

# CHAPTER 4

**I**n chapter three you learned that much of our trash ends up in a landfill. However, not all of our trash has to end up there. By reducing, reusing and recycling our trash, some of it can be used again!

**Humans** (that means you and I) have the job of protecting our environment. But how can one person change the whole environment? That is not easy to do...The environment contains everything in the entire world! That is a huge amount of space!

**The best thing may be to start with the area around us, like our homes and towns.**

Let's look at this smaller area...

The place where an organism lives in the environment is known as its **habitat**. The town you live in would be your habitat. This is where you sleep, play, find food and spend most of your time!



What an organism does in its habitat is known as its **niche** (this is a tricky word...try saying "nitch"). Playing with your friends, going to the grocery store and riding your bike are all a part of your niche!

Reducing, reusing and recycling trash in your habitat can also be part of your niche...

**Because there are so many humans, we can change the environment a lot!**

**Humans can affect the environment in three different ways:**

- We take resources from the environment like food, wood and water.
- We also add things to the environment, like smoke and trash.
- We can also replace the environment with something else. Have you ever seen a group of trees being removed and a new road or building placed there? This is another example of how humans can change the environment.

When humans take resources from the environment, add things to the environment and replace the environment with something else...

## ...we can change the world a lot!

In fact, humans have changed the environment a lot to improve their lives. Sometimes these changes are not very good for the environment. Some populations (groups of similar organisms) have been hurt by the changes we have made. When we remove trees to build homes or stores, all of the organisms that lived in those trees have to move,

right? These organisms have to find new trees for homes or they may not survive.



It is good that we can build homes to keep us safe. But sometimes the things that help us can hurt other organisms!

Now it is not just humans who change the environment. All organisms cause changes too. Ants eat food and drink water in their habitat. They also replace the environment with something else... anthills! Ants move sand from their habitat to create homes. This is their niche!

Now I hope you are not worried that ants are causing too many problems in the world! There is no need to squish every ant you see!

# Please do not do that!

Ants can cause changes in the environment, but their changes are small.

In fact, the bigger the organism, the bigger the changes that can be done to the environment. Humans cause more changes to the environment than ants!

In order to improve our lives, humans sometimes take away the basic needs of other organisms. It is our job to take care of our environment. If we don't, resources may get used up for ourselves or other organisms!

But we can always grow more  
living organisms, right?

**NOT ALWAYS!**

Living organisms are renewable resources! Maybe an example will help you understand...

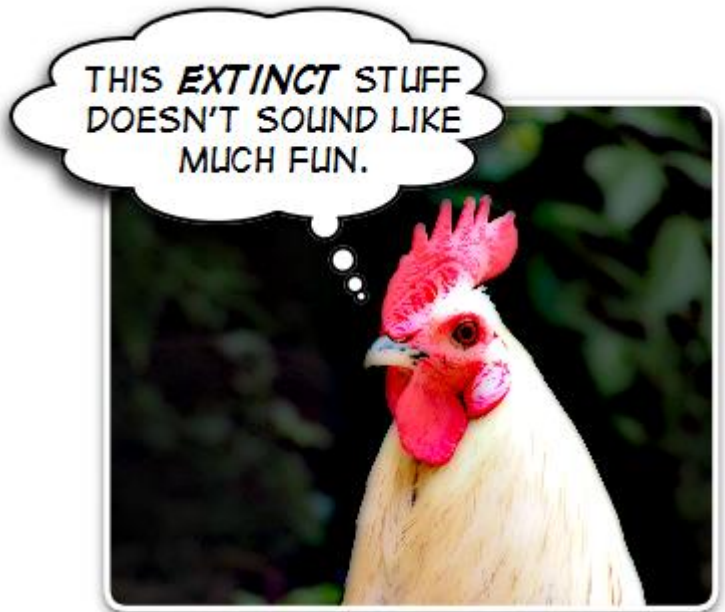
What if we ate all of the chickens in the  
environment?

(This is silly, but it would make a HUGE pile of fried chicken!!!)

This has never happened to chickens before, but it has happened to other organisms that were all killed. When all of the organisms of a similar kind (population) are no longer alive throughout the world, the organism has become **extinct** ("x-tinkt"). If chickens were extinct, there would be no chickens anywhere in the world! Now if all of the chickens ended up on our dinner plates, we would never be able to eat another drumstick, or pile of scrambled eggs, or chicken and noodle soup! Yikes!

One organism that has become extinct is the passenger pigeon. Every single passenger pigeon was hunted and killed. Because of this, there will never be another passenger pigeon in the environment.

**What I'm trying to say is this - When a population of organisms is no longer alive, there is no way for them to make other organisms of the same kind...**



**So, by being extinct, this population is not able to renew itself anymore!**

Earlier in this chapter I said that it our job to help protect the environment. This is very true! You can help keep our resources from being used up by reducing, reusing and

recycling in your lives! If everyone did this job, we can help protect our environment!

**Fill in the blanks with the correct letters. The words in the list on the right provide a clue to the answer.**

1) Ha \_ ita \_

the place where an organism lives in the environment

2) H \_ m \_ ns

a person

3) E \_ t \_ nc \_

when all of the organisms of a similar kind are no longer alive throughout the world

4) \_ i \_ he

what an organism does in its habitat



Match the words in the first column to the best available answer in the second column.

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| — Human   | 1) when all of the organisms of a similar kind (population) are no longer alive throughout the world |
| — Habitat | 2) a person  |
| — Niche   | 3) what an organism does in its habitat  |
| — Extinct | 4) the place where an organism lives in the environment  |

# Unit one review

Fill in the blanks in the story below with the following words:

Habitat	Recycled
Need	Reduce
Niche	Reuse
Wanting	

Every day, I wake up \_\_\_\_\_ a piece of chocolate cake, but I do not eat it! Instead, I go into the kitchen and make something else that I know I \_\_\_\_\_.

My home is my \_\_\_\_\_ and fixing my breakfast is my \_\_\_\_\_.

While fixing my breakfast, I never use paper plates because I want to \_\_\_\_\_ the amount of trash I make. Instead, I use a glass plate which I can wash and \_\_\_\_\_. During my breakfast, I drink a can of juice. When I am done, I place the empty can in a special container so that it may be \_\_\_\_\_.

**Be certain to go over your definitions for the test!**