkets charge for plastic bags?
B: It's for ² (*encourage*) shoppers to bring their own bags.
- A: Why are some cities building more bike lanes?
B: So that biking ³ (*be*) safer and more convenient.
A: What's the main reason for promoting biking?
B: It's for ⁴ (*reduce*) traffic congestion and pollution.
- A: Why do schools teach kids about recycling?
B: So that each child ⁵ (*know*) how to protect the planet from an early age.
A: And what's the purpose of community clean-up events?
B: They run clean-ups so as to ⁶ (*keep*) public spaces clean and litter-free.

C Complete the text with the expressions from the box. Each expression is used twice.

for in order to so that

A growing number of cities are encouraging the development of rooftop gardens ¹ combat air pollution and other environmental issues. Rooftop gardens improve air quality by reducing pollution and absorbing carbon dioxide. They are also useful ² lowering high temperatures in the summer, as plants help cool the surrounding environment. In addition to cooling the air in the summer, rooftop gardens also provide natural insulation ³ buildings stay warmer in the winter, reducing the need for heating. Urban gardeners also take care to grow a variety of different plants ⁴ create suitable habitats for local birds and insects. Some rooftop gardens are also useful ⁵ bringing communities together. These spaces allow people to meet, relax, and even grow their own food. They are carefully planned ⁶ city dwellers can enjoy a healthier and more connected lifestyle.



SPEAKING

Discussing a CONCEPT

● A Choose the correct word to complete the expressions.

- 1 Can you provide a **proof** / **source** for that?
- 2 Come **again** / **back**?
- 3 Do you have a / **any** proof?
- 4 Did I **hear** / **say** you right?
- 5 I've never heard that **after** / **before**.
- 6 **Where** / **Who** did you hear that?

● B 5.2 Complete the conversation with words from the box. Listen and check.

come evidence heard provide right sure



Ava: Did you know that AI and data servers are responsible for a significant amount of carbon emissions?

Leo: Wait, did I hear you ¹.....? AI is causing carbon emissions? How?

Ava: Well, training AI models and running data centers require massive amounts of electricity, and if that electricity comes from fossil fuels, it increases carbon footprints.

Leo: Hmm, I've never ²..... that before. Are you ³..... about this?

Ava: Absolutely! Some studies say data centers account for around 2% of global energy consumption.

Leo: ⁴..... again? Only 2%? That doesn't sound too bad.

Ava: True, but as AI usage grows, that number will get higher.

Leo: Do you have any ⁵..... to back that up?

Ava: Sure! I read an article recently from *Nature* about the energy demands of AI systems.

Leo: Can you ⁶..... a source for that? I'd like to read more about it.

Ava: Of course. I'll find the link for you.

Leo: Thanks! It's fascinating—and a little scary.

● C Record yourself expressing doubt about the claims made in the conversation using phrases from Exercise A.

PRONUNCIATION

Sounds: /h/ AND /r/

■ A 5.3 Listen and choose the word you hear.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1 hope / rope | 3 hug / rug |
| 2 hair / rare | 4 hail / rail |

■ B 5.4 Listen and repeat the sentences. Pay attention to the pronunciation of the words in bold.

- 1 I **hope** the **rope** is strong enough to hold my weight.
- 2 It's **rare** to see someone with purple **hair**.
- 3 She gave him a **hug** as they stood on the **rug**.
- 4 The **hail** hit the **rail** outside the window.

Contributing to an ONLINE DISCUSSION

- **A** Read the forum posts. Are the writers in favor of the bike lanes? Yes or no?

1 Sylvia 2 Paul 3 Hana

⌕
⌕
⌕

Today's question: What do you think about the new bike lanes downtown?


Sylvia

I think the new bike lanes are fantastic! They make biking much safer and they encourage more people to choose eco-friendly transportation. With fewer cars on the road, we'll see less traffic congestion and air pollution. This is a big step forward for our city!


Paul

I'm sorry, but I can't agree with Sylvia. I think the new bike lanes are a terrible idea! They've taken away valuable road space, and they're causing massive traffic jams for drivers.


Hana

While I understand Paul's concerns about traffic congestion, I agree with Sylvia that the bike lanes are a positive change. Unlike Paul, I believe that we need to shift our focus toward sustainable transportation. As more people start biking, we'll start to see the benefits—less pollution, healthier lifestyles, and safer roads.

- **B** Complete the chart with expressions from the box.

I believe what X says is right. I'm on X's side ...
 I'm sorry, but I think X is wrong. Like X, I also think that ...
 Unlike X, I think that ...
 While I understand X's point, I don't believe that ...

AGREE	DISAGREE

- **C** Prepare to write a post in the same forum thread as Exercise A. Make notes on something said that you agree with, something you disagree with, and a new argument of your own.
- **D** Write your post for the forum. Use around 60–80 words. Use expressions from Exercises A and B in your post.

