

HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE



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**Save the
Children**

The climate crisis isn't going away anytime soon, and we owe it to children to take it seriously.

Save the Children spoke to thousands of young people aged between 12 and 18 from across the UK to hear how they feel about climate change. Many are worried about what the climate crisis means for them, their families and their friends. Many feel frustrated that powerful people still aren't doing enough about it. All have dreams of safe, healthy and happy futures.

Climate change is the defining crisis of our time – and the rights and futures of children are most at risk.

To help parents, teachers, caregivers and adults everywhere navigate potentially difficult conversations, Save the Children worked with our [Youth Advisory Board](#) to come up with five top tips on how to speak to children about climate change. Here's their advice:

1

Hear them out

Children and young people are aware that the climate crisis will uniquely impact their generation. Make time and hold space for them to share how they're feeling and discuss their concerns and hopes for the future. Like one 17-year-old boy from the East of England told us, adults need to "be serious about resolving [climate change]" - and this starts with adults listening to and learning from what children are telling us. Don't underestimate their ability to ask tough questions, propose smart solutions, and teach you something, too.

It's okay that we might not have all the answers, or that we, as adults, might feel worried about children's futures. What's most important is that we commit to staying informed and creating open and honest conversations about climate change with children both inside and outside of their classrooms.

2

Rely on science

Disinformation spreads fast in the digital age – and it can ultimately undermine meaningful climate action.

Responsible conversations about climate change with children and young people should be informed by the scientists and climate researchers who know best. There's a wealth of information out there if you would like to feel more clued up on the root causes of climate change and the systemic change needed for a safer, greener future. The United Nations' [fact sheets](#) or Save the Children's child-friendly '[Born into the Climate Crisis](#)' report are both good places to start.

**3**

Tailor the conversation to the child

Be mindful of the child's age and capacity to understand complex issues before speaking to them about climate change. Encourage them to decide how they would like to discuss or learn more about the topic.

Younger children are likely to still be developing their understanding of the outside world. Start with the basics and discuss what is good for the environment, such as planting trees and clean oceans, and what's harmful, like rising temperatures and plastic pollution. Connecting with nature is an important step in building an understanding of climate change, so consider having these conversations outdoors if you're able to.

Older children may already have a more advanced understanding of climate change. Encourage them to see beyond their immediate environment and understand that, as one 15-year-old boy from the West Midlands put it, "[the climate crisis] is a global problem and we need to all work together" to solve it.

[Check out this helpful list](#) of the best picture books and older fiction titles to help children of all ages learn about climate change.

4

Make clear it's not their problem to solve

[Studies](#) have shown that climate anxiety is impacting the day-to-day lives of children and young people in countries across the world. In the UK, a vast majority of children we spoke to said they're worried about the world they will inherit.

Without sugar-coating the challenges ahead, it's important to remind children that the responsibility of solving the climate crisis isn't theirs. Be an ally to children who are carrying a huge burden on their shoulders that isn't of their making by acknowledging their concerns, reassuring them that they're safe, and reminding them that there are adults around the world who are passionately working to end climate change.

5

Take action together

Where there are crises, there's always hope that change is possible. Take it from one 14-year-old girl from Scotland: "My generation cares and can change things." Inspire children to see themselves as able to create real change and together explore options for change-making that feel accessible, impactful and fun.

Read an informative story about climate change, [like this one](#), and encourage children to share it with their friends to raise awareness. Discuss ways you can take climate action in your area, such as joining a protest or attending a local event during [Great Big Green Week](#). And commit to implementing climate-friendly ways of living into your daily routine, like trying out plant-based recipes or cycling to school or work.



Our work

Save the Children is supporting children like Mara, pictured here, who are right now on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

Living on the shores of Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia, Mara says she's "scared of rainy season." Ferocious storms have impacted her family's ability to fish, and Mara's mother worries that she won't earn enough money to feed her family and send Mara and her siblings to school.

Our teams work tirelessly to deliver programmes that support families like Mara's, but it's time now to listen to the demands of children and tackle the root causes of this crisis.



Photo: Lim Sokkhanlina/Save the Children

**Don't fear for children's futures –
fight for them. Because a greener,
fairer world is possible.**

Join Generation Hope.

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