

Find the Footprint of Your Favorite Snacks!



By Susan Hershberger

Introduction

In this activity, you'll think about the amount of energy and resources needed to make your favorite snack food and get it to you fresh, delicious, and undamaged.

What is your favorite snack? Select one to start:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cookies | <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh apple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Granola bar | <input type="checkbox"/> Mini-carrots and dip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bag of chips | <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit drink |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chilled soft drink | <input type="checkbox"/> Cheese and crackers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beef jerky | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice cream |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit smoothie | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freshly popped popcorn | _____ |

Procedure

Find out how "earth-friendly" your snack is by answering the following questions. You may have to do some research! The more points a snack earns, the larger its carbon footprint ... and the worse it is for the environment.

What do you observe?

Repeat the exercise above for a few more snacks. Which snacks have the smallest footprint? Which snacks have the biggest footprint?

Snack	Total Points

How does it work?

Reducing our environmental footprint is important. But it's about more than just making cleaner factories or more efficient cars. It also has to do with the personal choices we make. The snacks we choose (and the packaging they come in) make a difference. The amount of energy used to make, transport, and dispose of the snack also makes a difference. Even though the choices we make are small, the combined effect of all of us making good choices is huge!



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Question	If "yes," add these points	Energy and Ingredient Use
Is the snack in a package that can be washed and reused?	+ 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small • Energy and materials to make, water and soap to wash and reuse
Is the snack in a package that is disposable?	+ 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large • Energy and materials needed to make it, collect it as trash, and take it to the landfill
Is the snack in a package that is recyclable?	+ 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to Large • Energy and materials to needed to make, collect, and recycle the material
If the package can be recycled, do you throw it in the trash instead?	+ 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to Large • A recyclable package that does not get recycled has the same footprint as a disposable package
Is the snack in a package that is compostable?	+ 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small • Some energy and materials to make the package, and a small amount of energy to compost it
Is the snack or ingredients shipped to you by truck or train?	+ 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium • Energy costs for transportation
Is the snack or ingredients shipped to you by plane or boat?	+ 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large • Energy costs for transportation
Is the snack or ingredients made in a factory?	+ 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to Large • Energy is needed to run production and packaging factories
Is the snack or ingredients made at home?	+ 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small to Medium • Energy for light, heat, and refrigeration at home, plus ingredients to make the snack
Does a farmer grow the snack or ingredients on a farm?	+ 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small to Medium • Farmers use water and energy to grow food
Did you grow the snack or ingredients in your garden?	+ 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small • You still need water, seeds, and some energy
Is water part of the snack?	+ 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small, but not zero • Tap water is purified and distributed, which uses some energy
Does the snack need to be kept cold as it travels from the factory to the store, and in your home?	+3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium • Refrigeration requires electrical energy
Are there other energy or ingredient costs for your snack?	+1-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small to Large • Meat or cheese snacks require much more energy to produce than vegetables
TOTAL NUMBER OF POINTS =		

