

BELIEF CIRCLES

An introductory activity to help students to think about their own ideas and understand other possible viewpoints on sustainability issues as an ordinary teenager.

Age:	16-18
Group size:	Small groups or a whole class
National Curriculum:	Citizenship, Design & technology, English



Activity:

- 1 Prepare a number of statements in advance dealing with the sustainability issues you want students to consider. Print them in bold, large print on cards so students can read them from a few feet away. See Belief Circles Statements (**attached**).
- 2 Give each student a card to write his/her name on, also bold and large.
- 3 Organise students on chairs in a circle, and include yourself in the circle, participating if you wish.
- 4 Explain to the group that you are going to place a card on the floor in the centre of the circle on which is written a statement. Tell them you will ask them to think about their opinion about the statement. You will then ask them to place their name card as near to or as far away from the statement as their opinion is near to or far away from the statement itself. The limits are the front of their chairs and next to the statement card.
- 5 Explain that they must only put down their name card when you say so, not when they've made up their mind. This avoids everyone following the 'leader' in the group and should ensure everyone thinks about the issue.
- 6 Read out the first statement, put it in the centre, read it again and allow about 30 seconds thought, then ask students to put their cards down. Include your own if you wish.
- 7 Ask one student to explain why they have put their card in a particular position. It may help to choose an extreme view. Ask others to explain their positions and debate for as long as appropriate.
- 8 Do the same thing with further cards until you are happy that issues

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

have been raised. If you wish, ask students to write down the values they have at the moment about the issues highlighted.

- 9 Draw some conclusions about how our values affect our choices as consumers.

Notes:

An alternative way of running this exercise is to do it with post it notes and large sheets of paper. The results can then be pinned onto the classroom wall.

BELIEF CIRCLES STATEMENTS

- I believe it's the government's job to make sure waste is disposed of properly, not mine.
 - I believe we don't need to bother about using up resources. There will always be plenty for everyone.
 - I believe we'll always find new resources even if we use up those we've got now.
 - I believe it's just not possible to produce something without it doing a bit of environmental damage.
 - I believe that wherever possible producers should try to use renewable materials and sources of energy.
 - I believe it makes sense to try to design all products in such a way that they can be reused or recycled.
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- I believe people in other countries should learn to look after themselves. They're not our responsibility.
 - I believe it's more important to be trendy than environmentally friendly.
 - I believe it's much more important to be able to get a product easily than to be bothered about where it has come from or who made it.
 - I believe that people have a free choice about where they live. If they choose to live where there's a danger from pollution then that's their problem.
 - I believe that when children are used to make products, their families will be better off because there's another income.
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- I believe that what I buy in the shops is my business and doesn't affect anyone else in any way.
 - I believe the most important thing in choosing what we buy is value for money.
 - I believe people who make products have a much harder job than those who sell them so they should get more of the profits.
 - I believe it doesn't really matter whether something is needed or not – making new products always creates jobs for people.