

For [English-language learners](#), vocabulary related to environmental issues can be challenging. Tables sectioned according to types of environmental issues can help. These tables provide the word or phrase in the left column and an example of how to use the term(s) in the righthand column to provide context.

Important Issues

From acid rain to pollution and radioactive waste, there are many environmental issues around which discussion and debate have evolved. Students will likely hear many of these terms on the news or read about them on the internet and in newspapers. The general list of issues should prove helpful.

Term or Phrase	Example Sentence
acid rain	The acid rain ruined the soil for the next three generations.
aerosol	Aerosol can be extremely toxic and must be used with care when sprayed in the air.
animal welfare	We must consider animal welfare as we strive to create a balance between man and nature.
carbon monoxide	It's important to have a carbon monoxide detector in your home for safety.
climate	The climate of an area can change over long periods of time.
conservation	Conservation focuses on making sure we protect the nature we haven't already lost.
endangered species	There are many endangered species all over the planet that need our help.
energy	Humans are using an ever increasing amount of energy.
nuclear energy	Nuclear energy has passed out of fashion after a number of serious environmental disasters.
solar energy	Many hope that solar energy can wean us off our need for fossil fuels.
exhaust fumes	The exhaust fumes from cars standing in traffic can make you cough.
fertilizers	Fertilizers used by huge farms can pollute drinking water for miles around.
forest fires	Forest fires can burn out of control and create hazy weather conditions.
global warming	Some doubt that global warming is real.
greenhouse effect	The greenhouse effect is said to heat up the earth.

(non)renewable resources	As we move forward, we need to become more dependent on renewable energy resources.
nuclear	The exploration of nuclear science has created great boons, as well as horrific dangers for humanity.
nuclear fallout	The nuclear fallout from a bomb would be devastating to the local population.
nuclear reactor	The nuclear reactor was taken offline because of technical problems.
Oil slick	The oil slick caused by the sinking vessel could be seen for tens of miles.
ozone layer	Industrial additives have been threatening the ozone layer for many years.
pesticide	While it's true that pesticides help kill off unwanted insects, there are serious problems to be considered.
pollution	Water and air pollution situations have improved over the last few decades in many countries.
protected animal	It's a protected animal in this country. You can't hunt it!
rainforest	The rain forest is lush and green, bursting with life from all sides.
unleaded petrol	Unleaded petrol is certainly cleaner than leaded petrol.
waste	The amount of plastic waste in the ocean is shocking.
nuclear waste	Nuclear waste can remain active for many thousands of years.
radioactive waste	They stored the radioactive waste at the site in Hanford.
wildlife	We must take the wildlife into account before we develop the site.

Natural Disasters

From drought to volcanic eruptions, natural disasters are a big part of the environmental discussion, as this table shows.

Term or Phrase Example Sentenc

drought	The drought has gone on for sixteen straight months. No water to be seen!
earthquake	The earthquake devastated the little village in the Rhine River.
flood	The flood forced more than 100 families from their homes.

tidal wave A tidal wave hit the island. Luckily, no one was lost.

typhoon The typhoon hit and dropped more than ten inches of rain in one hour!

volcanic eruption [Volcanic eruptions are spectacular](#), but they don't occur very often.

Politics and Action

Discussion generally leads to the formation of environmental groups and actions, some positive and some negative, as this final listing demonstrates. Environmental groups are followed by a listing of verbs (or actions) related to the environment and environmental issues.

Term or Phrase	Example Sentence
environmental group	The environmental group presented their case to the community.
green issues	Green issues have become one of the most important themes of this election cycle.
pressure group	The pressure group forced the company to stop building on that site.
cut down	We need to cut down on pollution drastically.
destroy	Human greed destroys millions of acres each year.
dispose (of)	The government must dispose of the waste properly.
dump	You can dump recyclable garbage in this container.
protect	It's our responsibility to protect the natural habit of this beautiful planet before it's too late.
pollute	If you pollute in your own backyard, you'll eventually notice it.
recycle	Make sure to recycle all paper and plastics.
save	We save bottles and newspapers to take to recycle at the end of each month.
throw away	Never just throw away a plastic bottle. Recycle it!
use up	Hopefully, we'll not use up all our resources before we start solving this problem together.