

Living abroad for one semester

You decide to go abroad and spend an exchange semester at a high school along the East Coast of the United States in the second half of 5th grade. Fortunately, after a few days at your school in Boston you make three good friends with whom you spend a lot of time: Josephine, Rebecca and José.

Josephine



Josephine is a 15-year-old exchange student from Munich, Germany. She calls herself a “climate activist” and wants to learn as many languages as possible in her life.

Rebecca



Rebecca is 16, from Boston. She can speak Cantonese fluently, as her grandparents moved to the US from China in the 1970s and taught the whole family the language.

José



José is 15 and grew up bilingually with Spanish and English. He excels at mathematics and chemistry but does not like any other subject at school.

Fotos: MALLAI (Portrait) / Olanfactory (Portrait) / STEPHEN KAS (Portrait)

All three of them share an interest in travelling and the conviction to fight for a sustainable lifestyle in order to protect the environment.

As is common at high schools in the US, students have to join an after-school club. Together with your three new friends José, Rebecca and Josephine, you have decided to join the environmental club that takes place after school every Wednesday. In addition, you have also decided to take a trip to Washington during Easter break. You want to explore the most important sights and, above all, understand more about the political system in the US – no better place to do that than the capital!

Caring for your environment and living a sustainable life

Participating in an after-school club on sustainability



Kommunikative Kompetenzziele:

- Nachhaltiges Handeln benennen und sich darüber austauschen können
- Eigene Meinungen zu nachhaltigem Handeln ausdrücken können
- Eigene Ideen strukturieren und präsentieren können
- Andere Personen von den eigenen Ideen und Meinungen überzeugen können

Sprachliche Mittel:

- Wortschatz zum Thema „Nachhaltige Schule“ bzw. „Nachhaltiges Leben“
- Wortschatz zu den Themen Konsum, Mobilität und Müllentsorgung
- Meinungen / Ideen mit unterschiedlichen grammatischen Strukturen (*conditional clauses*, *gerund*, *passive*) ausdrücken

Das Aufgabenpaket „Umweltbewusst und nachhaltig leben“
auf **Englisch** steht auf der > **ÖSZ-Plattform** zum Download zur Verfügung.



1 Understanding sustainability

Together with your new friends José, Rebecca and Josephine, you have decided to join the environmental club that takes place after school every Wednesday. You are all aware, to a certain extent, of how important it is to preserve our environment and to live a sustainable life. To prepare for the first club meeting, you want to learn more about sustainability.



First, you want to read up on the topic of sustainability. You have looked for some information and found an interesting video.

> <https://www.sustain.ucla.edu/what-is-sustainability/>



Watch the video “What is sustainability” on your phone, tablet or laptop and do the following tasks. You might have to watch the video more than once to get all the details.

1) The UN defines sustainability as follows: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the _____ without compromising the ability of _____ generations to meet their _____ needs.”

2) What is meant by “replacement rate”? Use your own words.

3) What impacts of excessive consumption on our environment are named (list at least 3)?

4) Complete the quote (min. 1:45): “Sustainability is about understanding how all this is _____. It is about _____ thinking.”

5) Which example do they give for “systems thinking”?

6) Name the three “Es” that are mentioned in the video:

E _____

E _____

E _____



> **Additional online activity 1:** Go online and do more activities on the three Es.





With the theoretical background of what you have just learned, you continue to think critically about practical approaches to a sustainable lifestyle.

Read the following list on a climate-friendly way of living. If you want, you can also add some ideas of your own which might be missing from the list. Then pick the 5 most important ones and rank them from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).

	separate waste		buy local products only
	avoid waste		buy fair trade products
	use reusable items (water bottles, coffee-to-go mugs, tote bags ...)		reduce shopping in general
	avoid individual traffic, take public transport, cycle or walk to school		save energy
	don't order online		reduce your ecological footprint
	repair broken items (clothes, electronic items)		
	minimize the use of electronic gadgets		



> **Additional online activity 2:** Go online and read more about how to live sustainably.



Get into groups of 3 or 4.

Discuss your ideas and create a collective list of the five most effective ways to lead a sustainable lifestyle by filling in the table below. The following expressions may help you in your discussion.

I have put ... first/second ...

I have ranked as the most/least essential idea.

I think ... is definitely the most important.

... is significant, but not as relevant as ...

I consider ... most/least critical/vital.

Don't you think ... is more significant, though?

Interesting. Why did you rank that least/most critical?

I'm surprised that ... isn't on the list. I think that's absolutely necessary.

I would like to add ... to the list.

Most effective ways of living a sustainable lifestyle

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

② Implementing sustainability in your school

The environmental club that José, Rebecca, Josephine and you have joined seeks to raise students' awareness of a sustainable lifestyle and make them want to actively participate in working towards a better future. Your idea is to create and publish an informative poster for the school in which you explain the measures that should be taken. To do that you will need some in-depth information on certain topics and will have to decide which measures are going to be published on some sort of poster. Your next steps are:

1) Collect background information on one of the following topics and sum it up on one page.

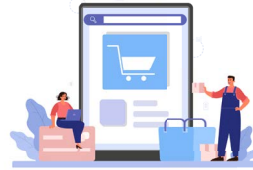


How to organize an environmental club to raise awareness of sustainability

Individual work



How to reduce waste at school



How to reduce consumption and improve shopping behaviour

Group work



How to get to school in a sustainable way

Illustration: Bilder von freepik / Bild von vectorstock auf freepik / Otho Palanis (AdobeStock)

2) Hold a panel discussion to decide on the first measures to take.

3) Create a school poster to inform your class and schoolmates about the next steps.

How to organize an environmental club to raise awareness of sustainability



You start by collecting suitable information on how to organize an environmental club. You have found an interesting video on how to integrate sustainability more easily into your everyday life at school.

> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atAGQ7kqL-g>



Watch the video about how some students “made their high school more sustainable” on your phone, tablet or laptop. While watching, complete the chart below. You might have to watch the video more than once to get all the details.

What measures were taken?	How were the measures supported?

What complaints were there?	What are their next steps?



After seeing this inspirational video, you want to come up with more ideas on how to make a change at your school.

Note down the things you consider useful and doable.

e.g. Launch an informative website on a sustainable lifestyle

e.g. Offer individual counselling on sustainability



If you need some inspiration, go online and do some research.

- The following link may be helpful
> <https://www.weareteachers.com/start-a-green-club/>
- Or get more inspiration from the blog by José, Rebecca and Josephine (> **Activity 3**).



Now you have a list that you want to discuss with your fellow club members.

Get into groups of 3 or 4 and discuss the benefits and drawbacks of some of the activities above. Then make a decision as a group and choose the 3 most effective approaches.

If we organized a strike on a regular basis, the teachers would get really ...

If people had organized, we wouldn't be dealing with all these problems now.

If ...

The most essential activity is ...

What I consider even more beneficial is ...

I strongly believe / I am strongly convinced that ... will contribute greatly to our cause.

I don't really see the point in ...

Handing out leaflets is essential / useless ...

Offering counselling may help / may not support ...

The three most effective approaches are	
1	
2	
3	

Collecting in-depth information on relevant topics for the club

You have already collected a number of measures and activities with your fellow club members. Now, you would like to prepare the panel discussion about the following topics:



You have decided to split up the task. Therefore, you divide into groups and each group collects in-depth information on one category and comes up with some measures on how to implement the topic in your school (e.g. with public activities such as protests, strikes or in-school activities such as assemblies, articles in the school magazine).

Get into groups of 3 or 4. Collect information and ideas and sum up your findings on one page. This forms the basis for your part in the following panel discussion in which you decide on the first measures the club is going to take. These measures will be published on an informative poster.

How to reduce waste at school



A.1

Guess what kind of waste is produced most in schools by ranking the following types from 1 to 7 (1 = the most produced, 7 = the least produced) (NOTE: some might have the same rate):

Waste category	Your guess	According to the chart	Your school
Textiles			
Glass			
Food			
Paper and card			
Plastic			
Garden waste			
Metals			

Now check whether your guess is correct by looking at the chart in the appendix and completing the 2nd column in the table above. Is there anything that surprises you?

Then fill in the last column with the kind of waste that you feel is most often found at your school:

Coca-Cola cans, fizzy drink cans, energy drink cans, foiled chocolate paper, scrap paper, sweet wrappers, orange peel, banana peel, organic waste, food waste from the cafeteria, paper towels, plastic packaging, plastic wrappers, glass bottles, broken school supplies, cardboard packaging, plastic yoghurt containers, disposable coffee cups, fabric scraps, used art supplies and products, broken desks and chairs ...

A.2

Read the text about the 3 Rs and write a short definition of each R in the table below.

> <https://roguedisposal.com/resources/education/recycling/exploring-the-three-rs-of-waste-management-reduce-reuse-recycle>



Then think about 2 activities that might be possible at your school for each category.

Re-	Definition	Activities
Reuse		
Reduce		
Recycle		



In your group, discuss and decide on a minimum of three measures you want to take at your school. Try to vary between the three Rs.

Measures to take at our school	
1	
2	
3	

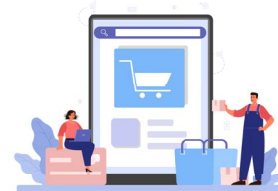


> **Additional online activity 4:** Go online and learn more about food waste in US-American high schools.



In your group, create one page on which you provide background information on the topic and suggest solutions and ideas to carry out with your club.

How to reduce consumption and improve shopping behaviour



Watch the video about shopping addiction and the need to find a solution to the problem of wasteful consumerism.

> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qWHJ29-s4U



Now do the following tasks connected with the three parts of the clip. You might have to watch the video more than once:

1st part: Shopping online:

Why do we buy things without thinking twice?
Why does online shopping seem to be more fun than going to the shops?
What is the evolutionary aspect of our compulsion to shop?

2nd part: Do we need all the stuff we buy?

What usually happens to the goods we order online?	
1	
2	
3	

3rd part: Alternatives to excessive shopping

Which four alternatives to excessive online shopping are proposed?	
1	
2	
3	
4	

A.2

After having seen the video, take a minute and come up with at least 3 arguments why we should avoid excessive shopping to protect our environment:

e.g. If we ordered fewer things online, we could reduce the amount of packaging which produces a lot of waste and costs a lot of money ...

1	
2	
3	
...	

B

Discuss your ideas in your group. Come up with at least 3 measures you want to carry out in your school with your club.

The most important measures that we want to carry out are:	
1	
2	
3	



> **Additional online activity 5:** Go online and learn more about fast fashion.



C

In your group, create one page on which you provide background information on the topic and suggest solutions and ideas to carry out with your club.

How to get to school in a sustainable way



A.1

Read the following text on sustainable transportation and complete the table below.

> <https://earth.org/8-sustainable-transport-solutions-to-improve-urban-mobility-in-the-us/>



Choose the 4 solutions you like best and add 1 or 2 ideas mentioned in the article about how to carry out the solution.

	Solutions	Concrete measure
1		
2		
3		
4		

A.2

Watch the following two short clips on how schools can teach children the topic of sustainability. While watching, concentrate exclusively on the topic of transportation and collect at least 4 ideas on how to get to and from school sustainably.

> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_TmlVZsgKo



> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dZPjN3g4rc>



1)

2)

3)

4)

...

...

Illustration: Bild von reimpel auf freepik

B.1

Now work with a partner and come up with at least 2 arguments that will convince your classmates to choose a sustainable way of getting to and from school (or other places). (Be creative and try to come up with less obvious ideas!)

1	
2	
...	

B.2

In your group, come up with a list of the best arguments and ideas (at least 3).

The 3 best arguments and ideas are:	
1	
2	
3	
...	



> **Additional online activity 6:** Go online and find out what a bike bus is.



C

In your group, create one page on which you provide background information on the topic and suggest solutions and ideas to carry out with your club.

Discussing measures for a sustainable school

After having acquired a lot of useful background information and having collected many ideas on how to implement these measures at your school, your club needs to decide on the first steps it is going to take. Of course, you want to convince your club members in a planned panel discussion that your topic and your ideas (waste/shopping/mobility) are the most important.



Preparing the panel discussion

Get together in your expert group (waste/shopping/mobility) and prepare arguments why your topic is the most important one. Your one-page handout serves as the basis for your upcoming panel discussion. Add further notes and ideas on an additional piece of paper. Make sure to also think about the other groups' arguments and try to prepare counterarguments.

<i>I see your point but ...</i> <i>I've never thought about it like that before.</i> <i>I suppose you could be right.</i> <i>I completely agree.</i> <i>I think we're on the same page.</i> <i>While I am with you as far as is concerned,</i> <i>I don't agree with ...</i>	<i>I strongly disagree with ...</i> <i>I'm not sure if I agree. What do you think about...?</i> <i>I'm not convinced. Wouldn't you say ... is more critical than that?</i> <i>Sorry, but I have to disagree. I don't find that very relevant.</i> <i>Maybe I'm wrong, but I believe that...</i>
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Holding the panel discussion

Your teacher is going to host the panel discussion with your fellow club members. You will be invited to present your topic and you should convince your classmates that YOUR topic is the most important one and that the club should focus on it first. Try to argue your point strongly but stick to the basic rules of respectful communication. At the end, you need to agree as a group which topic you want to start with. Also decide which of the topics should come second and third.



Creating a sustainability poster for your school

Now create a sustainability poster for your school. Get back into your expert groups (waste/shopping/mobility) and create a section of the poster for your topic. Explain why it is important (give facts, background information) and say what you want to do (explain the concrete measures). Be creative and convincing. Your schoolmates should be motivated by your design to actively contribute to a sustainable school.

③ Additional task

A creative approach to sustainability



Choose one form of expression listed below to talk/write about sustainability – in the broadest sense. You can work in small groups or alone. Just make sure that your final product can be presented (e.g. read aloud, shown, acted out, etc.).

- a poem
- a rap
- a song
- a cartoon
- a chart
- a drawing
- an interior monologue
- a roleplay
- a theatre/movie scene
- a sketch
- a news report
- a podcast
- a newspaper article
- a blog entry
- ... or any other product you can think of

Foto: Alexandra Koch (Pixabay)



You can use the following apps:

- for a song: > <https://app.suno.ai/>
- for a cartoon > <https://www.pixton.com/>



4 Linguistic and individual reflection

A.1

Grammar practice in connection with the topic of sustainability

Work in pairs. Form if-sentences to express a hypothesis with the words/phrases given (your partner knows the solution). Take turns after each sentence.

A

1	use reusable water bottles – avoid a lot of plastic waste
2	<i>If we rode our bikes to school regularly, we would improve our fitness level.</i>
3	repair broken items – reduce heavy transportation
4	<i>If we didn't overuse electronic gadgets, we would save a lot of energy.</i>
5	provide our colleagues with information – more aware of environmental issues
6	<i>If we bought local products, we would support local farmers.</i>
7	grow our own vegetables – not have to buy them
8	<i>If we ate less fish, big companies would stop polluting our oceans.</i>
9	take care of our items – not have to throw them away so soon
10	<i>If we bought only what we needed, we would reduce a lot of waste.</i>

B

1	<i>If we used reusable water bottles, we would avoid a lot of plastic waste.</i>
2	ride the bike to school regularly – improve your fitness level
3	<i>If we repaired broken items, we could reduce heavy transportation.</i>
4	not overuse electronic gadgets – save energy
5	<i>If we provided our colleagues with useful information, they would be more aware of environmental issues.</i>
6	buy local products – support local farmers
7	<i>If we grew our own vegetables, we wouldn't have to buy them.</i>
8	eat less fish – big companies stop polluting our oceans
9	<i>If we took care of our items, we wouldn't have to throw them away so soon.</i>
10	buy only what you need – reduce a lot of waste



> **Additional online activity 7:** Go online and work more on the use of if-clauses.



A.2

Work in pairs. Form sentences with the given expressions. Use passive structures to give your sentences a stronger impact. Depending on the message you want to express, you can form positive or negative sentences. Take turns. You will find (example) solutions on an extra sheet.

e.g. Paper waste must be reduced by all means necessary. Online shopping should be avoided.

What (noun)	Modal verb	How (verb)
paper waste	must	support
plastic waste	have to	avoid
electricity	might	reduce
electronic devices	may	limit
online shopping	should	launch
heavy traffic	need to	save
individual traffic	must not	repair
public transport		minimize
broken items		throw away
local products		buy
local farmers		purchase
local shops		increase
information campaign		reuse
		preserve



> **Additional online activity 8:** Go online and practice using the gerund.



B.1

Personal reflection

I have learned useful vocabulary and phrases to talk about environmental issues

Complete the chart with the 7 most important ones.

0	<i>to dispose of something</i>
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

B.2

I am able to argue for my cause and to convince other people by using different grammatical structures (e.g. conditional clauses, passive structures, gerund).

Choose 3 topics you now know more about and formulate 3 convincing statements as in the example given.

Online shopping	
Convincing	<i>If people didn't buy so much online, we would avoid a lot of packaging waste.</i>
	<i>People need to be persuaded not to shop online.</i>
	<i>Informing people about the bad effects of online shopping might have a huge impact on our environment.</i>

Topic:	
Convincing	

Topic:	
Convincing	

Topic:	
Convincing	



Additional online activities: *Go online and test your own skills and knowledge about sustainability.*



> Activity 9



> Activity 10

C

Further areas of interest

Write down what else you would like to know about the topic.

Solutions

Understanding sustainability



1) The UN defines sustainability as follows: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

2) What is meant by "replacement rate"? Use your own words.

Only use as much of the planet's resources as can be replaced by the planet itself. Use the planet's resources at a rate which keeps the system stable. You need to keep an equilibrium.

3) What impacts of excessive consumption on our environment are named (list at least 3)?

Fisheries and forests disappearing

Air pollution

Plastics in the ocean

Climate change

4) Complete the quote (min. 1:45): "Sustainability is about understanding how all this is connected. It is about systems thinking."

5) Which example do they give for "systems thinking"?

When you buy a smartphone, your decision has an impact on many people in a completely different part of the world.

6) Name the three "Es" that are mentioned in the video:

Environment

Economy

Equity

How to organize an environmental club to raise awareness of sustainability



What measures were taken?	How were the measures supported?
Indoor bin system to separate waste	Bins at the end of each corridor Extra information and education (information wall) to convince the students to separate waste
School garden: gardening of self-grown food	On an old basketball court, harvested food is integrated in the canteen's menu, leftovers are given to the chickens or composted

What complaints were there?	What are their next steps?
That the paper bins are too thin (compared to the recycling bin)	Try to reduce waste altogether (to get less waste into school)

How to reduce waste at school

A.1

Waste category	According to the chart
Textiles	5
Glass	5
Food	2
Paper and card	1
Plastic	3
Garden waste	5
Metals	4

A.2

Re-	Definition
Reuse	To use things again instead of throwing them away
Reduce	To produce less rubbish
Recycle	To turn something old and useless into something new and useful

How to reduce consumption and improve shopping behaviour

A.1

1st part: Shopping online:

Why do we buy things without thinking twice?
<i>Products are cheaper than ever before.</i>
Why does online shopping seem to be more fun than going to the shops?
<i>By buying things we get a dopamine hit. When we buy online, we get it twice: when we order the product and when the product arrives.</i>
What is the evolutionary aspect of our compulsion to shop?
<i>People who had the most stuff would survive. Therefore, gathering things is an innate human desire.</i>

2nd part: Do we need all the stuff we buy?

What usually happens to the goods we order online?	
1	not used and just stored in our homes
2	donated to thrift stores
3	thrown away

3rd part: Alternatives to excessive shopping

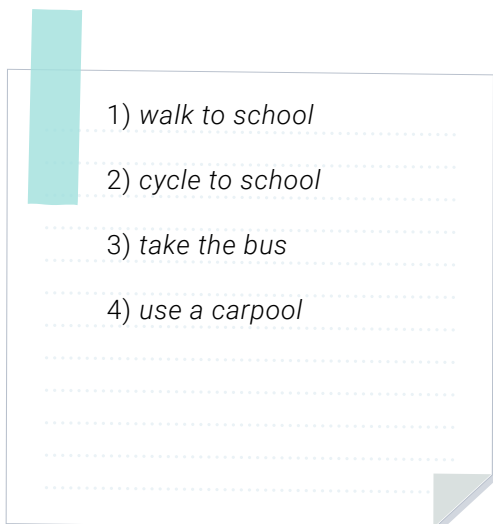
Which four alternatives to excessive online shopping are proposed?	
1	zero-waste household
2	a year of no shopping
3	minimalism
4	reuse and recycle

How to get to school in a sustainable way

A.1

	Solutions	Concrete measure
1	Better infrastructure for cyclists	More bike lanes (broader, separate and safer)
2	Encourage carpooling and ride-sharing	Install ride-share services in all areas
3	Alternative fuel technology	Electric buses, buses that run on natural gas, electric trains
4	Pedestrian-friendly cities	Walkable communities, make infrastructure more accessible
5	Green supply chain	Use rail or electric lorries to transport freight
6	Decarbonize aviation	Electric aviation
7	More public transportation	More commuter trains, public transportation also in smaller towns
8	Educate drivers	Reduce carbon footprint while driving, invest in green vehicles

A.2



- 1) *walk to school*
- 2) *cycle to school*
- 3) *take the bus*
- 4) *use a carpool*

Grammar practice in connection with the topic of sustainability

A.2

Example solutions:

Paper waste must be reduced.

Plastic waste should not be thrown away but recycled.

Electricity use has to be minimized.

Electronic devices must be repaired.

Online shopping needs to be limited.

Heavy traffic should be avoided.

Individual traffic should be limited.

Public transport should increase.

Broken items may be reused.

Local products must be purchased.

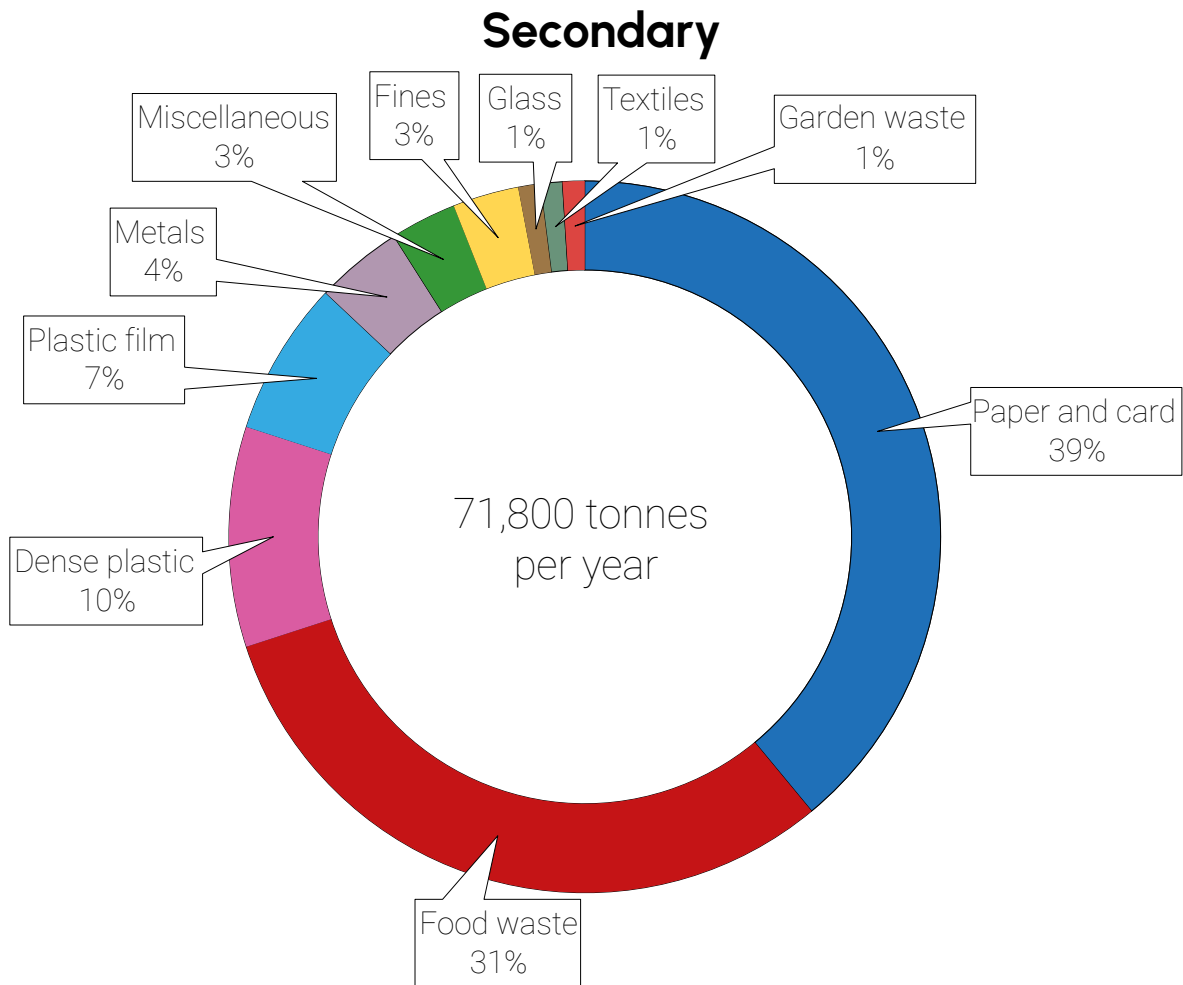
Local farmers have to be supported.

Local shops should be preserved.

An information campaign might be launched

Appendix: ad “How to reduce waste”

The amount of waste being produced in English schools each day equals the weight of 185 double-decker buses filled with waste.



Source: Report into the nature and scale of waste produced by schools in England, WRAP (2008)