

Task 1: Is it sustainable?

Group work

Time: 1 hour

Purpose of the task: to learn how to evaluate a product and see to what extent it is sustainable environmentally

Materials needed: paper, coloured pencils, a collection of small products (e.g. a plastic cup, kettle, bottle, milk carton, fast-food product, shirt)

Background to the task

Everything that is made has an impact on the environment. When evaluating a product, you need to think about many different stages of its life:

- c how the raw materials are produced
- c how the product is manufactured
- c how it is promoted
- c how it is transported to the shops
- c how it is packaged
- c how it is used
- c how it is reused, or disposed of after its first use
- c how any packaging is reused or disposed of.

Carrying out the task

- c Get into groups of 3 or 4 people and look at the product on the table in front of you.
- c Try to work out what materials have been used to make it.
- c Try to work out what manufacturing methods have been used.
- c Think about how the product is used.
- c Look at the packaging and try to identify materials and manufacturing methods.

- c Think about the following questions:
 - are the raw materials renewable?
 - how much energy is used at different stages of the product's life cycle?
 - what pollution is caused by extraction, processing, manufacturing, use and disposal of the product?
 - what other effects does it have on the environment?

Recording your results

- c Make a simple sketch of the product. Turn the paper to landscape format and draw your sketch in the middle of the sheet.
- c Make notes on the same sheet, identifying each material used to make the product. Highlight the name of the material in red if it has a bad environmental impact, and in green if it causes little or no environmental damage. Say simply what is good or bad about each material. (If you don't know, put a big ? next to it.)
- c Add any other comments related to the product's sustainability.
- c Write your name, a title and date on the sheet of paper.