

Set up your own Eco Club!

We need people who can see beyond the end of their nose

Currently, people in Finland consume three times more energy and natural resources than is globally sustainable. Our way of life demands too much of the Earth, and we consume more than what would be our share of the Earth's natural resources. This is neither just nor wise. If we want to continue to live on this planet, we must start leading a sustainable lifestyle. It means that we

- care about and look after both ourselves and others, also in the future
- act so that we do not waste natural resources, and sustain good living conditions for everyone living on this planet, including animals and plants

The school Eco Club's or "green team's" task is to make everyone at the school understand the importance of a sustainable way of life and to act accordingly. Club members help to reduce the ecological footprint of the school, and so they also work to promote global justice in the world.

Much can be achieved by improving the school building's energy efficiency, switching to renewable energy, improving the eco-friendliness of school lunches, and increasing the share of low-emission options for commuting to school or going on trips. It is also very important to talk about why it is a good idea to change your ways, and to inspire everyone to take part!

How does the Eco Club work?

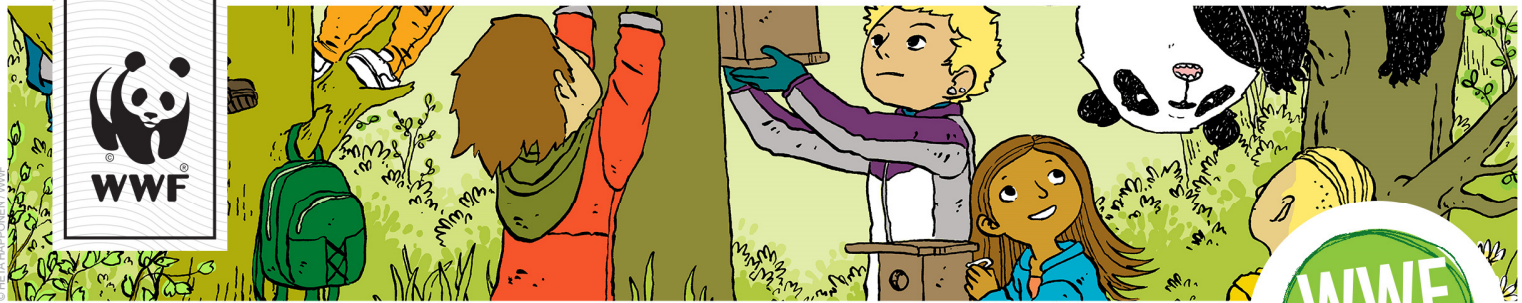
1. Choose who will join.

Students, teachers, and other school staff can all be members. Your core group can only consist of students and a teacher guiding the process, but now and then you should invite other people, such as the principal, to the meetings. It is preferable if the students are chosen from various year groups and include both boys and girls.

Include everyone who is interested, or, if there are far too many willing to join, hold an election. It is hard to estimate an ideal group size. If there are well over 20 volunteers, the Eco Club team should be split into a few activity groups so that there is enough to do for everyone. If the school is a comprehensive school, it would be good to have a teacher from both primary and lower secondary schools working with the Club. For big comprehensive schools, there can be separate groups for younger and older students, provided that the teams cooperate closely and meet as a whole group on a regular basis.

2. Think about what you want to do.

Find out about matters that require urgent action. What do students at your school want to do, or what are they worried about? Create a questionnaire, and plan activities based on the answers. Teachers, the principal, other school staff, and parents will help with activities, but they do not get to decide what the Club does. WWF is an expert on sustainability and environmental matters, so it is a good idea to have a look at the WWF website to find out what issues need addressing right now.



When the aim is to reduce the environmental impacts of school life, a focus on the following actions can be very effective:

- a) Improving the energy efficiency of the school building and increasing the use of renewable energy in the school.
- b) Improving the eco-friendliness of school lunches, including preventing food waste, reducing the use of meat products, and increasing the share of organic food.
- c) Increasing the share of cycling, walking, carpooling, and public transport for commuting to school or going on trips.

Find out what has already been done at your school and what you could do next. See what other schools' green teams are doing, check out the tips on the WWF Koulussa website, or sign up for training sessions for school green teams to find inspiration. At first, collect as many ideas as you can come up with. After that, you will be in a good position to start eliminating ideas and choosing the best one to carry out.

3. Make a plan

Decide how often you will meet. Eco Club should have regularly meetings, for example "on the first Tuesday of every month". Ask the teachers and the principal to allow you to use classroom time, and not just breaks, for your activities. Set up a few dates in advance for your team so that there will be progress.

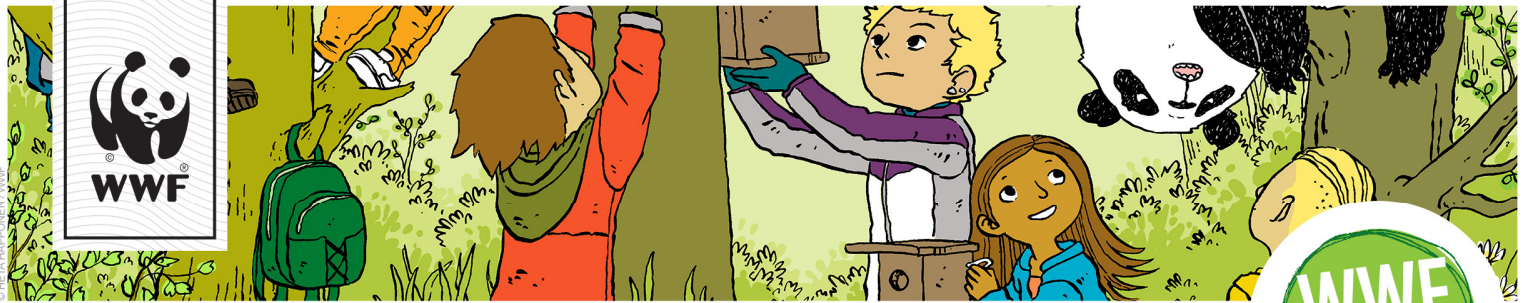
Make a more detailed plan about one idea that you are going to carry out. Make use of the WWF Koulussa idea form. Fill in on the plan:

- **The aim of the activity:** Why are we doing this, and what goal does it work towards?
- **Carrying out the idea in practice:** What will be done?
- **How the activity will be carried out:** Who does what? Do you need permission from someone? How do we inform others about this? How do we document this?
- **Resources:** Which people and what kind of equipment do we need? Where does the activity take place? Do we need money?
- **Schedule:** When are the different parts of the activity carried out?
You can also draw or write on the plan:
- **What does the activity look like and what is exciting about this particular idea?**

And after the activity is finished, you can use the other side of the idea paper to write how the activity went!

3. Document what you do and make some noise about your team's activities.

Keep a log of your meetings and activities, take pictures and make videos and interview the participants. Post the material on Instagram with the hashtag #wwfkoulussa. Talk about your activities on the school website or blog, your own noticeboard, the school info TV, the morning announcements, parents' evenings, the local newspaper, etc., so that the whole school and surrounding community will know what is going on.



Telling others about what you have done is very important, because that is how you inspire others to join in. When your friends are also involved, working together is a lot more fun. By looking at the photos on Instagram tagged #wwfkoulussa, you will get some idea about what other schools are doing to reduce environmental impacts. You must use social media in a way that does not exclude anyone from what you do.

When you have carried out a fun activity, you should also share it to inspire others visiting the WWF Koulussa website. New ideas for activities are constantly being collected in the Kierrätys huone (“Recycling Room”) section of the website. By filling in a short form about your own activity and sending it to WWF, you can help other green teams. Inspiring others to action increases the influence of your own team!

4. Work as a team, not by yourselves.

Take advantage of your strengths. Every team member has their own specific skills, and it’s a good idea to make use of them. Share the roles and responsibilities among the team.

Ask for help when you need it. Do not let yourself get stuck if something does not seem to be working out. Teachers, the principal, school staff, parents and other students can all help you.

5. Assess your performance.

What did we achieve? What did we learn? What went well, and what needs improvement? How do we get people to continue being involved with this theme? Thinking about these things in the next meeting after the activity has ended is a good idea, as is drawing on what was learnt for the future activities. Next time you will do even better!