

VOCABULARY BUILDER · IELTS

Environment

23 high-band words to read, understand,
and actually use – from B2 to C2.

B2

C1

C2

How to use this pack

A word you can only recognise is not yet a word you own. This pack is built to move each term from “I’ve seen it” to “I can use it under exam pressure.” Work through it in order.

1 Test yourself first

Go straight to the **Before** page and write what you think each word means. Don’t look ahead — this is your baseline.

2 Study the word bank

Read each entry: the definition, the example sentence, the collocations and the word family. The example is the most important part — it shows the word alive in context.

3 Do the tasks

Gap-fill, matching, word formation, a full IELTS-style reading, and speaking & writing practice. Use a pencil so you can redo them.

4 Test yourself again

Return to the **After** page and write the meanings from memory. Compare with your baseline — that gap is your progress.

HOW TO READ AN ENTRY

noun / verb / adjective

part of speech

B2 · C1 · C2

CEFR difficulty level

/ˈsɪmbəl/

pronunciation (IPA)

e.g.

example sentence in context

↔

opposite / contrast

What do you already know?

BEFORE

Before you read a single definition, write what you think each word means — even a rough guess or a synonym. Tick how sure you are. This is your honest starting point; you'll come back at the end to measure how far you've moved.

#	WORD	SURE? know · unsure · new	WHAT I THINK IT MEANS
1	sustainability	☐ ☐ ☐	
2	emissions	☐ ☐ ☐	
3	biodiversity	☐ ☐ ☐	
4	conservation	☐ ☐ ☐	
5	deforestation	☐ ☐ ☐	
6	renewable	☐ ☐ ☐	
7	carbon footprint	☐ ☐ ☐	
8	ecosystem	☐ ☐ ☐	
9	fossil fuels	☐ ☐ ☐	
10	degradation	☐ ☐ ☐	
11	habitat	☐ ☐ ☐	
12	depletion	☐ ☐ ☐	
13	contaminate	☐ ☐ ☐	
14	extinction	☐ ☐ ☐	
15	mitigate	☐ ☐ ☐	
16	offset	☐ ☐ ☐	
17	detrimental	☐ ☐ ☐	
18	finite	☐ ☐ ☐	
19	biodegradable	☐ ☐ ☐	
20	landfill	☐ ☐ ☐	
21	scarcity	☐ ☐ ☐	
22	erosion	☐ ☐ ☐	
23	replenish	☐ ☐ ☐	

The word bank

Twenty-three words, chosen for how often they earn marks in IELTS Writing Task 2 and Speaking Part 3. Read the example sentence aloud – that is where the meaning sticks.

1 sustainability /səˌsteɪnəˈbɪləti/

noun

B2

The ability to continue an activity long-term without damaging the environment or using up resources.

e.g. **Sustainability** means meeting today's needs without harming the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

COLLOCATIONS

environmental sustainability • long-term sustainability

WORD FAMILY

sustainable (adj), sustain (v), sustainably (adv)

IELTS The umbrella concept for almost every environment essay – define it early to frame your argument.

2 emissions /ɪˈmɪʃnz/

noun

C1

Gases or other substances released into the air, especially harmful ones.

e.g. Governments have pledged to cut carbon **emissions** to net zero by 2050.

COLLOCATIONS

carbon / greenhouse-gas emissions • reduce / cut emissions

WORD FAMILY

emit (v), emission (n)

3 biodiversity /ˌbaɪəʊdəɪˈvɜːsəti/

noun

C1

The variety of plant and animal life in a particular place or in the world as a whole.

e.g. Clearing the rainforest destroys **biodiversity** that took millions of years to develop.

COLLOCATIONS

rich biodiversity • a loss of biodiversity

WORD FAMILY

biodiverse (adj)

4 conservation /ˌkɒnsə'veɪʃn/

noun

B2

The protection of the natural world, or the careful use of resources to prevent waste.

e.g. Conservation projects have helped several endangered species recover.

COLLOCATIONS

wildlife / marine conservation • energy conservation

WORD FAMILY

conserve (v), conservationist (n)

5 deforestation /diːˌfɒrɪ'steɪʃn/

noun

C1

The cutting down or clearing of large areas of forest.

e.g. Deforestation to create farmland is a leading cause of species loss.

COLLOCATIONS

large-scale / rapid deforestation • combat deforestation

WORD FAMILY

deforest (v) • opp. reforestation

6 renewable /rɪ'njuːəbl/

adjective

B2

(of energy or resources) able to be replaced naturally, so it will not run out.

e.g. Wind and solar are **renewable** sources of energy that produce no direct emissions.

COLLOCATIONS

renewable energy / resources

WORD FAMILY

renew (v), renewal (n) • opp. non-renewable

IELTS Contrast "renewable" with "finite" and "fossil fuels" to structure the energy debate.

7 carbon footprint /ˌkɑːbən ˈfʊtprɪnt/

noun

C1

The total amount of greenhouse gases produced by the activities of a person, product or organisation.

e.g. Flying less and eating locally are two ways to shrink your **carbon footprint**.

COLLOCATIONS

reduce / shrink your carbon footprint • a large carbon footprint

WORD FAMILY

—

8 ecosystem /ˈiːkəʊsɪstəm/

noun

C1

All the living things in an area and the way they affect one another and their environment.

e.g. Even a small change in temperature can throw an entire **ecosystem** out of balance.

COLLOCATIONS

a fragile / marine ecosystem • disrupt an ecosystem

WORD FAMILY

ecological (adj), ecology (n)

9 fossil fuels /ˌfɒsl ˈfjuːəlz/

noun

C1

Fuels such as coal, oil and gas formed from the remains of ancient organisms.

e.g. Burning **fossil fuels** is the largest single source of greenhouse gases.

COLLOCATIONS

burn / rely on fossil fuels • a shift away from fossil fuels

WORD FAMILY

fossil fuel (adj, e.g. fossil-fuel industry)

10 degradation /ˌdeɡrəˈdeɪʃn/

noun

C1

The process by which the quality of the environment is damaged or reduced.

e.g. Intensive farming has led to serious soil **degradation** across the region.

COLLOCATIONS

environmental / soil degradation

WORD FAMILY

degrade (v), degraded (adj)

11 habitat /ˈhæbɪtæt/

noun

B2

The natural home or environment of an animal or plant.

e.g. As cities expand, the **habitat** of many species shrinks year by year.

COLLOCATIONS

a natural habitat • habitat loss / destruction

WORD FAMILY

—

12 depletion /dɪˈpliːʃn/

noun

C1

The reduction or using up of something, especially a natural resource.

e.g. The **depletion** of fish stocks threatens the livelihoods of coastal communities.

COLLOCATIONS

resource / ozone depletion

WORD FAMILY

deplete (v), depleted (adj) • opp. replenishment

13 contaminate /kən'tæmɪneɪt/

verb

C1

To make something dirty, impure or poisonous by adding a harmful substance.

e.g. Chemicals from the factory have **contaminated** the local water supply.

COLLOCATIONS

contaminate water / soil / food

WORD FAMILY

contamination (n), contaminant (n), contaminated (adj)

14 extinction /ɪk'stɪŋkʃn/

noun

B2

The state or process of a species dying out completely.

e.g. Hunting and habitat loss have driven many animals to the brink of **extinction**.

COLLOCATIONS

face / drive to extinction • on the verge of extinction

WORD FAMILY

extinct (adj)

15 mitigate /'mɪtɪgeɪt/

verb

C2

To make something harmful less serious or severe.

e.g. Planting trees can help to **mitigate** the effects of climate change.

COLLOCATIONS

mitigate the effects / impact / risk

WORD FAMILY

mitigation (n)

IELTS A precise, high-band verb for “reduce the damage of” – a favourite in climate essays.

16 offset /ˌɒf'set/

verb

C1

To balance or cancel out the effect of something by doing something with an opposite effect.

e.g. Some airlines let passengers **offset** their emissions by funding tree-planting.

COLLOCATIONS

offset emissions / carbon • carbon offsetting

WORD FAMILY

offset (n)

17 detrimental /ˌdetrɪ'mentl/

adjective

C1

Causing harm or damage.

e.g. Single-use plastics are deeply **detrimental** to marine life.

COLLOCATIONS

detrimental to (sth) • a detrimental effect / impact

WORD FAMILY

detriment (n)

IELTS A cleaner, higher-band swap for “bad for” — e.g. “detrimental to the environment”.

18 finite /'faɪnaɪt/

adjective

C1

Limited in amount; having an end, and therefore able to run out.

e.g. Oil and coal are **finite** resources that will eventually be exhausted.

COLLOCATIONS

finite resources / supply

WORD FAMILY

— • opp. infinite

19 biodegradable /ˌbaɪəʊdɪˈɡreɪdəbl/

adjective

C1

Able to be broken down naturally by bacteria, without harming the environment.

e.g. Switching to **biodegradable** packaging could dramatically reduce plastic waste.

COLLOCATIONS

biodegradable material / packaging

WORD FAMILY

biodegrade (v) · opp. non-biodegradable

20 landfill /ˈlændfɪl/

noun

C1

A place where large amounts of waste are buried under the ground; this method of disposal.

e.g. Most of the rubbish we throw away still ends up in **landfill**.

COLLOCATIONS

go to / end up in landfill • a landfill site

WORD FAMILY

—

21 scarcity /ˈskeəsəti/

noun

C1

A situation in which there is not enough of something.

e.g. Water **scarcity** already affects billions of people and is expected to worsen as the climate warms.

COLLOCATIONS

water / food scarcity • growing scarcity

WORD FAMILY

scarce (adj) · opp. abundance

22 erosion /ɪˈrəʊʒn/

noun

C1

The gradual wearing away of soil, rock or land by wind, water or other natural forces.

e.g. Removing trees speeds up soil **erosion** on steep hillsides.

COLLOCATIONS

soil / coastal erosion

WORD FAMILY

erode (v), eroded (adj)

23 replenish /rɪˈplenɪʃ/

verb

C2

To fill something up again, or restore a supply to its former level.

e.g. Forests take decades to **replenish** once they have been cleared.

COLLOCATIONS

replenish stocks / supplies / resources

WORD FAMILY

replenishment (n)

Task 1 · Gap-fill

Complete each sentence with a word from the bank. You may need to change the form (tense, ending). Each word is used once.

contaminate

deforestation

detrimental

emissions

extinction

finite

habitat

landfill

mitigate

offset

renewable

scarcity

1. New regulations aim to cut carbon _____ from heavy industry.
2. The country now generates half of its electricity from _____ sources.
3. _____ in the tropics releases huge amounts of stored carbon.
4. Without urgent action, the species could face _____ within a decade.
5. A chemical spill threatened to _____ the town's drinking water.
6. Sea walls are being built to _____ the impact of rising sea levels.
7. We cannot keep treating _____ resources as though they will last forever.
8. Around the world, millions of tonnes of plastic end up in _____ every year.
9. Building the dam would destroy the _____ of several rare birds.
10. Prolonged drought has led to severe water _____ in the region.
11. The excessive use of pesticides can be highly _____ to bees.
12. Companies can _____ their carbon output by investing in clean energy.

Task 2 · Match the meaning

Write the letter of the correct definition next to each word.

1 sustainability	☐	a living things in an area and how they interact
2 biodiversity	☐	b the variety of living things in a place
3 conservation	☐	c the using up of a natural resource
4 carbon footprint	☐	d using resources without using them up or harming the planet
5 ecosystem	☐	e the gradual wearing away of soil or land
6 fossil fuels	☐	f the protection of nature and resources
7 degradation	☐	g damage to the quality of the environment
8 depletion	☐	h the total greenhouse gases someone or something produces
9 biodegradable	☐	i able to be broken down naturally
10 erosion	☐	j coal, oil and gas formed from ancient remains

Task 3 · Word formation

Change the word in **CAPITALS** into the correct form to complete each sentence.

- SUSTAIN** We urgently need more _____ ways of producing food.
- CONSERVE** The charity funds wildlife _____ projects around the world.
- DEplete** The _____ of natural resources is accelerating year on year.
- REnew** Investment in _____ energy has risen sharply this decade.
- EXtinct** Conservationists are working to prevent the _____ of the species.
- CONTAMINATE** Tests revealed dangerous levels of _____ in the river.
- ERode** Heavy rainfall has caused severe _____ of the coastline.
- BIODEGRADE** The company has switched to fully _____ packaging.

Task 4 · Reading in context

Read the passage, then answer the questions. This mirrors an IELTS reading set – notice how many of your new words appear naturally.

Whose Job Is It to Save the Planet?

There is now little doubt that human activity is placing the planet under enormous strain. The burning of fossil fuels has driven up greenhouse-gas emissions, while deforestation and intensive farming continue to erode the world's biodiversity. If current trends persist, scientists warn, the damage to many ecosystems may become impossible to reverse.

Faced with this, some argue that the responsibility lies with individuals. By recycling, wasting less and reducing their carbon footprint, ordinary people can, they claim, make a real difference. Small changes – buying local food, or avoiding single-use plastics that end up in landfill – add up when millions adopt them.

Others insist that individual effort, though admirable, is not enough. The scale of the problem, they argue, demands action from governments and corporations: investment in renewable energy, stricter limits on emissions, and international agreements to protect forests and oceans. Without such measures, they say, no amount of personal sacrifice will be sufficient.

In reality, the two approaches are not in conflict. Governments can create the conditions for change, while citizens can demand it and adjust their own behaviour. Treating the planet's resources as finite rather than limitless is the first step. Only by combining personal responsibility with bold policy can societies hope to mitigate the worst effects of a warming world.

Questions 1–5 · True / False / Not Given

TRUE = the passage says so. **FALSE** = the passage says the opposite. **NOT GIVEN** = the passage doesn't say.

- | | | |
|-------|--|------------|
| 1 | Some people believe individuals can help by wasting less. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 2 | Scientists say that all environmental damage can still be reversed. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 3 | Governments have already banned single-use plastics worldwide. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 4 | The writer believes individual and government action are in conflict. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 5 | The writer argues that both personal and government action are needed. | T / F / NG |

Questions 6–9 · Vocabulary in context

- | | | |
|-------|--|-------|
| 6 | Find a word/phrase meaning: gases released into the air | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 7 | Find a word/phrase meaning: limited and able to run out | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 8 | Find a word/phrase meaning: the variety of living things | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 9 | Find a word/phrase meaning: to make a harmful effect less severe | _____ |

Task 5 · Use it yourself

Recognising a word is easy; producing it is what raises your band. Answer out loud, then in writing.

SPEAK Speaking — Part 3 style

Answer each question in 3–4 sentences. Try to use the words in **bold** accurately.

1. What can individuals do to reduce their **carbon footprint**?
2. Should governments invest more in **renewable** energy? Why?
3. How can we protect **biodiversity** as cities keep expanding?
4. Whose job is it to tackle **deforestation** — governments or companies?

WRITE Writing — Task 2 mini

Write an introduction and one body paragraph (about 80–100 words) for this prompt. Use **at least four** words from this pack.

Many people believe that the world's **finite** resources are being used up far too quickly. What are the main causes of this, and what could be done to promote greater **sustainability**?

Now, from memory

AFTER

Cover the word bank. Write each meaning from memory and tick the box only if you could also use the word in your own sentence. Compare this page with your **Before** page – every word you can now explain is a mark you’ve earned.

#	WORD	MEANING (FROM MEMORY)	CAN USE IT
1	sustainability		☐
2	emissions		☐
3	biodiversity		☐
4	conservation		☐
5	deforestation		☐
6	renewable		☐
7	carbon footprint		☐
8	ecosystem		☐
9	fossil fuels		☐
10	degradation		☐
11	habitat		☐
12	depletion		☐
13	contaminate		☐
14	extinction		☐
15	mitigate		☐
16	offset		☐
17	detrimental		☐
18	finite		☐
19	biodegradable		☐
20	landfill		☐
21	scarcity		☐
22	erosion		☐
23	replenish		☐

Answer key

TASK 1 · GAP-FILL

1 emissions 2 renewable 3 deforestation 4 extinction 5 contaminate 6 mitigate 7 finite 8 landfill 9 habitat
10 scarcity 11 detrimental 12 offset

TASK 2 · MATCHING

1 d 2 b 3 f 4 h 5 a 6 j 7 g 8 c 9 i 10 e

TASK 3 · WORD FORMATION

1 sustainable 2 conservation 3 depletion 4 renewable 5 extinction 6 contamination 7 erosion 8 biodegradable

TASK 4 · TRUE / FALSE / NOT GIVEN

1 TRUE 2 FALSE 3 NOT GIVEN 4 FALSE 5 TRUE

TASK 4 · VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

6 emissions 7 finite 8 biodiversity 9 mitigate



Nicely done. Revisit this pack in a week and again in a month — spaced review is what turns a recognised word into an automatic one. More themed packs at prepex.ai.