

# How to work with young people



## Introduction

Young people and their teachers, youth leaders and parents are some of the most receptive audiences. These guidelines give you ideas about ways to contact and work with them.

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## Why work with young people?

Young people are the next generation. They are important future decision makers and stakeholders. Young people are concerned about their environment. Many already hold strong views about the issue. Allowing young people to discuss environmental issues, to develop a deeper understanding and voice their concerns can be a positive, fulfilling experience both for you and for them. Educating young people will help them develop valuable skills and knowledge and help them make informed decisions in the future.

## **What is your role?**

You might want to visit schools and youth clubs and work directly with pupils, by giving talks and running sessions to inspire and educate. Perhaps you would rather act as an advisor to educators or the Board of Governors, to provide expertise and solutions.

How to contact your Local Education Authority & Youth Organisations  
Local Education Authorities (LEAs), support and challenge schools to improve their performance. They ensure every child has a school place, and are responsible for schools within their borough or county.

**Find the contact details for your LEA** either under 'Local Services' in the *Yellow Pages* or by searching on the Internet (search for your local council website, and from here there should be a page under Services called 'Education and Schools' or something similar). Alternatively the Department for Education and Skills site has a list of

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all the LEAs in the country, listed alphabetically - <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/localauthorities/> then click on the Local Authorities address finder link.

**Find the contact details for your local schools** either through your LEA as above or through [www.schoolswebdirectory.co.uk/](http://www.schoolswebdirectory.co.uk/) which includes a postcode, county or LEA search facility. For a free printed list of school addresses call your LEA. If you have access to the Internet, and follow the above instructions, you are likely to be able to find a list of schools in your area with addresses and telephone numbers, and often the name of the head teacher. There may also be a link to schools' individual websites if they have them.

It can also be worthwhile calling the LEA to ask them questions such as:

- Is the LEA running any environmental projects?
- Are there any environmental events/initiatives taking place locally?
- Do they know of any schools that are already working on environmental projects e.g. improving their school grounds, or running environmental clubs after school?
- Are there any Eco Schools in the area?
- You may also want to consider asking the LEA to send something to all your local schools (maybe a flyer advertising your services as a speaker, or some background information about Friends of the Earth).

**Find the contact details for your local youth clubs/organisations** either by doing an internet search (type *find a youth club* followed by the name of your town or Borough ie. *find a youth club Brighton*) or by contacting your local Development Education Centre (DEC) who should be able to advise you. Visit [www.dea.org.uk/dec/](http://www.dea.org.uk/dec/) for a complete list.

## How to approach schools and youth clubs

There are plenty of opportunities to work within both schools and youth clubs. They often appreciate help from an outside specialist, particularly if you can act as an expert on an environmental issue. One teacher said: "*A new face adds interest – children like experts.*"

When approaching a school or youth club be clear about why you are contacting them. What do you want to do and what do you need the school / group to do to make this happen? Teachers and youth workers like as much advance warning as possible.

### **Schools**

Start by telephoning the school receptionist to find out which teacher (get their name) is responsible for: assemblies; school environmental clubs; after school clubs; specific subjects such as geography; citizenship; PSHE and science. State which year you wish to talk to eg. Year 7 (11-12 year olds). If you cannot get through to a receptionist then write to the Head of the year of the age group you wish to talk to. Heads of year are often also PSHE and Citizenship coordinators.

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### Youth groups

As with schools it's important to try and find a named contact within the youth group to write to. However, as youth workers are not required to do work around the environment or sustainability (see bottom of this page) there won't necessarily be a specific member of staff with this remit.

The best thing to do is telephone the youth group, explaining that you are interested in doing some work with them on environment issues, and find out if there is a youth worker there with a particular interest in the field. Christian Aid, WWF and People and Planet all have regional staff that may be able to put you in touch with interested youth workers.

Janet and Tania from South Cheshire Friends of the Earth say that *"Writing to a named contact and enclosing information about our local group with contact details, a questionnaire for the teacher/youth worker to indicate their interest, details on what we can talk about, and a stamped addressed envelope has increased the response rate and means we have visited more young people"*.

You can follow up your letter with a phone call (for schools: lunch time or after 3.30 pm / for youth groups, times vary) or email.

### Once a visit has been agreed make sure you find out:

- date
- time
- where the school/club is
- how many people you are talking to
- if it is a mixed/single sex group
- the age of the young people you are speaking to
- how long your session is going to be
- topics they have already covered.

If you are planning to go into a school then it is beneficial to link your session to the National Curriculum. This will make it easier for teachers to accommodate your visit into their schedule and to provide focus to your session. Environmental education can be linked under many National Curriculum subjects and we have summarised the three main ones below. For a more detailed guide to the National Curriculum and suitable activities which fit within the subjects see <http://community.foe.co.uk/youth>

**Citizenship** – gives pupils the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels.

**Education for sustainable development (ESD)** – enables pupils to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to participate in decisions about the way we do things individually and collectively, both locally and globally, that will improve the quality of life now without damaging the planet for the future.

**Personal social and health education (PSHE)** – helps pupils to lead confident, healthy and responsible lives as individuals and as members of society.

Visiting a youth group can be slightly more complex as youth workers have no statutory or professional obligation to do work around the environment, sustainability or global issues. (Although, the Development Education Foundation is working hard to change this and have just introduced a global issues statement into the training outline for Youth and Community studies/qualifications).

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All youth workers are however, interested in providing stimulating activities for young people that enhance social and communication skills, help young people to play a useful role in their community and develop a sense of empowerment. Organising something like a debate may hit a lot of these buttons as would teaching young people how to lobby their council and media about an environmental issue important to THEM.

### How to plan a session

Talking to young people can be challenging, rewarding and enjoyable, and by remembering a few key things need not be scary!

#### **Know your audience**

When working with children and young people it's important to know who you are talking to. How old are they and what do they already know about the topic? Think back to when you were that age. What was most important to you? What made you excited? These sorts of questions will help you get a better sense of your audience.

#### **Be prepared**

- The best way to feel confident is to be prepared.
- Set clear aims and objectives – it's better to focus on one point rather than trying to teach everything at once.
- How long is your session? – break it down into smaller more manageable timeslots.
- Open your session with a bang – a gimmick often helps grab attention.
- What method are you going to use? You may want to use more than one in a session. Are they appropriate for the age you're working with? (See page seven for more on teaching methods).
- Have a backup activity in case things go more quickly than expected.
- How are you going to round off your session? Summarise the session. Maybe do a quick Q&A or a short quiz.
- You can use the quick Q&A or a short quiz to evaluate how the session went: Did it meet the objectives you set? Did the young people enjoy it? Did you enjoy it? What would you do differently next time?
- What resources do you need for your session? Who is going to provide them?
- The teacher/youth leader must be present in your session.
- Download the How to plan a session template from <http://community.foe.co.uk/youth>.

#### **In the classroom/youth club:**

- be relaxed and enthusiastic
- speak to young people as you would to adults
- answer questions: If you don't know, say so and offer to find out
- encourage all participants to speak, and listen to their points of view
- explain any technical points you make
- use props or visual aids where possible
- use a variety of techniques for short attention spans
- only give handouts when you're ready for them to be read.

#### **Health & safety**

It is really important to have thought through the possible risks and ways to reduce or remove them. This can be as simple as thinking through the materials you need and ensuring that you take steps to remove the risk and have measures to deal with the

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potential risk should it occur, e.g. making sure cables are not a potential trip hazard, or that materials do not have sharp edges. For a template risk assessment sheet go to <http://community.foe.co.uk/youth/> and follow the link to the Child Protection Policy.

### Child protection

It is important that you have read and incorporate the code of practice (available in Friends of the Earth's Child Protection Policy) into your planning.

### Planning template

Full version <http://community.foe.co.uk/youth>

Preparation prompts	Notes
Topic	
What activity are you going to deliver? <i>i.e. quiz / assembly.</i>	
How many students? What age are the students?	
What are you hoping to achieve? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Aims (general)</i></li><li>• <i>Objectives (specific &amp; measurable)</i></li></ul>	
National Curriculum links?	
Timings - <i>Make a time plan</i>	
What research is needed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Logistics i.e. room size / layout</i></li><li>• <i>Student knowledge / special needs</i></li></ul>	
What method (s) will you use? <i>i.e. explanation, Q&amp;A, discussion</i>	
What resources will you need?	
Are there any health & safety / child protection issues?	
How will you evaluate the session?	
<b>Further considerations</b>	
Further actions for the students?	
How will you involve the media?	
Will you be offering any follow up?	

## **How to... work with young people**

How to engage young people

### **Ways to communicate with young people**

There are many different ways of communicating – quite often we associate communication with verbal and face-to-face contact.

Face-to-face communications can take place through

- Workshops in schools, youth groups, after-school clubs, drama and arts clubs, faith groups and other interest groups.
- Street stalls and festivals.

However not all communication takes place in person, and there are many effective ways to get your message across to young people without actually being present.

Non face-to-face communication can take place through

- Radio (research you local area to see if there are any community-based radio projects).
- Magazines, newspapers and youth-oriented publications (your local authority Connexions youth service may have a regular magazine).
- Internet (use your own Friends of the Earth website or communicate your message through youth-oriented websites in your area).
- Posters and design-work.
- Flyers with youth-oriented messages about environmental and social issues.
- Displays in schools (schools often have themed weeks such as Arts or Fitness and you can creatively tie in Friends of the Earth messages with these).

### **Language**

Using the right type of language and, in face-to-face contact, the right tone and body-language, are all extremely important in getting your message across effectively.

Research your audience well beforehand – be aware of the culture and mindful of the kinds of peer pressures likely to be felt by the age group you are working with. Always try and link what you are saying to their experiences and give examples of how they can make changes in their everyday lives.

And remember that all young people are not the same.

### **Some simple do's:**

- be informative
- be inspirational
- be respectful
- be clear
- pitch the session at their level
- be friendly and approachable
- fun and creative activities – if appropriate you could use visuals and music
- encourage them to voice opinions and concerns, and to find the solutions themselves.

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### Teaching methods

It is important to choose appropriate teaching methods for your group and subject.

Below is a list of things to consider.

#### Objective

What's your overall goal? Answer this and then think about which teaching methods will help you to achieve it. For example, if you want students to learn how to make something then demonstration and practical will be far more effective than lecture and Q&A.

#### Who?

- Consider the *size* of the group and remember that some methods only work with smaller groups.
- What *age* are the students? Younger students have a shorter attention span and respond well to games and fun group activities.
- Ability level? Don't always assume that a class of 13 year-olds in one school will have the same ability level or motivation as in another school. Try and find out some background information from a teacher before you start planning your activities.

#### Resources

What resources will you need to compliment your teaching methods and are these available? Remember staff and classrooms are resources, if you are planning small group work you will need more than one teacher to facilitate this and sufficient space.

#### Evaluation

How will you assess learning? This should form an integral part of your planning and will go hand in hand with your choice of teaching method.

### The following is a list and description of the most common teaching methods

#### Lecture

Suitable for older students only. Involves the teacher/group leader telling the students information. It is *not* an interactive teaching method and there is usually no opportunity for feedback. Lectures *must* be supported by other methods that will assess whether learning has taken place.

#### Question & answer (Q&A)

Posing a series of questions to students in order to encourage thinking and to establish understanding. It is an ideal method to accompany lecture and is commonly used as an assessment method.

#### Discussion

Used in problem-solving, developing and changing attitudes and development of communication skills.

Students are actively involved in talking to each other about a certain idea, topic or activity that they have just completed. The teachers' job is to manage/facilitate the discussion. This is a good method for encouraging participation but be aware that some students may be reluctant to speak out in front of their peers.

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### Group work

Refers to both small and large group work. Often used for planning activities, practical or project work and usually involves a formal outcome through an activity or presentation. Students learn to work in groups, develop teamwork skills and improve communication skills.

### Role-play

Act out a situation e.g. public meeting to discuss the planning of a new supermarket. Role plays are good for developing opinions and encouraging students to look at a situation through a new perspective. Great for practicing communication skills.

### Debate

Choose a topic that has a strong argument for and against, split the class/group, one side researches and presents the case for and the other side, the case against. Once both sides have presented, the class takes a vote.

Debates can be incredibly thought provoking. However, they are time consuming and staff skill is essential to facilitate the process.

### Demonstration & practical

Normally used to demonstrate a practical skill after which the students will carry out a practical session i.e. practice the skill by repeating what they have seen.

### Games

Games are a learning situation with an element of competition. For young children, they are used to make learning fun and keep the students interested. For older students and adults they can be used as a team building exercise.

### Activity ideas

There are a huge number of activities which can be used. We have included a few below together with their National Curriculum links.

For more details on the National Curriculum see <http://community.foe.co.uk/youth>.

### Time machine

Ask everyone to close their eyes and think about where they live now. What is it like? What are the people like? What is the weather like? What are the shops like? How are people travelling? Etc. Then ask them to imagine the same place in 40 years time. How has it changed? – Ask the same questions as above. Get people to feedback on their vision. If it was a good vision, how can we ensure it happens; if negative, how can we prevent it from happening?

**English**  
**History**  
**Citizenship**  
**Geography**

### Leaves on a tree – wish list

Make a paper representation of a bare tree. Cut out paper leaves and ask people to write one thing on the leaf that they would like to see happen for the benefit of the environment. Then cut out paper apples and ask people to write one thing that they could do to make their wish come true. Stick the leaves and apples on the tree. Leaves on the ground could represent environmental problems/bad things we have done to our planet.

**Art & Design**  
**Citizenship**  
**PSHE**

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### Agree/Disagree or True/False

Use large cards with Agree/Disagree or True/False written on them. Place the cards at opposite ends of a room. Read out a statement, cars should be banned in London or shopping areas should be pedestrianised, and ask people to move to the card – whether it be Agree or Disagree. Discuss. Alternatively, cut out statements and give out to groups to discuss and give feedback.

**English**  
**Citizenship**  
**PSHE**

### Creativity

Write a press release or a story. Make a video or a story board. Design posters and leaflets, or create a website. The materials produced can be used for public information or you could organise a competition.

**English**  
**Art & Design**  
**ICT**

### Changing song lyrics

Take popular songs and ask the group to change the lyrics so the song is about an environmental issue.

**Music**  
**English**

### Dressing up

Make costumes of 'rubbish'. Dress up as characters and act out an environmental story, e.g. the life cycle of a plastic bag. Or work with the teacher or youth worker to put on a fashion show made out of recycled materials.

**Drama**  
**Art & Design**

Following up after your session and supporting the very keen

### What do we mean by follow up work?

Follow up work can take several forms from running additional sessions within the school / youth group to providing contact details for sources of further information and support, to simply phoning the school / group after the session to discuss how it went.

### Why is follow up work important?

In whatever form you offer it, providing some kind of support or follow up after your session is highly recommended. It shows that you are taking your role seriously, and knowing that they have some support (even if it is only advisory) will help the school / group to feel empowered in taking action.

### Ideas for follow up work / possible roles

- Environment advisor for student council / committee.
- Produce a newsletter for young people on your groups' environmental work.
- Start an environmental notice board.
- Practical help i.e. support setting up a waste and recycling scheme / set up eco-monitoring schemes.
- Facilitate a debating club; this could be a fantastic way to introduce important environmental topics.
- Advisory i.e. be able to redirect them to other organisation's / sources of info as needed.
- Promote new Friends of the Earth education resources as and when available.

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### Check list for follow up work

	<b>Notes / questions to ask yourself</b>
Be clear about your role:	<p><b>Q.</b> Are you going to offer your services for follow up work?</p> <p><b>Q.</b> What can you / can't you offer? (skill gaps &amp; time restrictions)</p> <p><b>Q.</b> Does this fit in with your initial aims of working with the school /group?</p> <p><b>Note.</b> Think about this before you make initial contact with a school / group as you may find that they will want to start talking about a long-term relationship straight away. They will almost certainly be keen to find out if any follow up support will be available.</p>
If you are not in a position to or do not want to undertake any follow up work yourself:	<p><b>Q.</b> Are there any other groups or individuals you could direct them to for further support and / or follow up work?</p> <p><b>Note.</b> Do a search on your local Council website for other environmental organisations in the area.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>For practical conservation work find out if there is a local Wildlife Trust <a href="http://www.wildlifetrusts.org">www.wildlifetrusts.org</a> or a local branch of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers <a href="http://www.btcv.org.uk">www.btcv.org.uk</a></p> <p>For advice about energy efficiency <a href="http://www.thecarbontrust.co.uk/carbontrust/">www.thecarbontrust.co.uk/carbontrust/</a></p>
If you have offered specific follow up support / work, consider:	<p><b>Q.</b> Are there any additional Health &amp; Safety and Child protection issues associated with your follow up work? <i>I.e. some activities may require an enhanced disclosure certificate.</i></p>

## How to... work with young people

### How to join the youth & education network

The youth & education network is open to all local Friends of the Earth members. By joining the network you will have access to:

- staff time
- a quarterly mailing
- articles in *Change your world*
- free child protection checks
- education resources
- share your own resources with others
- opportunities for sharing ideas and meet like-minded people
- full training days and workshop sessions
- opportunities to feed back your ideas and join the advisory group
- educators looking for a speaker.

Friends of the Earth's Youth & Education programme is focussed on supporting local groups to visit schools and youth clubs and to provide environmental education whilst **supervised** by a teacher or youth worker. To volunteer in this situation you will need a **standard disclosure** administered by the Criminal Records Bureau. If you have already had a disclosure you will still need to provide current documentation.

Setting up youth clubs, after school activities or environment days **unsupervised**, where you are in sole charge of young people and there are no teachers, youth workers or parents present is **not** an aim of Friends of the Earth's Youth & Education programme. Organising such an event requires a detailed understanding and knowledge of how to implement and meet the requirements of child protection and safety issues. Organising an event can only be carried out in the name of Friends of the Earth with staff permission, once they are satisfied with your plans and you have had an **enhanced disclosure**.

You can also join the network and act as an advisor to educators or the Board of Governors. You don't need to have a disclosure to fulfil this role.

To join the youth & education network and apply for a disclosure please refer to <http://community.foe.co.uk/youth/> or telephone 020 7490 1555.

How to find out more

### By Surfing Friends of the Earth's web sites

Your first port of call <http://community.foe.co.uk/youth>

Directing educators & young people <http://www.foe.co.uk/learning/>

Share experiences and join in on the Friends of the Earth's discussion forum 'How to work with young people'. <http://community.foe.co.uk/discussion>

Training days are advertised on <http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/events/> or keep an eye on the back page of *Change your world* (the bi-monthly magazine for local group members).

## How to... work with young people

### How to find out more... from other organisations

#### Connexions

Tel: 080 800 13219

Website: [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

Provides support to young people and run a lot of youth clubs. Its underlying aim is to combat social exclusion.

#### Council for Environmental Education

Tel: 0118 950 2550

Website: [www.cee.org.uk](http://www.cee.org.uk)

Membership of the Council is open to national organisations with an interest in environmental education.

#### Development Education Association

Tel: 0207 812 1282

Website: [www.dea.org.uk](http://www.dea.org.uk)

Working with a network of national and local organisations, including 45 local development education centres, the DEA aims to raise awareness of global and development issues in the UK.

#### Department for Education and Skills

Tel: 0870 000 2288

Website: [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

Find contact details for your Local Education Authority, the latest policies on sustainable development and other environment and education issues.

#### Eco Schools

Website: [www.ecoschools.org.uk](http://www.ecoschools.org.uk)

Tel: 01942 612 621

Eco Schools is a programme for promoting environmental awareness through curriculum subjects.

#### Education for sustainable development

Website: [www.nc.uk.net/esd](http://www.nc.uk.net/esd)

This website has been designed to help teachers, curriculum coordinators, school managers and governors to develop approaches to education for sustainable development.

#### Girlguiding UK

Tel: 020 7834 6242

Website: [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk)

#### National Curriculum

Website: [www.nc.uk.net](http://www.nc.uk.net)

This site links every National Curriculum programme of study requirement to high-quality, relevant teaching resources.

#### National Youth Agency

Website: [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

Tel: 0116 242 7350

Aims to advance youth work to promote young people's voice, influence and place in society

#### Prince's Trust

Website: [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

Tel: 0800 842 842

Works with 14-30 year olds who face disadvantages, offering them the support, encouragement and financial assistance to achieve their goals.

#### Rio Kids

Website: [www.riokids.net](http://www.riokids.net)

A web project in which young people born in the year of the Rio Earth Summit offer personal, creative responses to the sustainable development of our planet.

#### Scout Association Information Centre

Website: [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 300 1818

#### TeacherNet

Website: [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)

Information on educational news and resources for teachers.

#### UK Youth

Website: [www.ukyouth.org](http://www.ukyouth.org)

Tel: 0207 242 4045

UK Youth is associated with youth clubs around the country and can put you in touch with your local association.

#### Wildlife Trusts UK National Office

Website: [www.wildlifewatch.org.uk](http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk)

Tel: 0870 036 7711

Runs nationwide 'Wildlife Watch' clubs for children between 8 and 12, and produces educational resources for teachers/youth workers.

#### Young People's Trust for the Environment and Nature Conservation

Website: [www.yptenc.org.uk](http://www.yptenc.org.uk)

Tel: 01460 249 163

Encourages young people's understanding of the environment and the need for sustainability. Has fact sheets written specially for young people.

## How to... work with young people

**Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems,  
which make life better for people**

**Friends of the Earth is:**

- **the country's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation**
- **the most extensive environmental network in the world, with around 1 million supporters across five continents, and more than 70 national organisations worldwide**
- **a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in more than 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- **dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

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Friends of the Earth's Youth and Education Programme provides a range of publications exploring sustainable development, citizenship and environmental issues, designed to be used within a class, youth group or by individual young people.

Why not read our other education publications? For details telephone 020 7490 1555 or write to:  
Publications Despatch, Friends of the Earth, 56-58 Alma Street, Luton LU1 2PH

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Shouts to... the Local Friends of the Earth group members who have contributed.

Written by: Claudia Sartori & Vicki Felgate

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