

Grade 8 Life Orientation Worksheet

The Earth Charter

Passage and questions about the Earth Charter

The Earth Charter addresses important socio-economic issues. Read the following summary carefully.

What is the Earth Charter?

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life, and future generations. It is a vision of hope and a call to action.

The Earth Charter is centrally concerned with the transition to sustainable ways of living and sustainable human development. Ecological integrity is one major theme. However, the Earth Charter recognises that the goals of ecological protection, the eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, respect for human rights, democracy, and peace are interdependent and indivisible. It provides, therefore, a new, inclusive, integrated ethical framework to guide the transition to a sustainable future.

The Earth Charter is a product of a decade-long, worldwide, cross-cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. The Earth Charter project began as a United Nations initiative, but it was carried forward and completed by a global civil society initiative. The Earth Charter was finalised and then launched as a people's charter in 2000 by the Earth Charter Commission, an independent international entity.

Preamble

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognise that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

Principles

The four pillars and sixteen principles of the Earth Charter are:

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I. Respect and Care for the Community of Life

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love.
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful.
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

II. Ecological Integrity

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.
7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights and community well-being.
8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

III. Social and Economic Justice

9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social and environmental imperative.
10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care and economic opportunity.
12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

IV. Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace

13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision-making, and access to justice.
14. Integrate into formal education and lifelong learning the knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.
15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
16. Promote a culture of tolerance, non-violence and peace.

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Let us look at these two sections a little more closely:

II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.

- a. Adopt at all levels sustainable development plans and regulations that make environmental conservation and rehabilitation integral to all development initiatives.
- b. Establish and safeguard viable nature and biosphere reserves, including wild lands and marine areas, to protect Earth's life support systems, maintain biodiversity, and preserve our natural heritage.
- c. Promote the recovery of endangered species and ecosystems.
- d. Control and eradicate non-native or genetically modified organisms harmful to native species and the environment, and prevent introduction of such harmful organisms.
- e. Manage the use of renewable resources such as water, soil, forest products, and marine life in ways that do not exceed rates of regeneration and that protect the health of ecosystems.
- f. Manage the extraction and use of non-renewable resources such as minerals and fossil fuels in ways that minimise depletion and cause no serious environmental damage.

6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.

- a. Take action to avoid the possibility of serious or irreversible environmental harm even when scientific knowledge is incomplete or inconclusive.
- b. Place the burden of proof on those who argue that a proposed activity will not cause significant harm, and make the responsible parties liable for environmental harm.
- c. Ensure that decision-making addresses the cumulative, long-term, indirect, long-distance, and global consequences of human activities.
- d. Prevent pollution of any part of the environment and allow no build-up of radioactive, toxic, or other hazardous substances.
- e. Avoid military activities damaging to the environment.

7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.

- a. Reduce, reuse, and recycle the materials used in production and consumption systems, and ensure that residual waste can be assimilated by ecological systems.
- b. Act with restraint and efficiency when using energy, and rely increasingly on renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.
- c. Promote the development, adoption, and equitable transfer of environmentally sound technologies.
- d. Internalise the full environmental and social costs of goods and services in the selling price, and enable consumers to identify products that meet the highest social and environmental standards.

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- e. Ensure universal access to health care that fosters reproductive health and responsible reproduction.
- f. Adopt lifestyles that emphasise the quality of life and material sufficiency in a finite world.

8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

- a. Support international scientific and technical cooperation on sustainability, with special attention to the needs of developing nations.
- b. Recognise and preserve the traditional knowledge and spiritual wisdom in all cultures that contribute to environmental protection and human well-being.
- c. Ensure that information of vital importance to human health and environmental protection, including genetic information, remains available in the public domain.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.

- a. Guarantee the right to portable water, clean air, food security, uncontaminated soil, shelter, and safe sanitation, allocating the national and international resources required.
- b. Empower every human being with the education and resources to secure a sustainable livelihood, and provide social security and safety nets for those who are unable to support themselves.
- c. Recognise the ignored, protect the vulnerable, serve those who suffer, and enable them to develop their capacities and to pursue their aspirations.

10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.

- a. Promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations.
- b. Enhance the intellectual, financial, technical, and social resources of developing nations, and relieve them of onerous international debt.
- c. Ensure that all trade supports sustainable resource use, environmental protection, and progressive labour standards.
- d. Require multinational corporations and international financial organisations to act transparently in the public good, and hold them accountable for the consequences of their activities.

11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.

- a. Secure the human rights of women and girls and end all violence against them.
- b. Promote the active participation of women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life as full and equal partners, decision makers, leaders, and beneficiaries.
- c. Strengthen families and ensure the safety and loving nurture of all family members.

12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

- a. Eliminate discrimination in all its forms, such as that based on race, colour, sex, sexual

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orientation, religion, language, and national, ethnic or social origin.

b. Affirm the right of indigenous peoples to their spirituality, knowledge, lands and resources and to their related practice of sustainable livelihoods.

c. Honour and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfil their essential role in creating sustainable societies.

d. Protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and spiritual significance.

Answer the following questions using your own words:

1. What is the main goal of the Earth Charter? [2]
2. What goals does the Earth Charter recognise as being dependent on one another? [3]
3. Name the four pillars of the Earth Charter. [4]
4. What do you think 'sustainable development' means? [3]
5. In your own words, in a short paragraph, explain what you think each of the following sections of the Earth Charter covers and aims to achieve: [100]
 - Ecological integrity
 - Social and economic justice
6. Answer True or False: [8]

Read the following statement and answer either true or false:	True	False
1. The Earth Charter applies only to South Africa.		
2. Poor environmental conditions can lead to disease.		
3. Destroying forests is not an environmental concern.		
4. Polluting rivers is an environmental concern.		
5. Securing the human rights of women and girls and ending all violence against them is a socio-economic issue.		
6. Renewable resources include water, soil, forest products, and marine life.		
7. Minerals and fossil fuels are renewable resources.		
8. Empowering every human being with education is one of the aims of the Earth Charter.		

Total marks: 30

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Suggested Solutions

Question number	Possible marks	Solution
1	2	Developing sustainable ways of living and sustainable human development.
2	3	Ecological protection, eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, respect for human rights, democracy and peace are the goals that are seen as interdependent.
3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respect and care for the community of life - Ecological integrity - Social and economic justice - Democracy, non-violence and peace
4	3	<p>Sustainable development allows people to meet their basic needs and enjoy a good quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations.</p> <p>In the last 20 years, it has become clear that our current model of development is unsustainable. The negative effect our consumption patterns have on the environment and the climate suggests we're living beyond our means.</p>
5	10	Own words explaining reading above.
6	8	True/False statements – see answers below

Read the following statement and answer either true or false:	True	False
1. The Earth Charter applies only to South Africa.		F
2. Poor environmental conditions can lead to disease.	T	
3. Destroying forests is not an environmental concern.		F
4. Polluting rivers is an environmental concern.	T	
5. Securing the human rights of women and girls and ending all violence against them is a socio-economic issue.	T	
6. Renewable resources include water, soil, forest products, and marine life.	T	
7. Minerals and fossil fuels are renewable resources.		F
8. Empowering every human being with education is one of the aims of the Earth Charter.	T	

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