



GREEN SPORTS DAY



WHAT IS GREEN SPORTS DAY?

The Canadian Youth Sports Report 2023 estimates that 67% of Canadian youth participate in organized sports. Most of these participants are too busy having fun to think much about the environmental impact of the recreational sports they play or the professional sports they watch on television. However, sports are significantly contributing to climate change.

It's estimated that globally sports are responsible for 350 million tons of CO₂ every year. That's almost as much as the entire United Kingdom produces. To add to the problem, many sports are affected by a warming environment either because they require snow and ice, or the athletes must train and compete in dangerously hot conditions.

Canada has always been a supporter of the sustainable sport movement. In 2020, a group of seven Canadian Olympians and a researcher joined forces to host a Green Sports Day aimed at increasing the awareness of climate change and sports, to take action to reduce the carbon footprint of sport, and to celebrate the progress and positive impact of sports.

The Canadian Olympic School Program is excited to partner with Green Sports Day to support teachers in their efforts to make students aware of green sports.



ACTIVITY #1

INTRODUCING GREEN SPORTS TO YOUR STUDENTS

Provide a brief overview of the Green Sports Day. A possible script could be:

We have a unique opportunity to hear from some of Canada's Olympic athletes speak about the how sports we play affect the environment and contribute to climate change. We are going to have a short discussion before we log into the panel and hear from the Olympians.



DISCUSS: *Raise your hand if you participate in sports or recreation activities? What sports or activities do you do? (e.g., soccer, swimming lessons, biking, hockey, skiing, etc.)*

Teacher explains the link between CO₂ and climate change. See the text box for a simple explanation.

The key points are that the production of CO₂ contributes to climate change and our choices and actions can lower CO₂ emissions.



DISCUSS: *Can you think of examples of how sports or activities might create CO₂?*

Student examples might include driving to a game, using disposable water bottles, flying to a tournament, heating the swimming pool or gym, manufacturing equipment, etc.



CO₂ AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Gases like CO₂ make up the earth's lower atmosphere, and trap in the sun's radiation. These gases keep the planet's temperatures livable compared to the other planets. This is called the greenhouse effect and the gases are referred to as "greenhouse gases". However, over the last 100 years, the production of CO₂ has dramatically increased as we burn more fossil fuels, and more heat is being trapped close to the earth's surface. This is changing our climate. Average temperatures are rising, and storms, droughts, and heat waves are more severe. By reducing our production of CO₂, we can contribute to the global effort to slow climate change.



ACTIVITY #2

As the Olympians said, Green Sports Day is aimed at making sport more sustainable. There are many great actions underway to reduce carbon emissions and to help sport organizers host events that are more environmentally sustainable.



DISCUSS: *As a student, what can you do to make your sport and recreation activities more environmentally friendly?*

Explain that sport uniforms, shoes, skates, balls, pucks, swimsuits, protective pads, water bottles, and many other equipment are made with plastics. These plastics are made by refining oil and the process creates CO₂ emissions. Using recycled plastics produce much less CO₂, and keep plastics from landfills where they can take 30-1,000 years to decompose. The selection and disposal of equipment can make a huge difference to the environment.

Students can make a difference by applying the 5 Rs to your sports equipment. Explain each of the Rs and the examples that are provided below. Ask the students for other ideas how they can apply each of the Rs to their sports equipment.



REDUCE: Buy equipment with less packaging. Use fewer single use bottles or disposable plastic.



REUSE: Sports equipment exchange stores and swaps let someone else use the equipment you are no longer using. Consider using used equipment.



REPURPOSE: Your used sports shoes can be repurposed into the rubber that makes running tracks and artificial turf fields.



REFUSE: Avoid using single-use plastics like bags, straws, or containers.



RECYCLE: Look for local recycling depots to recycle polyester clothing, metal, or fiberglass. Recycled plastic bottles are often used to make new polyester clothing used for sports.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1

Choose one of the 5 Rs and have the students write an email to their friends or teammates that encourages them to apply that R to their sports equipment.

2

Design a poster that shows how sports and recreational equipment can be reused, recycled, or repurposed.

3

Ask the students to bring an article of sports or recreational equipment to class the next day as a show and tell. Ask them to explain what it is made of, how the 5Rs could apply to it, and how they might dispose of it when they no longer want it.