



History of Energy

Energy Comes From Nature

Natural resources are created by nature. Plants, forests, wildlife, air, water, sunshine, soil, rocks, minerals, and fossil fuels are natural resources found on Earth. All living things depend on natural resources for their survival. Plants need sunlight, air, water, and nutrients from the soil. Animals use natural resources for food, water, air, and shelter.

Natural Resources

Humans have always depended on natural resources. Our ancestors used the sun for daylight and warmth. They breathed fresh air and drank cool water. They ate plants and animals for food. They burned trees for fire. They built tools out of shells and rocks, and they built shelter from trees and soil. Like our ancestors, we depend on these natural resources for our survival, too.

Using More Natural Resources

Over time, people found new ways to use natural resources. Water and wind turned wheels to grind grain and pump water. Coal provided heat for steam engines that could run machines and move trains. Coal was also important for making steel. Using natural resources allows us to grow more food, live healthier lives, travel great distances, and build large communities. The **technology** we use to make life safer and better is possible because of natural resources.



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Some of Earth's natural resources are valuable sources of energy. These sources of energy fuel our cars and trucks, warm our homes, and generate the electricity we use every day. Humans depend on natural resources to meet all of our energy needs.

Some natural resources are **renewable**. Nature is able to replace or replenish Earth's supply over a short time. Some renewable natural resources are sunlight, air, water, plants, and animals. Some natural resources are **nonrenewable**. They take millions of years to form, so nature is not able to replace or replenish Earth's supply very quickly. Some nonrenewable natural resources are fossil fuels, rocks, and minerals.

Using Energy Affects Earth

Earth's natural resources have made our lives better, but using them affects the environment. For example, when a beaver uses trees to build a shelter in a river, the trees create a dam that floods the surrounding area. Plants living around the beaver's dam may die under water, and animals might need to find new homes. Humans' use of natural resources also affects the environment. Cutting down forests for wood or farming land for food destroys animal habitats. Excavating rock at a quarry to make cement or build roads changes the landscape. Burning fossil fuels to power cars and trucks emits pollution and **carbon dioxide** into the atmosphere. People depend on natural resources. Plants and animals depend on us to be careful when we use natural resources. It is important to use natural resources wisely.

There are things we can do to protect the environment as we use Earth's natural resources. We can choose to use less energy. We can conserve water. We can clean up trash. We can reduce waste, shop wisely, and recycle. We can plant trees. We can use natural resources wisely so they remain available for the future.



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Fossil fuel storage tanks.



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Coal mine



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