

A Simple Guide to Climate Action...

...At Your Own Pace!

About

Michèle Castiaux is a Belgian Geologist and Environmental Scientist. She has been living in Ireland for over 20 years. Since she was a child, she always had a passion for the protection of the environment. This was nurtured by parents and grandparents who had a deep belief that anything could be mended and that wasting anything was wrong. After working for a few years in consulting, she moved on to teaching sustainability, geology and environmental education to school children and has done so for over 13 years. Her experience has taught her that people want to help the environment, are happy to make changes but often don't know what to do. There is also a fear that it may mean giving up comfort and money. Michèle believes that *small changes made by many can lead to big changes* and this is what this booklet is all about! You can be a climate activist from the comfort of your own home, by living as sustainably as you can, meaning that you are making all of these little changes that will leave our planet "as good as new" for the next generation.

Take this guide one step at a time... at your own pace!

Michèle compiled a random mix of the most practical environmental tips collected from her environmental work in over 250 schools. All can put them into practice, young and old. It is a non-exhaustive list that should inspire you to add your own tips, the ones that are close to your heart. There is space provided for that on the last page of this booklet!

There's nothing so overwhelming than starting too many things at the same time. So take this guide as a step by step approach and pace it to suit you. If you think that you could make a change once a week, once a month or even once every few months, just do what fits your lifestyle! Maybe you could set a reminder in your calendar to refer to this guide so that you don't forget to take on board new resolutions. The pace doesn't matter so much, neither does the order of the steps. What matters is that you stick with the changes you choose, that they become such a routine you don't have to think about them anymore!

Stop Wasting – Respect the Earth

As you go through this guide, you will see there is a recurring message: "stop wasting"! As a general rule, if you avoid wasting anything, this will have a huge positive impact on climate change. We need to re-learn respect for our resources and respect for our environment. You will never waste something you respect. Once we respect our planet, we will win this battle against climate change.

So for now, let's follow FRED the dog and PENNY the cat on their search of climate friendly actions!



Reduce Reuse Recycle

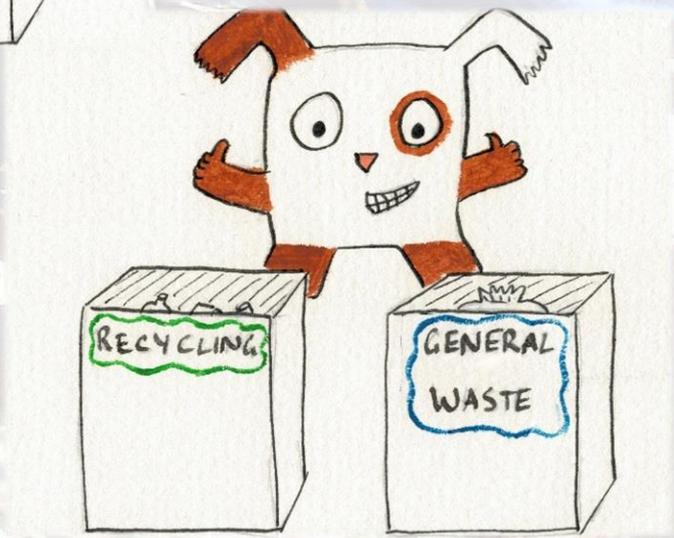
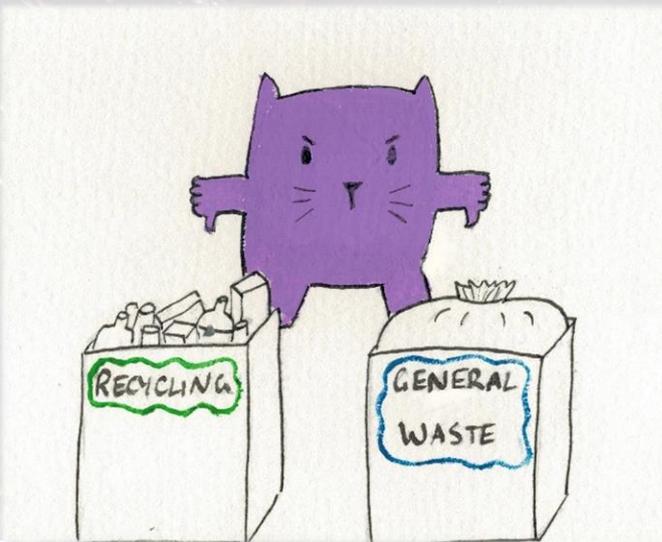
This well-known slogan applies to everything! Many people think that the ultimate goal is to RECYCLE more, but they could not be more wrong. The ultimate goal is to REDUCE first, meaning reducing our consumption of goods and the waste that comes from it. The following step is to REUSE anything that we can't keep, whether it's to pass it on to someone else, or transform it in a manner that makes the item reusable. And finally, RECYCLE what you can't reuse, keeping in mind that recycling requires a lot of transport and energy, which is why this is our last option.

Recycling is good, reusing is better and reducing is the best!

Take the test! (write your answers on a separate piece of REUSED paper to allow others REUSING this book!)

Q.1. You bring water to school or work every day. Do you:

- RECYCLE, i.e. put your empty clean disposable bottle in the proper recycling bin every day?
- REUSE, i.e. refill your disposable bottle a few times before you recycle it?
- REDUCE, i.e. use a refillable bottle that you have at home and never need to use disposable bottles?



Avoid wasting energy and fossil fuels

A lot of people think of electricity as energy, but may forget that fossil fuels, such as oil, coal and gas, are also a different source of energy. So you can save energy by REDUCING both electricity and fuel use. This means saving on how warm your house is, how many times you turn the kettle on, keeping the lights and other electrical appliances off when you don't need them, etc. You can also make healthy changes to your lifestyle, i.e. swapping watching TV or playing a video game for a board game, arts and crafts or a walk.

Remember, every minute of energy saved counts!

***If 5 million people save one extra minute of electricity a day,
it's 5 million minutes of energy saved every day!***

Take the test!

Q.2. It's a cold day and the house is getting chilly. Do you:

- Put the heating on full blast and you open the windows if you get too hot?*
- Put the heating up by only a couple of degrees to save on energy?*
- Put an extra jumper on, close a couple of doors and not turn the heating on at all?*

Q.3. You're bored. Do you:

- Spend the rest of the day on your phone (and charger at the same time)?*
- Play with your video games or phone for a little while then read a book?*
- Go outside to play in the garden or go for a walk?*
- Play a board game or do some arts and crafts?*



Avoid food waste

Food waste is a lot more than “just food waste”. When we throw out mouldy fruits, we not only waste fruits but we also waste:

1. The energy the farmer used to produce these fruits (diesel, electricity, water, human labour, ...);
2. The transport used to bring these fruits to your shop;
3. The packaging and energy used to produce the packaging of the fruits (if any);
4. If they are not organic fruits, pesticides were used pointlessly to produce your fruits. These pesticides caused harm to the environment for no reason at all!

When we throw out “out of date” meat products, we waste:

5. All of the above;
6. The emissions that were produced by the animals we eat;
7. The life of an animal that was raised then killed to end up in our plates.

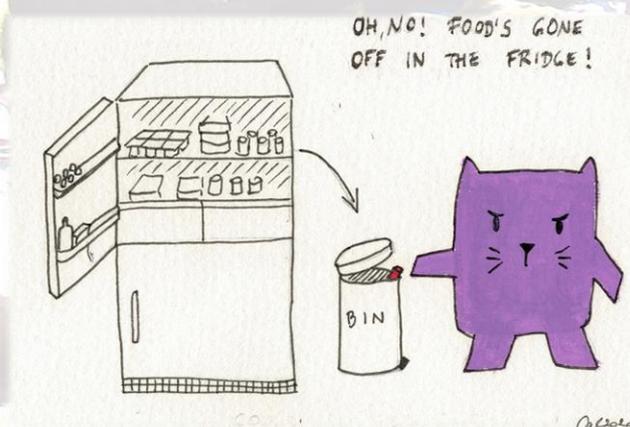
Food deserves the respect that all our natural resources should receive.

All foods, including processed foods, come from nature, from biodiversity, from our planet. The wastes listed above will all increase our impact on climate change. If you do waste food, you need to make major changes to prevent it!

Take the test!

Q.4. You went grocery shopping and are filling the fridge. Do you:

- a. Push everything to the back and put the newly purchased food at the front?
- b. Have animals to eat the food that has gone off so you're not too worried about food getting old or even half-empty jars?
- c. Before you went shopping, make sure you used up the food close to its use by date or any leftovers?
- d. Tidy everything in order of date, making sure food likely to go out of date soon is at the front of the fridge?
- e. Know the foods that can be eaten after their “best before dates” because you've informed yourself?



Avoid water waste

Yes, saving water helps reducing our impact on climate change! Having clean drinking water supplied to our house and having our dirty wastewater piped away from our houses and treated requires a lot of energy and chemicals. The more water you save, the less energy will be required to supply and treat it. From turning the tap off when you brush your teeth to washing the car with a (rainwater) bucket instead of a hose, all of these small changes sum up to millions of litres saved at no expense to you at all!

***In a year, classroom of 30 children will save over 260,000 litres of water
by simply turning the tap off when they brush their teeth.***

Imagine what a whole school could do!!!

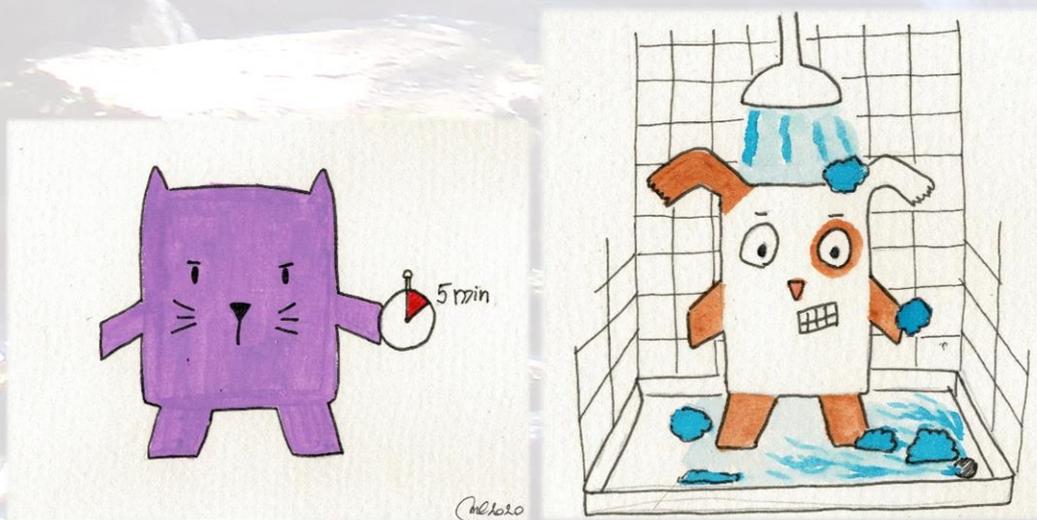
Take the test!

Q.5. There are a few dishes that need to be washed quickly. Do you:

- Throw them in the dishwasher and turn it on, since you're in a hurry?*
- Pass them under the running tap quickly, since it's only a few plates?*
- Use a basin or put the plug in the sink, filling it with a small amount of water, then wash your dishes, no matter how few plates you have or how in a hurry you are?*

Q.6. You have a wash every morning. Do you:

- Spend 15 minutes or more in the shower?*
- Spend 10 minutes in the shower, which will use approximately as much water as in a bath?*
- Spend 5 minutes or less in the shower, using 35 litres of water, which is still more than 3 large buckets of water?*
- Fill the sink with water and have a good wash using a facecloth and soap?*



Avoid single-use / disposable plastic

Plastic is an oil-based product, i.e. it is made from fossil fuel. The production of plastic not only requires fossil fuel as a raw material but also energy to be made. Furthermore, plastic is a non-biodegradable material, which will be in our environment hundreds if not a thousand years after we have left this Earth. If disposed of improperly, it breaks down into tiny pieces, then get washed in puddles, then streams, then rivers, then our seas. This plastic may take a while to travel but it will end up in our seas and contaminate our oceans and ocean life.

So, whether we look at production or disposal, plastic has an adverse effect on the environment, especially single-use/disposable plastic. For climate change, single-use / disposable plastic goes against the “REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE” principle as explained earlier.

Stopping the use of single-use / disposable plastic is one of the many ways we can all help reducing our impact on climate change.

Take the test!

Q.7. You are at a party and there is disposable cutlery at the table. Do you:

- Use the disposable cutlery then throw it in the bin as everyone else is doing the same?*
- Use the disposable cutlery then wash it at the sink to allow reusing it?*
- Always have your own cutlery with you and use it instead of the disposable one?*
- Kindly tell your host that, at the next party, you'd happily lend them some cutlery and would help them with the washing up?*



Protect Biodiversity

There are plenty of resources available to help you protect and enhance the biodiversity around you. You might see it as separate to reducing your impact on climate change. However... every step taken to protect biodiversity will have a positive impact on climate change, or vice versa, every step taken to reduce our impact on climate change will help biodiversity.

Biodiversity is nature. Nature takes the CO₂ from the air to make life or living creatures. Animals and plants are made of carbon, forests and bogs are called "carbon sinks".

You may not have a forest in your back yard, but if 5 million people in Ireland plant an extra tree each year for 5 years, it will be 25 million trees growing in Ireland, taking in the CO₂ that causes climate change.

Take the test!

Q.8. You have a small back garden and find it hard to maintain it. Do you:

- Spray everything with weed killer twice a year to avoid the work?*
- Just have grass everywhere and mow it every other week?*
- Leave nature to take it over except for a small place for garden table and chairs so you can enjoy it?*
- Plant some of the area available with pollinator friendly flowers?*



Buy Locally

When you buy locally, you support your local economy at the same time as reducing the carbon emitted by transporting goods to us from all over the world. It may seem more expensive at times, but in the long run, it is money invested in your environment and in your future. Furthermore, when you buy locally produced food, it's always in season, meaning you enjoy fresher products which have not been processed to survive long journeys in containers. In general, buying products "in season" means that they come from nearby instead of the other side of the planet.

Buying locally produced goods is an investment in the future of our planet.

Take the test!

Q.9. You need to stock up on fruits and veg. Do you:

- Go quickly to the supermarket and grab what you feel like buying, no matter where it comes from or if it is in season or not?*
- Go to the supermarket and buy fruits and veg that have been produced in Ireland or nearby countries, in season?*
- Go to your local fruits and veg shop and buy fresh products from Ireland?*
- Go to the local farmers' market and buy fresh products from your local area?*

Q.10. You need to buy some furniture. Do you:

- Buy an imported product that has been made on the other side of the planet?*
- Buy a sustainably made piece of furniture that has been made on the other side of the planet?*
- Buy second hand furniture?*
- Buy a piece of furniture made by a local carpenter out of sustainably grown wood?*



Eat less meat

The intense production of meat is one of the agricultural practices that produces the most greenhouse gases. As with everything, if we all make a small change, it can have a big impact.

Why not having a vegetarian day once a week or include less meat in your daily dishes.

Everyone's different, so do what suits you, keeping in mind that every little change adds up to a big change. Some people will be happy to go completely vegetarian whereas others will be happy to reduce their meat intake and that's OK too. The type of meat you consume can help reduce your impact on climate change. For example, choose organic over regular products. Of course, buy local to reduce the impact that transportation will have on climate change. Finally, and maybe most importantly, if you do eat meat, do not waste it!

Take the test!

Q.11. You have some leftover Bolognese sauce in the fridge, but not enough to make a meal for the whole family. Do you:

- Give it to your animals because there wouldn't be enough for another meal anyway?*
- Add a packet of mince meat to the leftovers to have enough for a family meal?*
- Put it in the freezer and will add it to another leftover of bolognese when needed?*
- Add a bunch of locally sourced vegetables that you had in the fridge to make enough sauce for everyone?*



Travel Smart

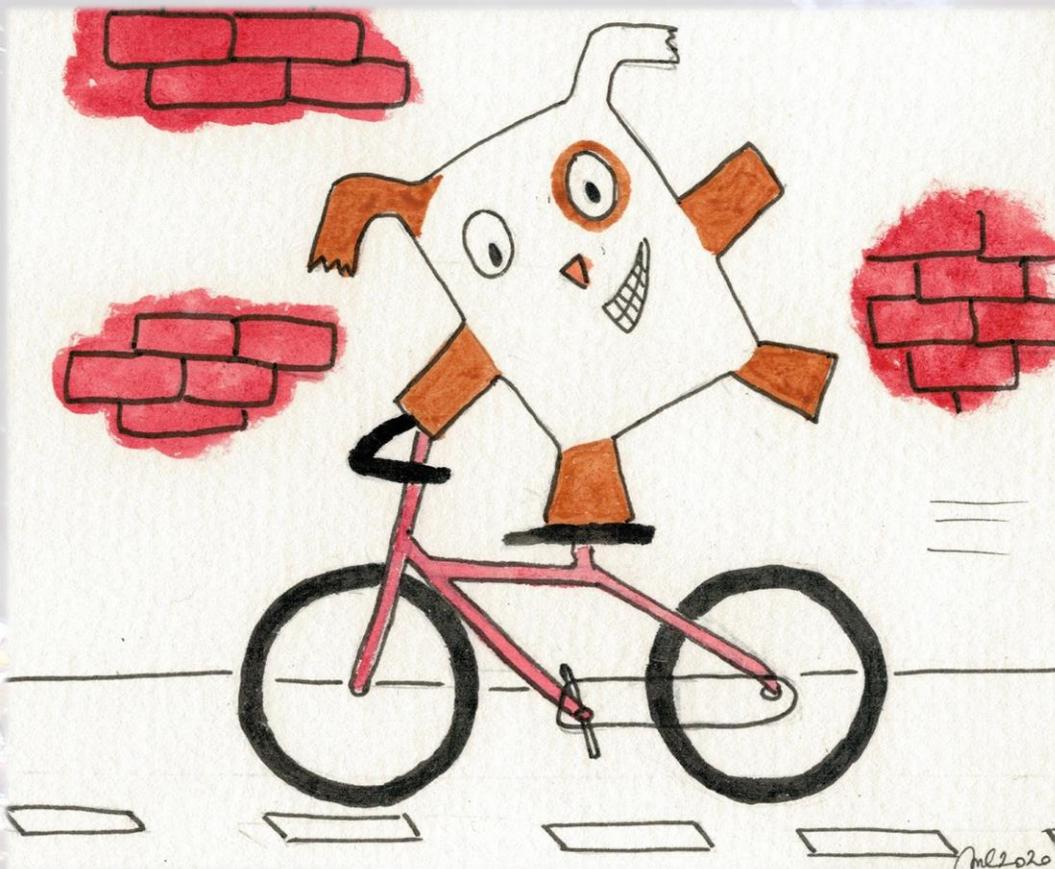
Walking or cycling will always be more environmentally friendly than transport requiring energy, be it fossil fuels or electricity. But when we need to use the car, let's be smart about it:

1. Car pool when possible
2. Travel smart: do the trips that require the car over the same journey, i.e. make a shopping list to allow you doing your grocery shopping only once a week, at the same time as driving the kids to scouts instead of doing 5 journeys a week because you didn't get organised.
3. Choose local holidays (by car or even better public transport) to foreign holidays. This will make a huge difference, improve your knowledge of local heritage and be good for the local economy.

Take the test!

Q.12. You do your weekly grocery shopping but run out of milk. Do you:

- a. Drive quickly to the supermarket to get some milk?
- b. Drive to the corner shop to avoid a long drive?
- c. Walk or cycle to the corner shop or supermarket to save on car journeys?
- d. get milk from your local farmer?



Think before you consume – Avoid over-buying (example: fast fashion)

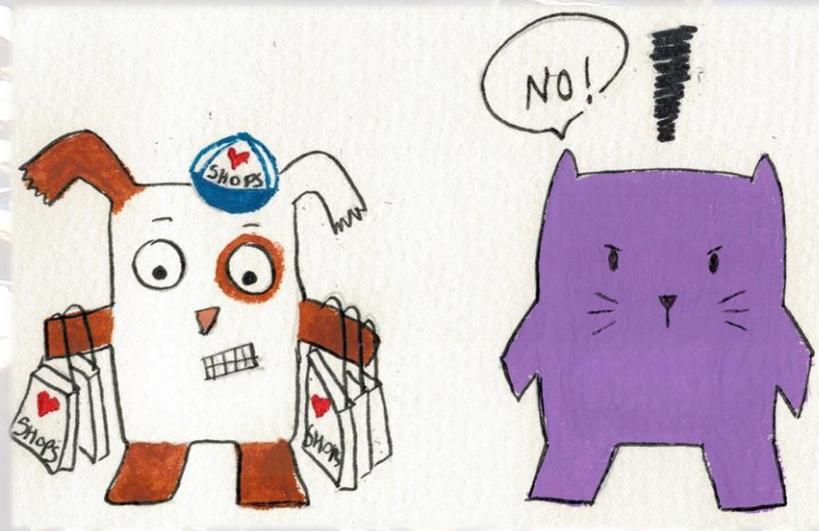
We are all guilty of over-buying as this is the way our world is designed. So, for your next purchase, ask yourself a few questions:

1. Do I really need it?
Sometimes it is worth waiting a few days before making a purchase to avoid that impulse buy of items we don't really need and which will become waste in the future.
2. Where does it come from?
Did this product travel from the other side of the planet to get to me? Could I get a similar one made locally, reducing any pollution from transportation?
3. Who made it/ produced it?
If I have the choice between a "fairtrade" or "organic" product and another one, can I afford the difference to make sure that the people who make my products are treated fairly and the land/resources producing these goods is preserved for generations to come?
4. How long will it last?
Some products only last a day then end up for years or hundreds of years in a landfill. Is there an alternative, can I buy a reusable product or do I already have something that would do the same job at home?
5. What will I do with it when I'm finished with it? Is it reusable, recyclable?
If I really need this item, will it last long enough? Is it something that I can reuse over and over again or can it be easily recycled or even repaired?

Take the test!

Q.13. The sales are on next week. Do you:

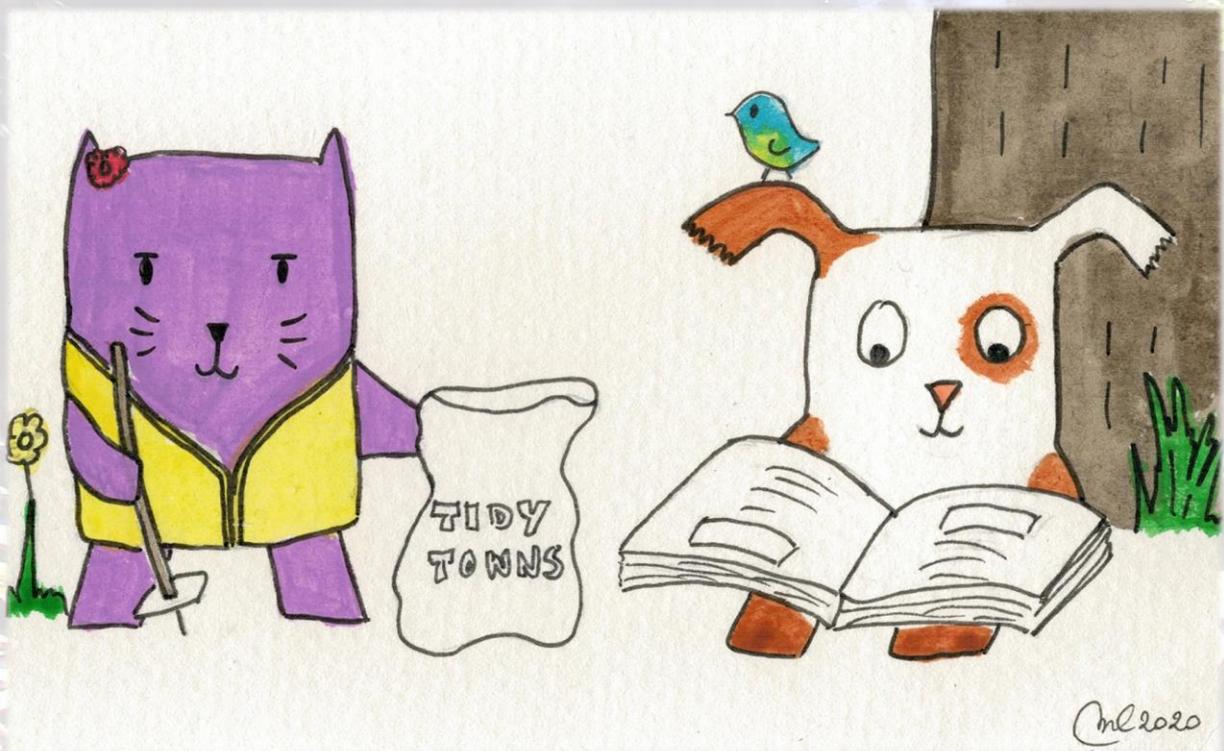
- a. *Plan to get early to the shops to be first in line to grab the best bargains?*
- b. *Wander around the shops and grab a few things that catch your eye?*
- c. *Not really bother as you have all you need?*
- d. *Buy second hand so you don't need to go to the sales. What you buy is often much cheaper than sales prize.*



Inform Yourself and Get Involved!

Don't wait to be told what to do by a friend, your school or your Local Authority! Inform yourself on what is going on in your local area and how you can help. It could be simply learning about exactly what goes in your recycling bin, learning new skills such as growing your own vegetables or getting involved with the local Tidy Towns committee or even how to fix your bicycle.

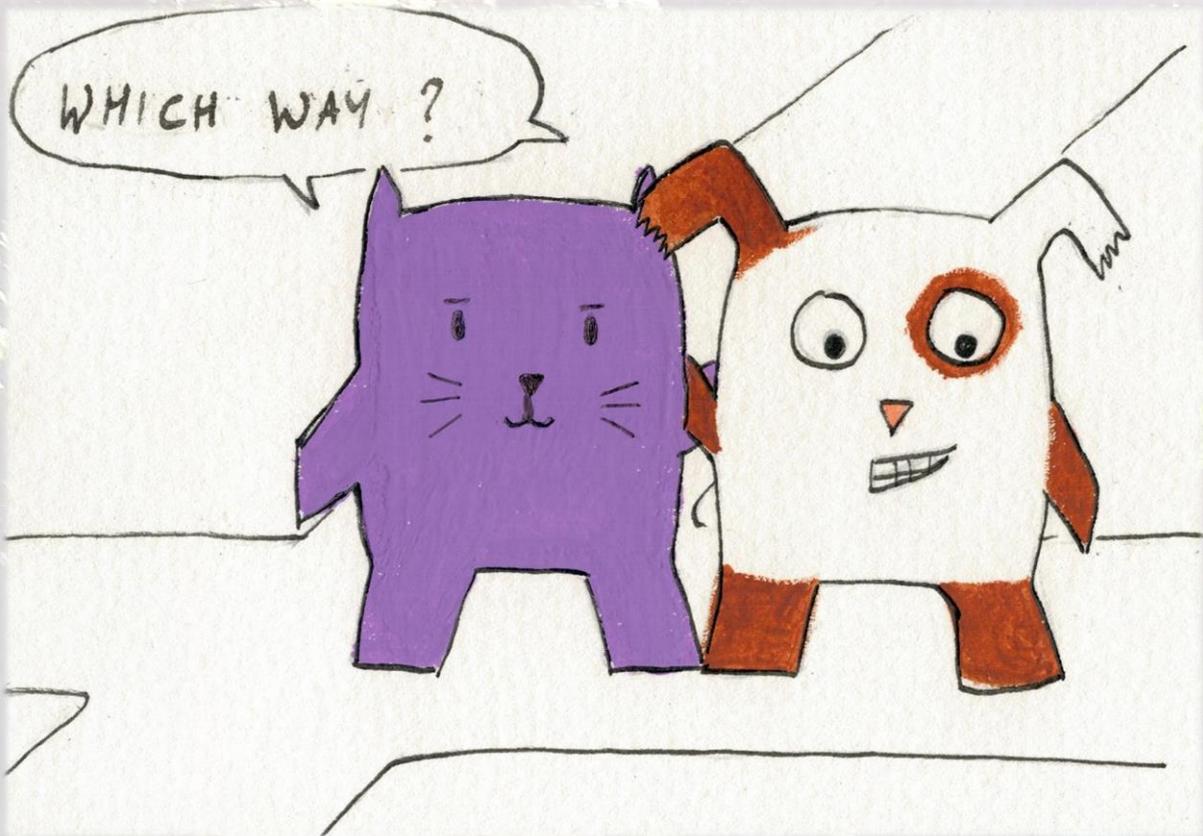
You can do as little or as much as your lifestyle permits. Every small effort is worth the try.



We're at a crossroad now, where do you think we will go? I know where FRED the dog and PENNY the cat would like to go!!!

Some people say the Earth will never cope with eight billion people...

What if eight billion people did good things for their planet?



Your Check List

ACTION	Date started	Check when done
Stop wasting		<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce Reuse Recycle		<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid wasting energy and fossil fuels		<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid food waste		<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid water waste		<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid single-use / disposable plastic		<input type="checkbox"/>
Protect biodiversity		<input type="checkbox"/>
Buy locally		<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat less meat		<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel smart		<input type="checkbox"/>
Think before you consume		<input type="checkbox"/>
Inform yourself and become involved		<input type="checkbox"/>
Your next goals:		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Take the test! Count the numbers of a, b, c and d's that you have on a separate piece of reused paper.

- 10 or more c, d or e's: well done, you are conscious about the need for climate action and are doing great! Keep up the good work but you can still take on board extra tips, at your own pace.
- 5 to 9 c, d or e's and the rest is a or b's: you would like to help our planet but are not sure of what to do yet, you're a "couch climate activist"! Take on board extra tips at your own pace.
- less than 4 or less c, d or e's and mostly a or b's: you need to change your lifestyle if you want to take climate action and help our planet!

