

A GUIDE TO TEACH THE PARENT



STUDENTS
ORGANISING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
UNITED KINGDOM

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WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE

- 1. WHAT IS TEACH
THE PARENT?**
- 2. GETING INVOLVED**
- 3. STARTING THE
CONVERSATION**
- 4. THE KEY FACTS**
- 5. TALKING ABOUT
CLIMATE CHANGE**
- 6. MAKING PLEDGES**



Teach the Parent* puts young people in the educator's seat as they provide their parents with climate education through informal conversations.

We hope this will inspire our parents to take action on climate change and adopt more environmentally friendly practices in their lives.

**Teach the Parent includes all parents, guardians and carers, although we use 'parent' to cover all these terms throughout this guide.*

Teach the Parent is led by young people, for young people. We want to support and engage our parents in meaningful, constructive and informative conversations about the climate crisis. These are designed to happen informally - this could be around the dinner table, on a walk or sitting on the sofa. After the conversation, we ask our parents to make a pledge, which we will talk you through in this guide.

WHAT IS TEACH THE PARENT?

GETTING INVOLVED

If you haven't already, sign up by pledging to have a climate conversation with your parent.

When you have completed the form, you will be sent resources to help you, including this guide. Completing the pledge also helps us monitor impact and allows us to send you helpful tips and reminders.

Now all you need to do is have a climate conversation with your parent and ask them to make a climate pledge. We'll collect these pledges to understand our impact and understand the changes our parents and guardians are making because of us!



Let's get started!

The first step is to think about topics that are relevant to your parent's life. Think of the things they care about, as well as those that may have a big impact. Think about how these things are being impacted by, or are contributing towards, the climate crisis.

For example, if your parent works in the financial sector; you could talk to them about the role of banks in funding fossil fuel expansion. If your parent flies a lot, use this as a chance to talk about the carbon emissions of aviation.

If nothing jumps out, don't worry! Lots of topics around climate change affect all of us.

We will explore these various topics in this section to help you shape your conversations.

We will outline some key facts and suggest some questions you can ask your parent to get the conversation going for each topic. We will talk about the global solutions we need to tackle the issues, recognising the need for systems change to tackle the causes of the climate crisis.

We also recognise the importance of offering hope, and inspiring individuals to take climate action. So, alongside the global solutions we have suggested some pledges your parents can commit to now, to adopt more environmentally friendly practices in their lives and make a positive difference.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

THE KEY FACTS

FOSSIL FUELS AND ENERGY

Fossil fuels release large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂), a greenhouse gas, into the air. This causes global warming, which causes the changes in the climate. In 2018, 89% of global CO₂ emissions came from fossil fuels and industry. We need to half our emissions by 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, which is vital to stop the worst effects of climate change. Despite this warning, globally, we are on a track to global temperatures of more than double 1.5 degrees. [Read more about this.](#)

Questions to ask your parent:

- What % of carbon emissions do you think come from the fossil fuel industry? How do you think our family could reduce our use of fossil fuels? What energy company do you use?

Global solutions: We need to stop using fossil fuels, which will mean completely switching to renewable energy sources and 'decarbonising' our societies and economy.

What your parents can pledge to do now: Switch energy provider to a company who use 100% renewable energy. Online tools like [The Big Clean Switch](#) can help.

THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM

In 2021, HSBC, Barclays, Santander, NatWest and Lloyds, between them provided almost \$16bn (£12.9bn) to the 50 largest oil and gas companies to expand production. [Read more.](#) UK pension funds also have an estimated [£128 billion invested in fossil fuels](#), equivalent to nearly £2,000 for every person in the UK. This financing and investment enables the continuous expansion of our fossil fuel use – which must stop if we are to stop runaway climate change.

Questions to ask your parent:

- Who do you bank with? Do you know who your pension provider is?

Global solutions: Put pressure on banks and pension providers to stop funding fossil fuel projects.

What your parent can pledge to do now: Switch where you bank using tools like [Switch It](#), or switch your pension using [Make My Money Matter](#).

THE KEY FACTS

TRANSPORT

Transport is responsible for 24 % of the world's CO2 emissions. Public transport produces 45% less carbon emissions than driving. Frequent-flyers, often coined “super emitters” - who represent just 1% of the world's population - caused half of aviation's carbon emissions in 2018!

Questions to ask your parent:

- How often do you use public transport, and what is stopping you from using it more?

Global solutions: Cheaper, better funded and better connected public transport. Everyone should be able to use it! Electric cars are good, but aren't always the best solution as they are expensive and environmentally damaging to produce. Instead, we should move away from the idea that every family needs a car and start carsharing more.

What your parent can pledge to do now: Think about the way you choose to travel, and how it can be more sustainable. You could make a pledge to switch one regular journey you usually make by car to public transport, carsharing, walking or cycling; or opt for a holiday by train not plane.

BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity is declining faster than ever and one of the main drivers is human-caused pollution. Natural ecosystems and habitats have also declined by 47% throughout human history, part of this being the 420 million hectares of forest destroyed by human activity.

Questions to ask your parent:

- Have you noticed a decline in biodiversity, have you seen fewer insects in our garden or in parks?

Global solutions: We need to stop manmade pollution to protect our natural ecosystems, and that means tougher conservational and environmental legislation. Supporting international and domestic organisations and communities that focus on rewilding and conservation is important too.

What your parent can pledge to do now: Support the campaigns and political action being taken to protect biodiversity, like the work of the Wildlife Trust. Pledge to make your garden, if you have one, a home for biodiversity by planting a seed bomb. Buy less and think carefully about/research what you buy, avoid products that are particularly harmful to biodiversity.

THE KEY FACTS

DEFORESTATION

The world chops down 10 million hectares of trees every year to make space to grow crops and livestock, and to produce materials such as paper. This accounts for about 16% of total tree loss cover. Around 96% of deforestation takes place in the world's tropical forests. [Read more here.](#)

Questions to ask your parent:

- How many trees do you think are chopped down a year? To guide the conversation, you can show your parents this interactive map of deforestation.

Global solutions: Governments need to introduce strong anti-deforestation policies domestically to global supply chains, to stop people from chopping down trees. You can [see the increase in deforestation](#) in the amazon when climate denier Bolsonaro was in power in Brazil. It's also important to recognise indigenous people and local communities are the best suited to maintain forests. Indigenous people currently [protect 80% of biodiversity left in the world.](#)

What your parents can pledge to do now: Don't buy products from companies who engage in deforestation, and write to the company to tell them why. [More information on companies and deforestation here.](#)

OUR WASTE

Every year we dump 2.12 billion tons of waste, and this number is rising. If all of this waste was put on trucks, a line of them would go around the world 24 times. Less than 20% of global waste is recycled each year, and rich countries often export recyclable waste to poorer countries. All this waste produces methane and pollutes oceans, rivers and homes. Plastic makes up 80% of debris in our world's oceans. [Read more here.](#)

Questions to ask your parent:

- How much waste do you think the world produces each year? Why is this bad, what are its effects?

Global solutions: We need to reduce global consumption. In other words - stop making, buying and wasting so much stuff! Stopping plastic pollution at its source is one effective way to do this, Governments can take action by introducing bans on single use plastic. It's also important to recognise the [inequality in our consumption patterns](#); privileged lifestyles in the Global North produce a carbon footprint 100 times greater than that of the world's poor nations combined.

What your parent can pledge to do now: Reduce your consumption by taking part in buy nothing day; or make switches to reduce single-use waste, such as bringing your own bags to the supermarket, buying loose fruit and veg or using a re-usable water bottle/coffee cup.

THE KEY FACTS

TECHNOLOGY

Lots of people talk about the potential of technology, like carbon capture, to combat the effects of climate change. The successes of these technologies, however, are not guaranteed. Technology can play an important role, like identifying the most effective forms of renewable energy, but it can't be over-relied upon. Climate change is a problem of global inequality and a pursuit of endless growth, and we need to tackle these issues, rather than rely on a technological fix and continue business as usual. [Watch more on this.](#)

Questions to ask your parent:

- What do you are the main drivers of climate change and our increased carbon emissions? What role do you think technology plays in helping us to fix it?

Global solutions: Support technological developments that are accessible for all countries, rather than allowing private companies to limit access through patents. Commit to addressing the wider causes of climate change, avoiding over-reliance on technological solutions.

What your parent can pledge to do now: Pledge to have a conversation about the technological causes and solutions to climate change with a friend, neighbour or colleague.

OUR FOOD

Food needs to be grown, processed, transported, distributed, prepared, consumed, and disposed of. All these steps create CO₂, which contributes to climate change. Food is the cause of 30% of all carbon emissions, but around 1/3 of the food we produce is either lost or wasted. Meat accounts for 60% of the carbon emissions created by food. [Read more here.](#)

Questions to ask your parent:

- What food do you think we waste the most of? Why is this? (Tip: its often bread!)

Global solutions: In the UK, meat consumption needs to be reduced. By 2050, each person should be eating no more than 300g of meat per week. Changes should be made in the way we grow our food too, increasing access to for locally sourced and farmed products.

What your parent can pledge to do now: Reduce your meat intake and go vegetarian or vegan for a month, or even just a day or two a week! For tips and information, see [Meat Free Monday's](#) or [Eating Better](#).

POLITICS AND VOTING

Our governments have a big impact on how we tackle the climate crisis. They implement policies nationally, like investing in renewable energy, or make strong international commitments and show international leadership at climate conferences like [COP](#).

Questions to ask your parent:

- Have you ever written to your MP, or spoken to them? What issue did you raise with them? Do you know what your local MP's voting recording on climate is?

Global solutions: We need politicians and parties that will take action on the climate crisis, implementing ambitious plans to decarbonise their countries and make bold international commitments to carbon emission reductions.

What your parent can pledge to do now: Take a look at your [local MPs voting record on climate change issues](#). If it isn't good - [email them or visit them at their surgery](#) to discuss it. At election time, pledge to read the environmental policies of each party when considering who to vote for.

GLOBAL POLITICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

North America and Europe are responsible for around half of all carbon emissions since the Industrial Revolution. Compare this with China, who contributed to about 11% of the historical total, and Sub-Saharan Africa, who contributed just 4%. Despite this, countries in the Global South are suffering the worst effects of climate change. [Read more](#).

Questions to ask your parent:

- Do you think we have a bigger responsibility in countries like the UK to tackle the climate crisis and reduce our carbon emissions?

Global solutions: We need to talk about climate justice when we speak about the climate crisis, recognising the disproportionate effects of climate change, historically and now. Countries in the Global North need to lead the way in reducing their carbon emissions, given their historical emissions. We need stronger international agreements to source 'loss and damage' funding for those countries suffering the worst effects of climate change - [this was partially achieved at COP27](#).

What your parent can pledge to do now: Empower the voices and stories of those suffering the most from climate change, [take a look at some of these voices here](#). Support the work of [climate justice campaign groups](#) and organisations, by either donating or raising awareness of them.

Climate Outreach have written a really useful guide on how to have productive conversations about climate change, following their 'REAL TALK' principles. Read more on them here.

Respect your conversational partner and find common ground

Enjoy the conversation

Ask questions

Listen and show you've heard

Tell your story

Action makes it easier (but doesn't fix it)

Learn from the conversation

Keep going and keep connected

***TALKING ABOUT
CLIMATE CHANGE***

MAKING PLEDGES

After working through these tasks with your parent, ask them to make a pledge for climate action!

Share the feedback and pledge form with them and fill it in yourself.

Some example pledges:

- Take public transport instead of driving.
- Switch who they bank with or where their pension is invested to opt for a more ethical provider.
- [View more suggested actions here.](#)

For additional information on taking part in Teach the Parent, [visit our FAQs page.](#)



GOOD LUCK!

