

Introduction to protesting about environmental issues

Protesting can be a powerful way to make a difference, especially when it comes to protecting our environment. Throughout history, protests have helped bring attention to important issues and create positive change. When it comes to environmental issues, protesting helps raise awareness, influence policies and push for actions to protect our planet.



Why environmental protests matter

Protests are a way for people to come together and show their concern for issues like climate change, pollution or endangered animals. When people protest, they highlight problems, push for solutions and inspire others to get involved.

- 🌱 **Raising awareness:** Protests get people talking about environmental issues and teach them why it's important to care.
- 🌱 **Influencing policies:** When people protest, they can push leaders to make laws that protect the environment.
- 🌱 **Building community:** Protests bring people together to support a shared cause, creating a strong sense of community.
- 🌱 **Driving change:** Protests can lead businesses and governments to make more sustainable choices.

Take a look at some historical and contemporary examples of environmental protests, showing how young people like you can make a difference.

Historical examples of environmental protests

The first Earth Day (1970)

What happened: On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day took place with more than 20 million Americans participating in rallies and demonstrations. This event was organised to bring attention to environmental issues like pollution and habitat destruction.

Impact: Earth Day led to the creation of important environmental laws in the U.S. including the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. It also sparked a global movement that continues to grow every year.

Why it matters: This event showed the power of collective action and helped establish environmental protection as a key issue on the global stage.

Chipko Movement (1970s-1980s, India)

What happened: The Chipko Movement, also known as the “Tree-Hugging Movement,” involved villagers in Uttarakhand hugging trees to prevent them from being cut down by loggers.

Impact: This protest helped protect forests and inspired similar movements around the world.

Why it matters: The protest aimed to protect the forests from commercial logging and highlight the importance of forests for the local ecosystem and livelihoods.

Contemporary examples of environmental protests

Fridays for Future (2018-Present)

What happened: The Fridays for Future movement began with Greta Thunberg, a teenager from Sweden, who started skipping school to protest outside the Swedish Parliament for stronger climate action. This led to millions of students around the world joining in, organising strikes and demonstrations.

Impact: Fridays for Future has raised global awareness about climate change, leading to increased climate action commitments from governments and corporations. It has empowered young people to take a stand and demand urgent changes.

Why it matters: This movement shows how young people can lead global conversations on climate issues and drive significant change.

Extinction Rebellion (XR) (2018-Present)

What happened: Extinction Rebellion, or XR, is known for its non-violent civil disobedience to demand urgent action on climate and ecological issues. XR protests have included road blockades and sit-ins in major cities.

Impact: XR has brought significant attention to the climate emergency and pushed governments to declare climate emergencies and set more ambitious climate targets.

Why It matters: XR's approach emphasizes the urgency of the climate crisis and the need for immediate action, showing that direct action can lead to meaningful dialogue and change.

The Youth Climate Strikes (2020-Present)

What happened: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many youth climate activists adapted their protests to online platforms, using social media to organise virtual strikes and raise awareness about climate issues.

Impact: These virtual strikes continued to engage a global audience and advocate for climate action during a challenging time, demonstrating the adaptability and resilience of youth activism.

Why It matters: The shift to online activism highlights how technology can be used to continue advocating for environmental issues even in difficult circumstances.

How can you get involved?

- 1. Join or organise demonstrations or protests:** Look for local climate marches, clean-ups, or advocacy events. You can also organise your own events with friends and community members.
- 2. Use social media:** Share information about environmental issues, support campaigns and connect with other changemakers online.
- 3. Volunteer:** Get involved with local environmental groups or conservation projects to contribute directly to the cause.

What next?

As environmental challenges continue to grow, the role of protests in advocating for a sustainable future remains more crucial than ever. By participating in protests or other forms of activism, you can contribute to a larger movement for a sustainable future.

Protesting can seem like a big task but, when you work together with others, it can be a lot of fun! Just remember to stay safe, ask for help when you need it and always stand up for what you believe in. Every voice matters, including yours.

Find out more using our 'How to guide: Plan your own environmental protest or demonstration' written by Young Changemaker, Emma Greenwood