READY TO USE GAMES

# Earth Day

[Earth Day](https://www.earthday.org/) is on 22 April. It was first marked in 1970 and today is recognised as the largest secular observance in the world, with more than a billion people taking part worldwide. Of course, the Bible carries a call for us as followers of Jesus to care for and look after the world, and many children and young people are passionate about environmental issues, so use these games to introduce the theme, before going onto explore some of the issues in more detail.

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## Creature bingo

**You will need:** bingo cards made up of lots of different creatures that can be found in your area; cards, a different one of these creatures on each one; marker pens or counters

Before the session, create a list of creatures that can be found in your area – depending on where you live, these could include red kite, grey squirrel, fox, cat, sparrow, swan, hedgehog, trout, centipede, house spider or heron. Create bingo cards, each with a different combination of these creatures (try to avoid having any two cards the same). If you can include pictures, as well as the names of the animals, all the better.

Make up a set of calling cards, each with the name of one of the creatures. Shuffle these cards.

Give each player a bingo card and a pen (or a handful of counters, if you want to reuse the cards). Look at the first of your calling cards and call out the creature written on it. If a player can see that on their bingo card, they should mark it off (or put a counter on the creature). Keep going until a player has marked off all the creatures on their card. They should shout: “Bingo!” and they are the winner. (You could also play until some players have marked off the four corners of their card, or marked off a line.)

Use the game as a way into talking about the creatures in your neighbourhood and how you can see them (or look after them).

## Litter pick

**You will need:** lots of balls of newspaper; paint; paintbrushes; bin bags

Before the session, paint dots of colour on the balls of newspaper and allow to dry. Use as many colours as you want teams, and make sure you create the same number of each colour.

Split the group into two or more teams. Give each team a bin bag and assign each one a colour. Challenge everyone to collect all the newspaper balls marked with their colour. At the signal to go, the teams should start collecting. Give them a time limit (such as 30 seconds), then count the amount of litter each team has collected. Take away any balls of the wrong colour they have collected. The team with the highest score wins. Play as many times as the players would like to.

Remember to recycle all the newspaper after the game is finished.

## Recycling rumble

**You will need:** clean recycling (paper and cardboard, glass jars and bottles, plastic pots and cartons, drinks cans, food tins – tape around any jagged edges of the food tins if necessary); five large plastic boxes or bags (such as large blue IKEA bags); magnet; paper and marker pen; stopwatch

Before the session, set out the five boxes or bags and write labels for each one: ‘Paper and cardboard’, ‘Glass’, ‘Plastic’, ‘Aluminium’ and ‘Steel’. Mix all the recycling together and place it in the centre of the room. Challenge the children to sort all the recycling into the right boxes or bags. Make sure they place it carefully in the right place, rather than throwing it (particularly the glass!). To differentiate between aluminium and steel, they will have to test the cans with a magnet – if a can is magnetic, it is steel; if not, it is aluminium. Time the group to see how quickly they can sort all the recycling.

If you have a larger group, play in teams. Once you have finished, chat about the recycling you do at home. If the group is interested, you could contact your local recycling centre to discover what happens to your recycling and rubbish when it is taken away.

## Lights out

**You will need:** large building to play in; various light sources (torches, lanterns, lamps, reading lights, battery-operated tealights etc)

This game requires a large building with lots of rooms to play in – it would be ideal for playing on a residential. Before the game, set up and turn on all your light sources, each one in a different room or part of your building. Turn out all the other lights in the building, apart from on staircases and in a central gathering place. (Risk-assess this game, and make sure that all trip and slip hazards are removed.)

Starting in the central gathering place, split the players into pairs or threes and give each smaller team a torch or lantern so that they can see in the dark. The teams have to go around the building turning out any lights they can find (not the ones on the staircases!). Meanwhile, adult volunteers should go around and turn the lights back on. If a team of players spots an adult, that adult has to go back to the central space and is out of the game.

Once all the lights are out, gather the teams together and chat about turning lights out to save energy. You could also talk about light pollution and the need to reduce the amount of light going up into the sky, rather than down on the ground where it is needed.

## Migration hopscotch

**You will need:** chalk or masking tape

Before the session, mark out a hopscotch grid on the floor with chalk or masking tape. Explain that all the players are birds that migrate to the UK. You might choose swallows that migrate from Africa to the UK in the summer. Alternatively, you could choose the pink-footed goose that migrates from Scandinavia and Iceland to the UK in the winter.

If you choose swallows, name the start of the hopscotch ‘Africa’ and the end ‘UK’. All the players have to hopscotch from one end to the other to represent making a successful migration. Then start removing squares because of various obstructions to migration: pollution (such as spills or illegal dumping), building of housing on a bird’s habitat, bird flu outbreaks or increased air traffic.

Keep playing, taking one square away for each migration, until your flock of birds can’t migrate any more. Chat together about what might happen if birds struggle to migrate from one place to another. If you have time, research what life is like for your chosen bird. The [RSPB website](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/) is a good place to start.

This game is taken from the NEEF website. There are plenty more suggestions of environmental games to play [here](https://www.neefusa.org/education/environmental-education-group-games-activities).

## Video games

**You will need:** appropriate console and screen or PC

There are plenty of environmentally focused video games on the market to help you start a conversation and consider what a response of faith might look like in various situations. Do some research in which game might be the best for your group; [this list](https://www.chaostheorygames.com/blog/20-environmental-sustainability-video-games-from-the-last-decade-2021) is a good place to start.

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