

There's No Place Like Home

by Barbara Bakowski

You Can Clean Up Your Community

Pollution. That word might make you think of black oil floating atop ocean water. You might think of gray exhaust pouring from factories. Or you might picture chemicals being sprayed on crops. But other forms of pollution threaten your well-being too.

Consider your "personal environment"- say, a 10-mile-wide circle around your home. What disturbs your enjoyment of those surroundings?

Cut Down the Noise

Noise is the number-one complaint of U.S. citizens. Noise stands ahead of crime, litter, and traffic, according to a U.S. Census Bureau survey. Does the noise of leaf blowers bother you? Do construction sounds ruin your day? Unpleasant human-made sounds are *noise pollution*, which comes from many sources.



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photos.com- Noise pollution is a growing problem.

Loud noise can damage hearing. Even low-level noise can disturb sleep and give you

headaches. It can cause blood pressure to rise. Noise can ruin digestion and make you feel anxious, according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

The Council on the Environment of New York City offers these tips to cut noise:

- **Turn it down! Keep music and television volume low.**
- **Help keep your pets quiet.**
- **Encourage your family and friends to use quieter vehicles and appliances.**

Turn Down the Light

The attack on your senses isn't limited to hearing. *Light pollution* is a problem too. Artificial light comes from sources such as streetlights and offices. *Light trespass* happens when unwanted light enters someone's property. *Sky glow* occurs when light shines upward. It reflects off moisture and dust in the atmosphere. The result is a haze that makes it hard to see stars in the night sky.

Some researchers say artificial light disturbs sleep cycles. That can make it harder for the body to fight diseases. Stray light can cause *insomnia*-an inability to sleep. And that can cause daytime problems. People who don't sleep are often crabby. They can have a hard time concentrating.

The International Dark-Sky Association offers the following advice.

- **Ask yourself, "How much light do I need?" Use lighting only when you need it, and use the right amount of light for the task.**
- **Use timers to control lighting and save energy.**
- **Inside and outside your home, check that light is directed downward, where it is effective.**

Clear the Line of Vision

Visual pollution refers to sights that people find ugly. They can include outdoor advertising, power lines, and cellular towers. Surveys have shown that most people object to billboard

advertisements.

Visual pollution can lead to stress. Researchers at Texas A&M University studied two groups. The first group traveled on roads lined with signs and strip malls. The second group followed less-developed routes. Members of the first group showed higher stress. They had higher blood pressure and heart and breathing rates.

Some experts say that billboards distract drivers and cause accidents. That is especially true when the billboards use light and motion.

How can you rid your neighborhood of billboards, graffiti, and other pollution? Find strength in numbers.

- **Join or start a volunteer group that carries out projects such as graffiti and litter cleanup.**
- **Look for ways to adopt areas to clean and clear. Many places have Adopt-a-Park or Adopt-a-Street programs.**
- **Attend city council and other local meetings. Become informed about issues such as billboard advertising and cell-phone towers in your community.**
- **Organize a letter-writing or e-mail campaign. Or start a Web site to publicize issues.**

The final suggestions apply to all kinds of pollution problems. Remember, you can bring power to your cause by organizing your efforts. Complaining only goes so far. But with some help from others, you can really clean up!

A Success Story

Teens Against Graffiti (TAG) is a volunteer group in Santa Clarita, Calif. Members are working to wipe out graffiti from their community. School and church groups and individuals get together on the third Saturday of every month. They clean graffiti from road signs, bus benches, alleyways, and other places around town. The TAG teens say they "take pride in their community and ... make a positive difference in the quality of life in Santa Clarita."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is noise pollution?

- A. gray exhaust pouring from factories
- B. unpleasant human-made sounds
- C. black oil floating atop ocean water
- D. chemicals being sprayed on crops

2. The author discusses the problem of noise pollution. What is one solution for fighting this problem?

- A. You can clean graffiti from road signs, bus benches, and other places around town.
- B. You can complain to your friends, family, and neighbors.
- C. You can use lighting only when you need it.
- D. You can encourage your family and friends to use quieter vehicles and appliances.

3. Read these sentences from the text.

"Loud noise can damage hearing. Even low-level noise can disturb sleep and give you headaches."

Based on this evidence, what conclusion can be made?

- A. Noise can cause your blood pressure to rise.
- B. Noise doesn't have to be loud to have an effect on you.
- C. Noise can ruin digestion and make you feel anxious.
- D. Noise doesn't matter when you're sleeping.

4. Based on the information in the text, what can you infer about different forms of pollution?

- A. Different forms of pollution may affect people in different ways.
- B. Pollution is the same everywhere you go.
- C. Pollution adds to your enjoyment of your surroundings.
- D. All forms of pollution attack your sense of hearing.

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. Researchers at Texas A&M University studied the effects of visual pollution on stress.
- B. Your "personal environment" is a 10-mile-wide circle around your home.
- C. There are many forms of pollution as well as many ways to cut down on pollution.
- D. Teens Against Graffiti (TAG) is a volunteer group in California working to wipe out graffiti.

6. In the first paragraph of the passage, the author mentions an oil spill, exhaust from factories, and chemicals being sprayed on crops. Why might the author have chosen to begin the text with these forms of pollution instead of the forms that are discussed later in the text?

- A. because the forms of pollution in the first paragraph have no effect on your personal environment
- B. to grab the reader's attention with familiar forms of pollution
- C. because an oil spill, exhaust from factories, and chemicals on crops are more dangerous than other forms of pollution
- D. to distract the reader with too much information

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

You might think crime, litter, and traffic are the biggest complaints of U.S. citizens, _____ noise is their number-one complaint.

- A. yet
- B. since
- C. therefore
- D. as a result

8. What is visual pollution?

9. What is one negative effect visual pollution has on people? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

10. Read these sentences from the beginning of the text.

"Pollution. That word might make you think of black oil floating atop ocean water. You might think of gray exhaust pouring from factories. Or you might picture chemicals being sprayed on crops. But other forms of pollution threaten your well-being too."

Why might the author have focused on these other forms of pollution in the rest of the text instead of the familiar forms mentioned in this first paragraph? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
