

ASK CLIMATE CHANGE & HEALTH SERIES

What's inside:

1. What is climate activism?
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What is climate activism?

Climate activism is a global movement to spur action on climate change and climate injustice (and, importantly, work *against* inaction on these fronts) and create a safe, sustainable, and equitable world for everyone. There are myriad ways to be a climate activist, and they don't all involve attending protests or sit-ins, canvassing, or the other actions that first come to mind when we think "activist" (although those certainly count too!). We'll cover a wide range of ways to be a climate activist in this issue — but first: why should we consider being a climate activist at all?

Why is climate activism important?

In some ways, the answer is simple: activism works. We know this from the [civil rights movement](#) in the US, the [anti-apartheid movement](#) in South Africa, the [Green Wave movement](#) in Argentina, and hundreds of other popular movements throughout history. All of these movements were essential parts of social changes that have brought more freedom, inclusivity, and justice to the world. Similarly, [citizens lobbies](#) played a key role in pressuring governments to act when the hole in the Ozone was discovered, leading to regulations that have saved the planet and humanity from dangerous planetary damage. Climate activism is a movement that has one foot in environmental activism and one foot in social activism, as the two are so intimately intertwined. It harnesses the collective power of people — shown time and time again to be capable of changing the course of history — to pressure decision-makers in government, industry, and beyond to reduce emissions, reduce pollution, and invest in a livable future for all. After all, a livable future is a reasonable thing to demand, don't you think?

In short, climate activism is important because it keeps the pressure on the system to change — and change is absolutely imperative.



Climate protesters hold signs at a demonstration. Image: Getty Images

Activism: your way

I think we can agree that no one likes doing what they don't like to do. So it might seem like common sense that our participation in any activism should include things we *like* to do. But it's not always that simple, especially when we have fixed ideas of what that activism is "supposed to" look like, or when we feel a sense of obligation or responsibility attached to it, rather than a sense of fun. But climate activism can be fun, social, communal, fulfilling, and – seriously – even restful. Let's take a look at some of the ways climate activism can look.



Marching, protesting, disrupting

Let's kick it off with the well-knowns. One option is to get out there and use your voice and body to show support for climate action. This could be in support of local climate policy, Fridays for Future, or for an Earth Day march. It can be really fun, especially when done with friends or family. Get a group together to make signs, ask young people in your life to be involved, make plans to share a meal afterwards. Revel in your collective power. Most climate change gatherings remain safe and peaceful, but check out the Sierra Club's [*Safety tips for attending rallies and protests*](#) to be prepared for any situation. And don't worry – if this isn't your thing, read on!



Read!

Personally, I can't think of a more opposite experience to attending a protest than curling up with a book and a cup of tea. It may seem almost too simple, but knowledge is a crucial tool in climate activism and can open us up to new ways of approaching the issue. Not sure where to start? Consider joining the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition's [book club](#)! If book clubs aren't your style, have a look at the Coalition's past reads for a great list, or consider the books below, recommended by Yale Climate Connections. You can find synopses for those books [here](#), along with more recommendations (like [books to help you stay inspired to fight climate change](#)) and a link to their radio program. Another nice guide comes from [Concern Worldwide](#).

If reading isn't your thing, try an audio book version of the climate books you're interested in, or go for a podcast – check out [this fantastic quick guide](#) to climate podcasts from the UN.



12 Books on climate change recommended by Yale Climate Connections. Image: YCC



Educate young people

One of the best ways to ensure things will be different in the future is to teach young people to think and behave differently when it comes to the environment, climate change, and social justice. We can do this in so many ways – passing on our love of the outdoors, teaching respect for living things, educating about climate change and pollution, teaching sustainable eating/buying habits – the list goes on! The teaching project Social Justice Books has put together a [site full of books](#) on these topics for young people of all ages. Even a simple conversation about these things with the young people in your life can spark a change.



Lead the way at ISK

Agencies, no matter where or what kind, can implement climate-friendlier practices, and it is often employees who start the ball rolling. Work alone or get a group together to implement a composting system at ISK. Change light bulbs to energy-saving LEDs (once current ones burn out!). Advocate for the use of renewable energy at ISK whenever possible. Ditch plastic in as many ways as you can around the office. There are myriad ways to be an activist at work – check out [this article](#) from The Climate Pledge for more. Engaging with clients on sustainability and climate change health impacts definitely counts!

To be continued in Part Two, coming soon...