

The
English Teacher's
Climate Crisis
Survival Kit



Published by the ELT Footprint community
ELTfootprint.org

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Introduction

Who is this survival guide for?

This short survival guide is specifically aimed at English language teachers, schools and institutions who are looking for a starting point to make their lessons more focused on the climate emergency and to make their place of work greener and more sustainable.

ELT Footprint, who are we?

Do you ever feel as if your classroom and everything outside your classroom are two separate worlds? *ELT Footprint* was created to help bring the things that matter most into our working lives. We aim to integrate our work with our homes, the living planet, the long-term safety, health and happiness of our loved ones, and nature.

There is a global crisis going on that threatens so much that we value and, as English teachers, just like everyone else, we can choose to be part of the problem or part of the solution. *ELT Footprint* is first and foremost a community of people working within the English teaching profession that aims to be part of the solution.

We are a hub for sharing ideas, raising awareness and celebrating victories. We are also a resource. Teachers, school owners, ministries of education, trainers, examiners, materials writers and publishers need support and guidance in making their workplaces and practices greener, and we are here to help, with ready-made materials, and with the people power only a caring community can provide.

At the time of publication, we have about 3,000 members (and counting) all around the world. We have an active website and blog – eltfootprint.org – and we have hope that our profession can be an example of how industry can change so that it is sustainable. If you work in ELT but are not yet a member, then welcome to *ELT Footprint*!

Instructions for use

If you ...

want to know how to give your lessons a sustainability twist, go to page 4.

are looking for quality ready-made lessons related to environmental issues, go to page 5.

need guidance on making your staffroom and school greener, go to page 6.

are wondering what more you can do, go to page 7.

need to know how the language of the climate crisis is changing, go to page 9.

And if you aren't sure what all of this has got to do with you and your job, read on.

You can find out more about becoming an ELT Footprinter at the end of this guide.

ELT & our role in fighting the global climate crisis

For humanity to put an end to the current global crisis in rising temperatures, waste mismanagement and biodiversity collapse, we must all pitch in. Realising how little we can do to halt the industrial extraction of high-carbon fuels or change how society shops can be demotivating. But there is a middle way – a way of making change happen at the intermediate level of our schools and organisations. When we are at work, we have a say in how things are run, we can talk to our bosses and our peers, and our good practices can be seen far and wide. As ELT Footprinters, we are seeing this happening in our workplaces. At the level of the workplace we can enhance the effect of our actions in three main ways:

- 1 Teachers teach. As such, we can educate our students about the issues. In this survival guide there is advice about raising awareness effectively, without patronising or lecturing, and there are links to great lesson plans on everything from fast fashion to ending the use of microplastics.
- 2 English is the language of global activism and climate science. We can help our students with the means to join in this global conversation and help them see their place in this community of like-minded people, whether as conscientious consumers with questions or as ecologists with answers.
- 3 Our profession is part of a global industry. This has its positive sides, such as our ability to spread great ideas quickly, but it also means that we leave a large carbon footprint in the form of extensive long-distance travel, a globalised ELT publishing industry and an over-reliance on hardware and the Internet. ELT makes a mess, but we can take steps to clean it up.

Gone are the days when we could afford to let others be the activists. The time has come for us all to do what we can, and since ELT is where we live and work, so ELT is the place we need to change.



5 ways to give your lessons a sustainability twist

We can approach the challenge of making a lesson part of the solution from a variety of angles. Here are a few.

1 Topics

Spend time in the lesson discussing issues of sustainability related to the topic. In a lesson on *clothes and fashion*, for example, ask: *Where were your clothes made? Have a look! Do you know who makes your clothes? How many t-shirts do you own? How often do you buy new clothes? What do you do with clothes that you have outgrown? (for children) or that you no longer wear? (for adults).*

2 Subtext

We can often perceive messages in a lesson's content. For example, an article that celebrates the glamour of travel might have the subtext: *Don't we all want to travel long distances by air?*, or a lesson on how to be successful might be conveying the underlying message: *You, too, can aspire to be as wealthy as this person.* Ask your students to identify and question the values implied in lessons.

3 Visual literacy

Think about the images chosen to accompany the lesson. Could they have used different images to show other sides of the topic? For example, in a lesson on food, rather than showing a fancy restaurant, they could have shown how the food got all the way from the farm to the plate. You could present the class with alternative images that show different aspects of the topic and ask: *How would these change the overall message of the article?*

4 Classroom footprint

It's much easier to cut down on photocopies now that we have the tools to share material digitally. In addition, ensure that lights, projectors, heaters or air-con are turned off when not needed. Involve the students in these habits. Discuss what you can do collectively to make lessons greener.

5 Project-based learning

Getting students to take their environmental topics out of the classroom and into the real world can serve several purposes, and project-based learning can be the way to achieve it. The first benefit is the motivation generated when you take the language into a real environment; the second benefit comes from the level of collaboration between students that projects require. The final – and most important – benefit is that our students will be sharing their environmental awareness with others. So, get them making posters to put on lamp posts, writing short articles for local English-medium newspapers or taking the message to younger students in other schools.

See this article by Owain Llewelyn for more ideas: [7 Tips for Environment-themed Language Lessons](#)

See this blog post by Ben Goldstein for more thoughts on using images: [Images and the Climate Crisis: moving out of our comfort zone](#)

Useful links to lesson plans & lesson ideas

This page offers a quick guide to finding ready-made lessons with environmental themes.

General sites with lots of lessons to explore

[ELT Sustainable](#)

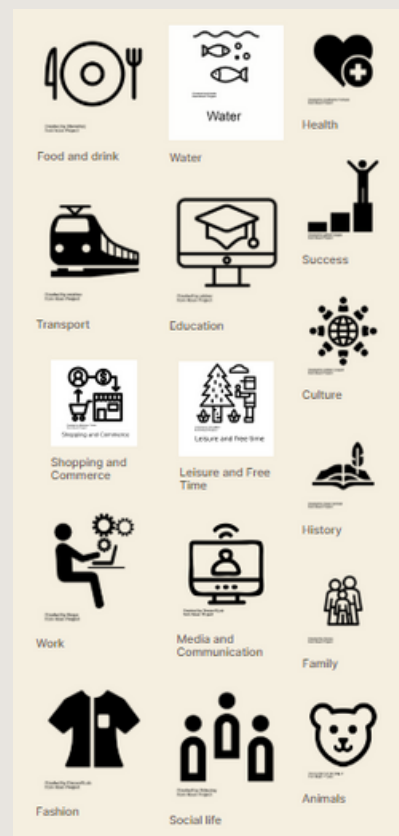
Owain Llewelyn has been creating quality lessons with sustainability at their heart since 2012. Many of them are related to particular moments in the calendar (see p.7). This free website usefully arranges lessons by topic. Owain Llewelyn also runs a course in bringing sustainability into the classroom: [Language Teaching for the Planet](#).

[British Council's Learn English magazine](#)

Among the huge bank of lessons published by the British Council are reading lessons based around special days, including many related to environmental and social justice.

[The World's Largest Lesson](#)

This is the UN's ambitious education programme to meet 17 sustainable development goals, by 2030. It has easy-to-use lesson plans and creative resources for all 17 goals and as well as suggestions for ways in which you and your students can take action to achieve these goals.



Tailormade lessons from ELT Footprinters



This hands-on [recycling quiz](#) and project for young learners was shared on our blog by teacher, trainer and school owner Anita Demitroff.

Coursebook author Sue Kay wrote [a set of tailormade worksheets](#) on the subject of clothes and fashion which you can access via the [Materials](#) section of our website.

This blog post by Ceri Jones introduces an [eco-kindness calendar](#) for young learners, which can be adapted for adults.

Look for other popular themes and topics on the [Materials](#) section of the *ELT Footprint* website. These include eco-heroes, diet and its impact on the planet, music festivals, bees, e-waste, Halloween, nature photography and plastic.

A charter for a greener classroom

A charter for a greener classroom

- 1 Think before you copy
- 2 Recycle and reuse paper
- 3 Use notebooks and take notes
- 4 Use reusable classroom materials (e.g. mini whiteboards)
- 5 Be aware of the classroom environment (a/c and heating)
- 6 Reduce plastic (e.g. stationery)
- 7 Be the example (no single-use plastic)
- 8 Raise awareness
- 9 Go digital
- 10 Share ideas



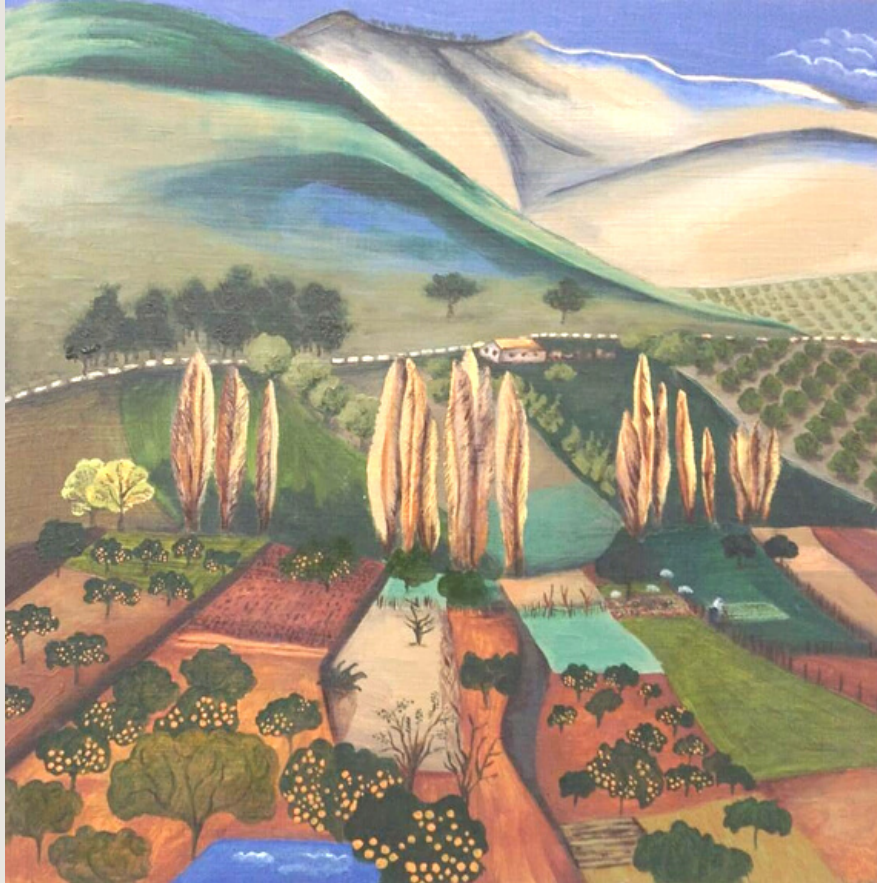
This classroom charter was drawn up by two *ELT Footprint* founding members, who are also teacher trainers, Nicola Meldrum and Danielle Jones. They wanted to introduce a discussion about environmental responsibilities in their initial training courses and beyond.

Nicola Meldrum wrote about it in a [blog post](#), and Danielle Jones implemented it across all training at her school.

You can download a copy [here](#) and adapt it for your context.

What's next?

Here are five paths that could take you onwards!



- Join *ELT Footprint* on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. Read posts on the website. Get in touch!
- Call a staff meeting, put out greening ideas and take initiatives in your staffroom.
- Try out lessons from the sources yourself. Make your professional development green! Then share what you've done with colleagues. Maybe write a blog post about what you've done, or post about it on social media.
- Read and research: prepare for social and environmental change by learning the green 21st century skills, e.g. gardening, mending and repurposing; learn about politics and activism: join Greenpeace, join Extinction Rebellion, join your local environmental advocacy group; get to know more about your planet, especially your local patch.
- Take [a course in sustainable lesson planning](#) with Owain Llewelyn.

ELT Footprint's Environmental Days Calendar

In order to promote social and environmental issues, the United Nations designates specific days to mark them. Through awareness-raising and action, people can learn more about their importance. One key way to do this is through lessons about them. These can be especially engaging because they are so topical, and their message may find its way outside the classroom into the students' lives and local contexts.

ELT Footprint have put together a couple of resources to help us remember these days.

- 1 Add the [ELT Footprint calendar](#) to your Google calendar.
- 2 Use our [downloadable pdf calendar](#) (with interactive links to lessons and resources) and share it in your classroom or office.
- 3 Check out the [official UN International Days](#) list.

JUNE



Glossary of terms

As language teaching professionals, we understand the power of words. The words we use can sensitise or desensitise people to certain viewpoints. *Warming*, for example, sounds quite pleasant – it sounds like something to be desired; as such, the term *global warming* is a misleading way of referring to an event that is likely to make most people's lives more difficult and dangerous. *Global heating* more accurately describes what is happening. In this way, newspapers and publishers are adopting new terms to describe the climate crisis (not to be referred to as *climate change*). We think ELT should do, too, in the language used in lessons materials and the language we teach our students. Here are some recommended terms, along with the terms they replace. Some aim to more accurately describe the crisis we face; others classify the natural world according to its own reality rather than how it is exploited by people as a resource.

New expressions

climate breakdown / crisis / emergency

the living planet / natural world

global heating

defending the planet

high-carbon fuels

climate science denier

living things

fish population

What they replace

climate change

the environment

global warming

saving the planet

fossil fuels

climate sceptic

natural resources

fish stocks

This article explains why *The Guardian* newspaper changed the language it uses to report on the environment: [Why The Guardian is changing the language it uses about the environment](#)

This blog post explains how the *Oxford English Dictionary* chose *climate emergency* as its Word of the Year for 2019 here: [Climate Emergency: Oxford Dictionary Word of the Year 2019](#)

This blog post introduces an *ELT Footprint* project initiated by teacher and author, Clyde Fowle, to put together an updated glossary of terms. [A glossary of key environmental terms for the ELT classroom](#). You're welcome to come and join the conversation!

Acknowledgements

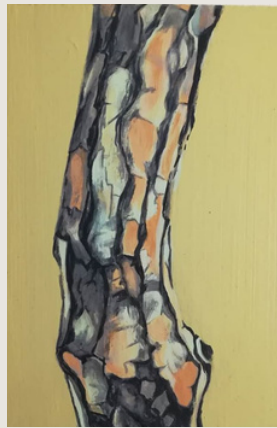
Thanks go to all our members, followers and supporters, and to all the people working in ELT who are fighting for the environment in their various different capacities.

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And to Anna Bellinger, *ELT Footprint's* Artist in Residence, for the front cover and other illustrations. Keep up with her work on Instagram @absowm and at www.annabellinger.net/.



"To the peace activists, feminists, stray dog adopters, teachers, volunteers, foster carers, recyclers, givers, doers and believers, I say thank you. We are all on a different path and we all see through different eyes. Current world issues that you are passionate about, aren't always what other people are trying to change... and that's okay. It's not everyone's job to save every part of the world but it is everyone's responsibility to thank every person who is doing THEIR part to save the world. Don't criticise, just appreciate. Don't judge, just educate. We're all trying our best. Thank you."

Carla Borthwick, inspired by Peta Kelly's book *Earth is Hiring*.

