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Estep 1

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Eco-Footprints

Have you ever stopped and taken a little bit of time in your day and thought about all of the harmful products and trash we accumulate and use in one day? If you stop and really think about it, you will realize that it's quite a bit. I know I waste more than I should. The measure of human demand on the Earth's ecosystem is called an Eco-Footprint. It is very important that we all know what an Eco-Footprint is, what it means to us, and what we can do to make it better.

An Ecological Footprint is a measure of demand for the world's natural resources and can be contrasted with the planet's ecological capacity to regenerate. In other words, the Eco-Footprint is a measurement of whether or not our planet is large enough to meet the human demands on nature. There are two sides to the Footprint measurement; bio-capacity and our Eco-Footprint. Bio-capacity is the asset side of the Footprint. It is the planet's biologically productive land areas which consist of the forests, pastures, cropland, and fisheries. Our Ecological Footprint is the demand side on nature. This side represents the areas that provide the renewable resources we are using and to absorb our waste. This includes all land that is occupied by our cities and towns. Of course, we all consume enormous amounts of resources and produce even more waste. All the resources that we use are put into five categories; energy, settlement, timber and paper, food and fiber, and seafood. Most of these resources are renewable like energy and food, but timber and the materials we use for settlements take a while to grow back. As our population grows, it's obvious that there will be a higher demand for all of these resources. It is of the utmost importance that we make sure and take care of our planet so it can meet our demands.

To me, the human race's Eco-Footprint is one of the highest and most important factors of our lives. Keeping our world environmentally safe should be on the top of everyone's list of things to do every day. In my eyes, this planet that we live on is providing us with all the resources that we need and more without asking for anything in return. Instead of returning the favor by keeping it in good condition, we are doing the opposite by cutting down forests faster than they can grow back, replacing productive land with too much human infrastructure, etc. The list goes on and on. This is actually a really big issue and it is never addressed enough. Everyone needs to get involved in keeping our only home safe. I found out that it now takes the Earth one year and six months to regenerate what we use in one year. That's 1.5 times faster than the safe limit. So in other words, we are taking more than what the Earth is able to give. That is not good or fair trade in any way. I mean, if we don't help our ecosystem now, it's just going to become inhabitable, and no one wants that. We all need to act now on this issue before it is too late!

There are many different ways that we can help our planet out and decrease our Eco-Footprint, most of which are small and easy things in our life. We can start by saving energy as much as possible. There are plenty of ways for us to save energy in a big way. Most of the energy that we use in our lives is electric lighting. It's funny thinking back to when I was a younger kid, my parents would get angry with me if I didn't turn off my bedroom lights so they could save money. I now realize that it is also helping our planet when we turn off lights or electronics when we aren't using them. Solar power is a big alternative to electricity, not only is it cheaper, it's also cleaner and safer. Using solar and

lunar panels for power is a great way of helping out our planet. One big way of staying environmentally friendly is, of course, using the three big R's; reduce, reuse, and recycle! That is the biggest way in which we can keep our environment clean and clear. Everyone is able to help out just by picking up any trash on the ground, recycling any plastic bags or bottles that you find, and reusing anything that can be used again instead of normally throwing it away. There are many other ways to have less of a harmful impact like starting your own garden, using cloth bags instead of plastic, and only use resources when necessary. These may not seem like much, but they can make a great impact if everyone participates!

There are so many ways for us to make a difference in this world. It should be of the utmost importance for everyone to help keep our only living space safe. The fate of our planet and future generations depends upon how we take care of our planet now! All we have to do is try!