

PRODUCT PARIS

Introductory activity to help students to start thinking about the values that lie behind their choices as consumers when they go shopping for anything and have to decide which of a number of different products to buy.

Age:	14 -16
Group size:	Groups to encourage discussion
National Curriculum:	Citizenship, Design & technology, Geography, English



Activity:

- 1 In advance, buy a selection of product pairs that are relatively good or bad from a sustainability point of view in the area you want to consider (economic, social, environmental or general.) Number each product, e.g. 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B etc. See **Product Pairs** (attached)
- 2 Place the 'paired products' on a table at the front of the class where everyone can see them.
- 3 Ask students to imagine they are going shopping and have your chosen products on their shopping list. Ask them to choose one item from each pair, to note their choice, and to write down a brief reason why they made the choice (e.g. looks better, know the brand). Do not mention sustainability – they should make their choices as ordinary students.
- 4 Report back on reasons for choices. Write them on the board and summarise the main criteria people use when making decisions as consumers.
- 5 Raise the question of sustainability – is it a criterion commonly used in decisions as consumers?
- 6 At this stage teachers may choose either to stop the activity and return to it when more work on sustainability has been completed or they may wish to follow up the sustainability issue immediately.
- 7 To continue, now give students background information about the two products and their relative sustainability.
- 8 After the explanations, ask students to consider their choices again. Does the knowledge lead to any changes in their choices?

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

PRODUCT PAIRS

PRODUCT A	PRODUCT B	ISSUES
Milk: Long life milk	Milk: Milk man's local milk	brings out processing, energy use, transport, food miles, local employment
Coffee: Fair trade, organic coffee	Coffee: coffee from a large international company	fair trade, transport, fertilisers, pesticides, human rights, ethical trading, food miles
Mouse mat: Standard mouse mat	Mouse mat: Recycled mouse mat	recycling, reuse, packaging, product need, closing the loop
T-shirt: unbleached, organic cotton and fair traded	T-shirt: sweat shop made and using artificial pesticides, bleaches etc.	fair trade, toxic emissions, social impact of products, cost

More extreme items:

Pens/pencils: Remarkable recycled plastic cup pen, from www.remarkable.co.uk , tel. 0208 741 1234 (10 for £4.25)	Pens/pencils: compared with a cheap biro sourced locally.	Materials, durability, reuse
Socks: Organic cotton socks from www.naturalcollection.com	Socks: locally sourced synthetic socks	Use of fertilisers and pesticides, Use of synthetic dyes compared with natural colours, Energy use
Toothbrushes: finger toothbrush www.no-shank.com	Toothbrushes: electric toothbrush sourced locally.	Energy in use, Materials needed in manufacture, Possibility of disassembly, Packaging
Shopping Bags: Fair trade Sisal Durable Shopping bag £12.95 www.naturalcollection.com	Shopping Bags: conventional plastic bag	Durability, Litter, Waste