

COP26 – the UN Climate Change Conference

COP26 will take place from 1 to 12 November 2021 in Glasgow, Scotland. Find out what it's for, what will happen and how young people are getting involved.

Tasks

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises to check your understanding.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. a conference
2. make or break
3. to postpone
4. funds
5. to go on strike
6. to adapt
7. emissions
8. on track

Definition

- a. an important situation which will lead to either success or failure
- b. a programme of talks or meetings about a particular issue
- c. to decide to do something later than you had originally planned
- d. harmful gases that are sent into the air, e.g. from factories or vehicles
- e. to change and become better able to live in your environment
- f. money that is used for a specific purpose
- g. making good progress towards a goal
- h. to stop doing something (e.g. work or study) because you want to draw people's attention to an issue you are suffering from

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Introduction

Climate change is causing problems all over the world. Compared with 40 years ago, we have almost five times more floods, droughts, heatwaves and other natural disasters today. And some of the poorest people in the world are the ones most in danger from climate change. That's why the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres recently said, '2021 is a make or break year to confront the global climate emergency.' Action needs to be taken now to reduce climate change – before it is too late.

What is COP26?

COP26 is the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference. These events are also known as 'COPs', which stands for 'Conference of the Parties'. At COP26, world leaders, scientists and environmental campaigners will work together and plan action against climate change to protect people and the planet.

COP26 will be held from 1 to 12 November 2021, in Glasgow, Scotland. It should have taken place in 2020, but it was postponed for a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

What does COP26 hope to achieve?

The event has four goals.

1. **To get countries to set higher targets for reducing emissions.** Countries will need to reduce the use of fossil fuels, protect trees and forests, use more electric vehicles and invest in clean energy.
2. **To help countries to adapt to the changing climate.** Countries will need to protect their natural environment and find ways to protect people from climate problems, such as by building defences against natural disasters.
3. **To raise funds.** Countries will need money to achieve goals 1 and 2.
4. **To work together.** The climate emergency can only be solved if countries work together. Countries will need to agree how to do this and then take action quickly.

The 2015 Paris Agreement

Six years ago, at COP21, the Paris Agreement was signed. The goal is to keep global warming below 2°C, ideally 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement was important because it was the first ever legal agreement bringing countries together to act. Since then, 190 countries have joined the Paris Agreement. However, time is running out. Not enough has been done, and COP26 is seen as a last opportunity to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. COP26 will try to get climate action on track.

How are young people getting involved?

Young people are at the front of the movement for climate action. School students around the world went on strike in 2019 to call for more urgent action, and Greta Thunberg has spoken to world leaders about it.

Before COP26 in Glasgow, there will be a COP26 Youth Summit from 28 to 30 September in Milan, Italy. About 400 young people from 197 countries will attend. Some will travel to Milan, and others will attend online. The young people will work together in groups to develop proposals for climate action.

Find out how you can get involved by visiting the British Council's Climate Connection site: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection>.

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. Natural disasters are more common today than 40 years ago.	True	False
2. Only politicians will go to COP26.	True	False
3. The COP26 conference was supposed to happen in 2019.	True	False
4. Countries need to work harder and faster to reduce climate change.	True	False
5. The Paris Agreement has been a total success.	True	False
6. At the COP26 Youth Summit in Milan, young people will mainly listen to politicians' proposals about how to solve the climate emergency.	True	False

Task 2

Write a number (1–5) to put the events in the correct order from the first to the last.

- _____ School students went on strike.
- _____ The Paris Agreement was signed.
- _____ COP26 will be held.
- _____ COP26 was postponed.
- _____ The COP26 Youth Summit will be held.

Task 3

Complete the sentences.

warming	leaders	disasters	change
goals	break	emissions	proposals

- The conference is about the issue of climate
- António Guterres said that '2021 is a make or year to confront the global climate emergency.'

3. COP26 is a last opportunity for countries to meet the of the Paris Agreement.
4. International will come together at COP26 to discuss the action needed.
5. The aim is to limit global to below 2°C.
6. Countries need to cut CO₂
7. Countries also need to protect their people from natural
8. At the Youth Summit, young people will develop for action.

Discussion

What do you think is the most important action that needs to be taken to confront the climate emergency?