

E-Waste Crisis: The Environmental Cost of Gadgets

COMPREHENSION • VOCABULARY • DISCUSSION

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Reading Passage

Read the passage carefully. Each paragraph is labelled with a letter for easy reference.

- A** In today's fast-paced technological world, electronic waste, or e-waste, has become a significant environmental challenge that affects ecosystems and human health. Each year, millions of tons of discarded gadgets—like smartphones, laptops, and televisions—end up in landfills, contributing to a growing environmental crisis. This increasing problem is largely due to the rapid turnover of technology; people frequently upgrade their devices, often discarding perfectly functioning ones for the latest models, which leads to an alarming accumulation of waste. For instance, in 2022 alone, an estimated 57 million metric tons of e-waste were generated globally, a figure that continues to rise as technology evolves. The improper disposal of these electronics poses serious risks, as they contain hazardous materials like lead, mercury, and cadmium, which can leach into soil and water, causing severe environmental damage and health issues for communities nearby, including increased rates of illness and contamination of local resources.
- B** Efforts to address the e-waste crisis have been initiated by various organizations and governments around the world. Many countries are now implementing stricter regulations on electronic waste disposal and promoting recycling programs to recover valuable materials that can be reused. For example, in 2021, the European Union introduced a directive aimed at reducing e-waste by encouraging manufacturers to design longer-lasting products and improve recycling methods, which is essential for sustainability. Additionally, awareness campaigns are being launched to educate consumers about responsible disposal options, emphasizing the importance of recycling and proper handling of old electronics. Individuals can play their part by recycling old gadgets through designated programs or donating them to charities, which helps extend the life of these devices. As the demand for new technology continues to grow, it is crucial to find sustainable solutions to manage e-waste effectively and minimize its impact on the environment.

Vocabulary Glossary

Key words and phrases from the passage. Study them before attempting the exercise below.

WORD / PHRASE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
ecosystems	areas where plants and animals live together and affect each other	<i>The forest is home to many different ecosystems.</i>
landfills	places where waste is buried under the ground	<i>The city plans to build a new landfill outside town.</i>
discarded	thrown away or no longer used	<i>She discarded her old clothes to make space for new ones.</i>
accumulation	a gradual increase in the amount of something	<i>The accumulation of snow made driving difficult.</i>
hazardous	dangerous or risky	<i>The factory worked with hazardous chemicals.</i>
leach	to slowly pass through something, often into water or soil	<i>Chemicals from the landfill can leach into the water supply.</i>
sustainability	using resources in a way that does not harm the environment	<i>Sustainability is important for future generations.</i>
directive	an official order or instruction	<i>The government issued a directive to reduce air pollution.</i>

Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blank

Use one word or phrase from the glossary above to complete each sentence. Each item is used only once. Answers are on the final page.

1. The old sofa was _____ because it was broken.
2. Farmers worry about chemicals that might _____ into the soil.
3. To improve _____, companies are using more eco-friendly materials.
4. The _____ of paper on his desk made it hard to find his pen.
5. The new city _____ requires recycling of plastic and glass.
6. Many animals live together in the forest _____.

Comprehension Questions

These questions are different from the online practice test. Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D). Answers and explanations are on the final page.

Question 1

What is a major reason for the rapid increase in e-waste?

- A. People frequently upgrade to newer technology.
- B. Recycling programs are too effective.
- C. Electronics have become more durable.
- D. Fewer people are using electronic devices.

Question 2

What is one purpose of awareness campaigns mentioned in the passage?

- A. To promote buying new gadgets.
- B. To educate people about recycling old electronics.
- C. To discourage the use of technology.
- D. To advertise new electronic brands.

Question 3

What kind of materials in e-waste pose a risk to the environment?

- A. Biodegradable materials.
- B. Hazardous materials like lead and mercury.
- C. Recycled materials.
- D. Renewable materials.

Question 4

Why did the European Union introduce a directive in 2021?

- A. To increase the sale of new electronics.
- B. To reduce the amount of e-waste produced.
- C. To discourage technology innovation.
- D. To eliminate the use of hazardous materials.

Question 5

What is a key action individuals can take to help with the e-waste issue?

- A. Throw electronics in the trash.
- B. Recycle old gadgets through designated programs.
- C. Keep all old devices at home.
- D. Ignore e-waste problems completely.

Discussion & Writing Prompts

Each prompt references a specific detail from the passage above. Use for classroom discussion or a short written response (150–200 words).

1. The passage mentions that in 2022, 57 million metric tons of e-waste were generated globally. How do you think this number could be reduced in the future?

2. According to the passage, the European Union introduced a directive to reduce e-waste. How effective do you think such directives are in your country?

3. The passage states that improper disposal of e-waste can lead to health issues for nearby communities. What are some ways to ensure safe disposal in your area?

Answer Key

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Q1 A

Q2 B

Q3 B

Q4 B

Q5 B

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

FIB1 discarded

FIB2 leach

FIB3 sustainability

FIB4 accumulation

FIB5 directive

FIB6 ecosystems

Comprehension Question Explanations

Why the correct answer is right — and why each wrong option is incorrect.

1. What is a major reason for the rapid increase in e-waste?

✓ A — People frequently upgrade to newer technology.

The passage states that rapid turnover of technology leads to more e-waste.

✗ B — Recycling programs are too effective.

The passage mentions recycling as a solution, not a cause of e-waste.

✗ C — Electronics have become more durable.

Electronics being more durable would reduce e-waste, not increase it.

✗ D — Fewer people are using electronic devices.

The passage suggests that more people are using electronic devices, not fewer.

2. What is one purpose of awareness campaigns mentioned in the passage?

✓ B — To educate people about recycling old electronics.

The passage mentions campaigns aim to educate about responsible disposal.

✗ A — To promote buying new gadgets.

The campaigns focus on recycling, not buying new gadgets.

✗ C — To discourage the use of technology.

The passage does not mention discouraging technology use.

✗ D — To advertise new electronic brands.

The campaigns are about recycling, not advertising brands.

3. What kind of materials in e-waste pose a risk to the environment?

✓ B — Hazardous materials like lead and mercury.

The passage states that e-waste contains hazardous materials like lead, mercury.

✗ A — Biodegradable materials.

Biodegradable materials do not pose the same risks as hazardous ones.

✗ C — Recycled materials.

Recycled materials are not what pose the risk.

✗ D — Renewable materials.

Renewable materials are not associated with the risks mentioned.

4. Why did the European Union introduce a directive in 2021?

✓ B — To reduce the amount of e-waste produced.

The passage states the directive aimed to reduce e-waste.

✗ A — To increase the sale of new electronics.

The directive is not about increasing sales but reducing waste.

✗ C — To discourage technology innovation.

The passage does not mention discouraging innovation.

✗ D — To eliminate the use of hazardous materials.

The focus was on reducing e-waste, not eliminating materials.

5. What is a key action individuals can take to help with the e-waste issue?

✓ **B — Recycle old gadgets through designated programs.**

The passage advises recycling old gadgets to help manage e-waste.

✗ **A — Throw electronics in the trash.**

Throwing electronics in the trash contributes to the problem.

✗ **C — Keep all old devices at home.**

Keeping devices does not help reduce e-waste.

✗ **D — Ignore e-waste problems completely.**

Ignoring the problem does not address the issue.

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Letters Refugee Camp Family Story Hope — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/letters-refugee-camp-family-story-hope>

Global Health Preparedness Lessons Recent Pandemics — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/global-health-preparedness-lessons-recent-pandemics>

Climate Migration Communities Move — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/climate-migration-communities-move>