

Games for the Future:

# Seeing Sustainability

Sustainability is protecting people, planet, and prosperity.

## Games for the Future: Seeing Sustainability

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

#### Type of program

Short activity

#### Overview

In the *Seeing Sustainability* card game, learners use their imagination to discover how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals might related to various pieces of art and consider ways the goals can be applied to everyday life.

This game is one of three related Games for the Future, a set of activities designed to engage participants in futures thinking and learning about the UN's Global Goals for sustainable development. Check out the *Silly Sustainability Stories* and *Cards for Humanity* games for other ways to engage your audience in futures thinking.

#### Audience

The game was designed for and tested with diverse audiences. It can be adapted to use with a variety audiences and program formats. For example, it can be used during camps, school programs, or as a drop-in activity on the museum floor. Play the game to determine how it will best work for you!

#### Big ideas

- Sustainability means healthy people, communities, and environments, now and in the future.
- Sustainability practices can be incorporated into everyday situations and scenarios.
- We can work together to create a sustainable future. Everyone has a part to play.

#### Learning objectives

As a result of participating in this program, learners will increase their:

- Understanding of big ideas related to sustainable futures.
- Awareness of the ways that sustainability is relevant to their lives and issues they care about.
- Sense of self-efficacy related to sustainability, including their ability to take sustainable actions and participate in conversations about sustainable futures.
- Creativity and critical thinking skills that support sustainable choices in daily life.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Sustainability

*Sustainability* is a big concept. According to the United Nations (UN), a sustainable way of living “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987). People’s needs include food, water, shelter, work, happiness, and respect. This definition of sustainability prioritizes equity, because it recognizes that people all over the world have needs that are equally important. This view of sustainability also emphasizes the importance of considering how our actions today will affect society, the economy, and the environment in the future.

In 2015, UN countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Global Goals (also called the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs). The Global Goals outline a pathway to a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the interconnected challenges we face, and recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth, address social needs, and tackle climate change and environmental protection (United Nations, n.d. and 2015).

Quality education is one of the societal (or “people”) priorities of sustainability. *Education for sustainability* “cultivates individual and collective potential...to increase the possibility that humans and other life can flourish on Earth now and into the future” (Cloud, 2017). Arizona State University’s Sustainability Science Education program provides a brief introduction to education for sustainability (Arizona State University, 2014).



An international group of collaborators have created a companion set of Good Life Goals that explain how everyone can do their part to create a better future. These include 85 ways anyone can contribute toward the Global Goals for sustainable development (SDG Business Hub, n.d.). The Good Life Goals are

more oriented toward individual (personal) action, whereas the Global Goals are more oriented toward collective (government) action.

## **Futures thinking**

*Futures thinking* is a set of skills and ideas that help us to understand what might happen in the future, how we can get ready for it, and how each one of us can affect it (West, 2017). Futures thinking doesn't attempt to predict the future, but it does consider different ways the future might unfold. People have different ideas about what might happen and what they would like to see happen in the future, so it's important to consider multiple perspectives.

## **Talking about art**

This activity is meant to encourage learners to think about sustainability in new ways. Neither the facilitator nor the participants need to know a lot about art to enjoy themselves and learn about sustainability from this game. As a facilitator, if you'd like to learn more about discussing art with a wide range of audiences, here are some helpful resources:

“How to ‘Read’ a Painting”:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-and-schools/teaching-english-and-drama/how-to-read-a-painting>

“Looking at and Talking about Art with Kids”:

[http://www.mswholeschools.org/files/Stafford.Handout.looking%40art\\_questions.pdf](http://www.mswholeschools.org/files/Stafford.Handout.looking%40art_questions.pdf)

“Hopper’s Nighthawks: Look Through The Window”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j5pUtRcNX4&t=383s>

## **References**

Arizona State University. (2014). Sustainability Science Education. Sustainability education framework for teachers: <https://sse.asu.edu/ways-of-thinking/>

Brundtland, G.H. (1987) Our common future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Geneva, UN-Dokument A/42/427. <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-ov.htm>

Cloud, J., ed. (2017). Education for a sustainable future: Benchmarks for individual and social learning. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, pp. 1-66.

SDG Business Hub. (n.d.) Good life goals. <https://sdghub.com/goodlifegoals/>

United Nations. (n.d.) The sustainable development agenda. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

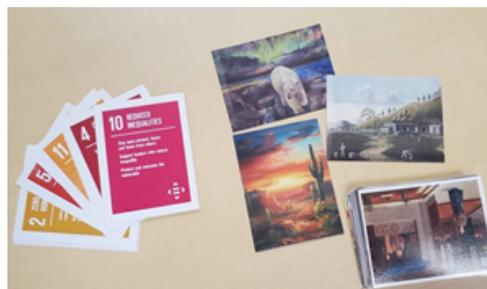
United Nations. (2015). Sustainable Development Goals. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WODX8fyRHA>

West, J.R. (2017). Futures thinking playbook. <https://library.teachthefuture.org/product/futures-thinking-playbook-supplementary-materials/>

## MATERIALS & ADVANCE PREPARATION

### Materials

- Set of SDG cards representing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (available to download and print from [nisenet.org](http://nisenet.org))
- Set of art cards, to be printed out or purchased (not included; see below for suggestions)
- Optional: Variety of stickers (not included; see below for suggestions)



### Advance preparation

#### Steps

1. **Print SDG cards:** Download and print the SDG cards from the NISE Network website. Each page has 4 cards. Cut out the cards with scissors or a paper cutter. Use cardstock or laminate the cards for durability. Ensure that the cards are printed single-sided and are in full color.
2. **Create custom set of art cards:** To create a set of art cards, you can purchase postcards from major online retailers or well-known art museums' online stores or print images you find online (following fair-use standards). You will need at least 25 art cards in order to have a good selection.

Consider including a wide arrange of art mediums, subjects, and styles; well-known works and less familiar works; and works from a variety of cultural traditions. Example of artists you might include are:

- Fernando Amorsolo
- Banksy
- Pieter Bruegel
- Mary Cassatt
- Paul Cezanne
- Frida Kahlo
- Jacob Lawrence
- Maggie Laubser
- Georgia O'Keeffe
- Faith Ringgold
- Diego Rivera
- Irma Stern
- Amrita Sher-Gil
- Jermone Tiger
- Fujishima Takeji
- Frederick Varley
- Sōtarō Yasui

It is recommended to avoid using religious art or art that is highly controversial, as those pieces may distract from the connections to sustainability and/or may not be appropriate for your audience.

If you choose to print your own art cards, ensure the cards are in color, single-sided, and roughly the same size as the SDG cards (3.5"x5").

- 3. Select a set of stickers (optional):** As an optional extension to the activity, participants can enhance the art cards by adding small stickers or pictures. If you choose to do this extension, you will need a selection of images. You can also laminate the pictures/stickers so they are removable.



### Note

If your museum has works of art on display, you could adapt the game to discuss those pieces rather than using a set of art cards.

## SET UP

### Time

5 minutes

## PROGRAM DELIVERY

### Time

5-20 minutes

### Talking points and procedure

Gather 1-10 players around a table or other suitable playing surface. Open the game to participants by asking them if they like art, or if they like to be creative. Sort the cards into two sets, one with the art cards and the other with the SDG cards.

1. Shuffle each set of cards and place each one face down on the table.
2. Have someone flip over the top art card. As a group, discuss what is seen in the art. The following are examples of guiding questions:
  - What do you see in the artwork?
  - What are the characters doing?
  - What are the relations between the characters in the artwork?
  - What might the characters be feeling and why?
  - What are some colors you see? What is the overall tone or feeling that might be communicated, why?
  - Where might the scene be taking place?
3. Next have a player select an SGD card. Take this time to introduce a brief overview of the Sustainable Development Goals and their purpose. After this quick introduction, ask the player(s) what the goal represented on the card means to them. The following are possible guiding questions:

- What does this goal mean literally?
  - What does the goal mean to you personally?
  - Have you seen this goal applied in your life?
  - What kind of businesses, places, or people might this apply to?
  - What are some benefits or drawbacks of this goal?
  - How can this goal make life better or harder?
  - Who might this goal be trying to help?
4. Now bring the art card back into the discussion, and see if the players can find any connections between the art card and the goal, positive or negative. The following are examples of guiding questions:
    - Do these two cards have any connections? Why or why not?
    - Does the art embody or relate to the goal in a positive or negative way? How?
    - If you could redo the artwork to embody the goal card, what would you make or change?
  5. Optional: Invite participants to alter or enhance the art card by adding small stickers or pictures to better reflect the goal on the SDG card. Then, ask them to share their modified artwork and its story.
  6. Finally, ask learner to reflect on how the goal could be incorporated into their everyday lives, or how their communities may have already started addressing this particular goal. Wrap up by thanking them and/or asking if they would like to play again.

### **Tips and troubleshooting**

Younger participants might have a harder time understanding the term “sustainability.” If this happens, you can try asking them if they are familiar with recycling and why we do it. Use this as a bridge to introduce bigger concepts in the SDGs and explore why they might be beneficial to society. You may find that the term “Global Goals” is more accessible to participants than “Sustainable Development Goals.” These names for the goals can be used interchangeably.

You’ll probably learn that most participants are very creative about finding connections between the artwork and the goal they happen to choose, but some participants may have trouble connecting the cards. It is okay if your participants can’t find any connections between a particular work of art and goal. If this happens, you can discuss what the art might need to include or exclude to better reflect the goal.

Some people find art intimidating. If participants don’t know what to say about an artwork, it can help to start by discussing the basic elements they see and building from there. One good tactic is to ask what figures (or other things) the participants see and ask what they think are the relations, actions, and emotions of the subjects might be. It is also important to encourage the idea that there are no wrong interpretations of the painting and it is okay if someone else interprets the painting in a different way, as art is subjective and means different things to different people.

It is sometimes helpful to know some background information about the artworks, so you can share why they look the way they do and who their intended audience was. However, this is not always necessary—especially since your goal is to discuss participants’ ideas about the art and its possible

connections to sustainability, not the artists' intentions.

### **Going further...**

Here are some resources you can share with program participants:

**“The lazy person’s guide to saving the world”:**

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction/>

**“Goodlife goals pack of actions”:**

[https://docs.wbcsd.org/2018/09/Good\\_Life\\_Goals/Pack\\_of\\_Actions.pdf](https://docs.wbcsd.org/2018/09/Good_Life_Goals/Pack_of_Actions.pdf)

## **CLEAN UP**

### **Time**

5 minutes

### **Steps**

Sort and store the materials. You can use an elastic band to hold the cards together and a small bin or envelope for the stickers.

## **UNIVERSAL DESIGN**

This program has been designed to be inclusive of visitors, including visitors of different ages, backgrounds, and different physical and cognitive abilities. The following features of the program’s design make it accessible:

- Repeat and reinforce main ideas and concepts
- Provide multiple entry points and multiple ways of engagement

## **LICENSE AND CREDITS**

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) logo, color wheel, and icons are used according to the United Nations guidelines: [https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SDG\\_Guidelines\\_AUG\\_2019\\_Final.pdf](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SDG_Guidelines_AUG_2019_Final.pdf)

