

Every year, millions of people around the world switch off their lights for one hour to draw attention to the environment. Read on to find out more.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. biodiversity
2. to raise awareness
3. a landmark
4. an initiative
5. climate change
6. worldwide
7. to ban
8. a reduction

Definition

- a. a famous place
- b. when there is less of something
- c. the variety of plants and animals in a place
- d. a plan to do something together
- e. across the whole world
- f. to make people think about something
- g. a change in temperatures and weather around the world
- h. to say that people cannot do or use something

Earth Hour

What is Earth Hour?

Every year, in late March, people and institutions come together to switch off all non-essential lights for sixty minutes at 8.30 p.m. local time. They do this to show their support for the fight against the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity. Millions of people all around the world join in, as do governments, businesses and institutions. By switching off their lights and measuring the reduction in the amount of energy that is being used, people are showing that it is possible to make a difference.

But Earth Hour is more than one hour without lights, once a year. It's part of a movement of people who are working together all year round to protect the environment.

How did it start?

The World Wide Fund for Nature in Australia introduced the idea in 2007. They wanted to find a way to raise awareness about climate change. And they wanted to show that when millions of individuals work together, they can make a difference.

The first Earth Hour was held on 31 March 2007 at 7.30 p.m. in Sydney. More than two million residents and 2,000 businesses turned their lights out for one hour. The lights also went out on the famous Sydney Opera House. The people of the city of San Francisco were so inspired

by the event in Sydney that they held their own 'Lights Out' event in October of the same year. This was the beginning of the Earth Hour movement.

How many cities take part?

The event has grown over the years, with more and more people, businesses, organisations and governments taking part every year.

In 2008, a year after the first Earth Hour event, 35 countries and more than 400 cities joined in. Websites also took part, turning their homepages black in support of the initiative. By 2012, 152 countries and more than 7,000 cities and towns were taking part. In recent years, the numbers have kept increasing, with more than 188 countries and territories worldwide taking part each year. In 2019, more than two billion photos were shared on social media platforms.

Famous people and famous places

A number of celebrities have put their names to the cause, including singer Ellie Goulding, tennis star Andy Murray, TV host Ellen de Generes, actor Leonardo di Caprio and ex-Beatle Paul McCartney. Politicians and world leaders have also given their support, and thousands of famous landmarks have turned off their lights, including the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Empire State Building in New York and the Pyramids in Egypt.

What has the movement achieved?

The Earth Hour movement has achieved much more than getting people to turn off their lights. Since 2007, among other actions, they have planted trees in various countries around the world, including a 2,700 hectare forest in Uganda and 17 million trees in Kazakhstan. They worked together to ban the use of plastics on the islands of the Galapagos, one of the most important nature reserves on the planet. And they have sponsored solar power projects in India and the Philippines.

What can I do?

Join the movement. Find out the date and time for this year. Visit the Earth Hour website and find out what's going on. Then get ready to turn off your lights and join the millions of other people around the world who are fighting to save our planet!

Sources:

<https://www.earthhour.org/faqs>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/earth-hour>

<https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/10-years-earth-hour-worldwide>

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

1. Earth Hour takes place _____ every year.
 - a. in October
 - b. in the same month
 - c. on the same day
2. Earth Hour started in _____.
 - a. Paris
 - b. San Francisco
 - c. Sydney
3. It was celebrated around the world for the first time in _____.
 - a. 2007
 - b. 2008
 - c. 2012
4. In 2008, _____ countries took part in the event.
 - a. 35
 - b. 400
 - c. 7,000
5. The Earth Hour movement is _____ a one-hour event.
 - a. more than
 - b. only
 - c. part of
6. The _____ is the organisation that introduced the idea for Earth Hour.
 - a. United Nations
 - b. World Health Organization
 - c. World Wide Fund for Nature

Task 2

Match the answers to the questions.

Questions

1. Where?
2. When?
3. Why?
4. Who?
5. What?

Answers

- a. To raise awareness of climate change
- b. Switch off lights for one hour or more
- c. The end of March
- d. All over the world
- e. Individuals, businesses and organisations

Discussion

Do you think Earth Hour is a good idea?

Answers

Preparation task

1. c
2. f
3. a
4. d
5. g
6. e
7. h
8. b

Task 1

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. a
6. c

Task 2

1. d
2. c
3. a
4. e
5. b