



YOU
REALLY
GOTTA
RECYCLE

One life, **live it.**
One world, **protect it.**



SHANE
McCONKEY
FOUNDATION

ECOCHALLENGE TOOLKIT

What's Inside

About the EcoChallenge	3
How It Works	4
Step 1: Understand the Challenge	5
Step 2: Build Your Team	6
Step 3: Choose Your Project Focus	7
Step 4: Set Clear, Achievable Goals	8
Step 5: Create a Timeline	9
Step 6: Activate Your Project	10
Step 7: Document Your Progress	11
Step 8: Get Help & Stay Motivated	12
Step 9: Prepare Your Submission	13
Step 10: Celebrate & Share Your Success	14
Bonus Tips for Success & Resources	15
Winner Highlight & Previous Winner Inspo	16
EcoChallenge Levels Explained	18





The vision of the Shane McConkey EcoChallenge is to inspire and empower individuals, especially young people, to engage in creative and impactful environmental projects. By fostering a spirit of innovation and adventure, the EcoChallenge aims to cultivate a deep appreciation for nature and promote sustainable practices that protect and preserve our planet for future generations. Through education, community involvement, and hands-on initiatives, the EcoChallenge strives to create a global movement of environmentally conscious citizens dedicated to making a positive difference in the world.

ENGAGE**INVOLVE****SUPPORT****PROMOTE**

WHO IS SHANE MCCONKEY?

Shane McConkey was a legendary skier and BASE jumper known for his pioneering spirit and fearless approach to extreme sports. A true visionary, Shane developed innovative techniques and gear that profoundly influenced the sports he loved. McConkey's playful personality and relentless pursuit of thrill inspired a generation of athletes, and he remains an icon in the skiing community. Shane's passion for protecting our planet inspired the EcoChallenge and continues his legacy.



We encourage students to become **EcoChallengers** for life.

HOW IT WORKS

The Shane McConkey EcoChallenge operates through a structured, engaging process designed to inspire environmental stewardship and action among young people.

The rules for participation are simple:

1. Students can join as individuals or teams with an adult advisor.
2. Competition is open to students from Preschool through College/University.
3. Entries can be submitted throughout the year but are due on Earth Day.
4. Winners are announced May 15 and awarded a range of cash prizes.
5. Prize money can benefit their school or nonprofit of their choice.

Participation in the Shane McConkey EcoChallenge not only educates participants about environmental issues but also empowers them to make a real difference, **fostering a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship.**

Projects are sorted into categories:

- Expert
- Black Diamond
- Blue Square
- Green Circle

Judges rate each project according to:

- Environmental Impact
- Community Outreach
- Creativity
- Execution

Winners receive a cash prize to donate to the nonprofit of their choosing, learning in turn to give. All participants receive certificates to commemorate their efforts. Top tier winners become ambassadors for the EcoChallenge, sharing their experience with other young change makers.



STEP 1

UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGE

Before you begin, it's important to understand the focus and mission of the EcoChallenge. Your project should have a clear connection to the environment and be action-oriented with a measurable impact.

- **Focus:** The project should address an environmental problem (e.g., waste reduction, energy conservation, pollution prevention, climate change, etc.).
- **Mission:** To help you and your teammates become environmental leaders by developing a hands-on, action-oriented project.



TACTICS:

1. Check out our website to dive deeper into the focus and mission of the Shane McConkey EcoChallenge: shanemcconkey.org/ecochallenge
2. Follow us on social media for important information and EcoChallenge updates [@shanemcconkeyecochallenge](https://twitter.com/shanemcconkeyecochallenge)

STEP 2

BUILD YOUR TEAM

It's time to recruit your friends, classmates, and/or community members to join your EcoChallenge team. You may also work individually. Groups and individuals must have an adult mentor.

- Find people who **share your interest** in creating and strengthening sustainable change in your school or community.
- **Build your team** with members who share goals of encouragement, learning, and creating a positive impact.
- **Choose a team captain** that will lead the project and determine how often you'll be communicating and when you will have regular team meetings.
- **Choose an adult mentor**, it may be a parent, teacher, or someone in your community who can oversee the project.



TACTICS:

- **Social Media Campaigns:** Students can create fun and informative posts on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook showcasing goals, benefits, and project ideas. Use eco-friendly hashtags and tag school clubs and community groups to increase visibility and participation in the team.
- **School Announcements and Clubs:** Students can ask to promote the EcoChallenge during school announcements, at club meetings, or in relevant classes (like science, art, or environmental studies). They could also set up a table during lunch to sign up interested classmates.
- **Eco-Friendly Events or Rallies:** Attend or organize local events like cleanup days, recycling drives, or tree planting. These events attract students who are passionate about the environment and may be inspired to join your team.

STEP 3

CHOOSE YOUR PROJECT FOCUS

Select an environmental issue that resonates with you. Here are some project ideas:

- **Waste Reduction:** Organize a recycling drive or create a campaign to reduce plastic use in your school or community.
- **Energy Conservation:** Start a campaign to encourage energy-saving habits or implement renewable energy devices in your school or community.
- **Biodiversity Preservation:** Plant trees, start a community garden, or organize a habitat restoration project to enhance local ecosystems.
- **Pollution Prevention:** Organize a local clean up event, or design a system to reduce local waste and educate the community about it.
- **Climate Change Awareness:** Develop materials or presentations to raise awareness and educate others about climate change and solutions to reduce your carbon footprint.

TACTICS:

- **Hold a kick-off meeting** with your team and create a plan to track completed actions, explore collective impact, and collect to the team data.
- **Task each team member with specific action(s)** to encourage participation by all.



ECOCALLENGER TIP

Focus on something you're passionate about. The more engaged you are, the more successful your project will be.

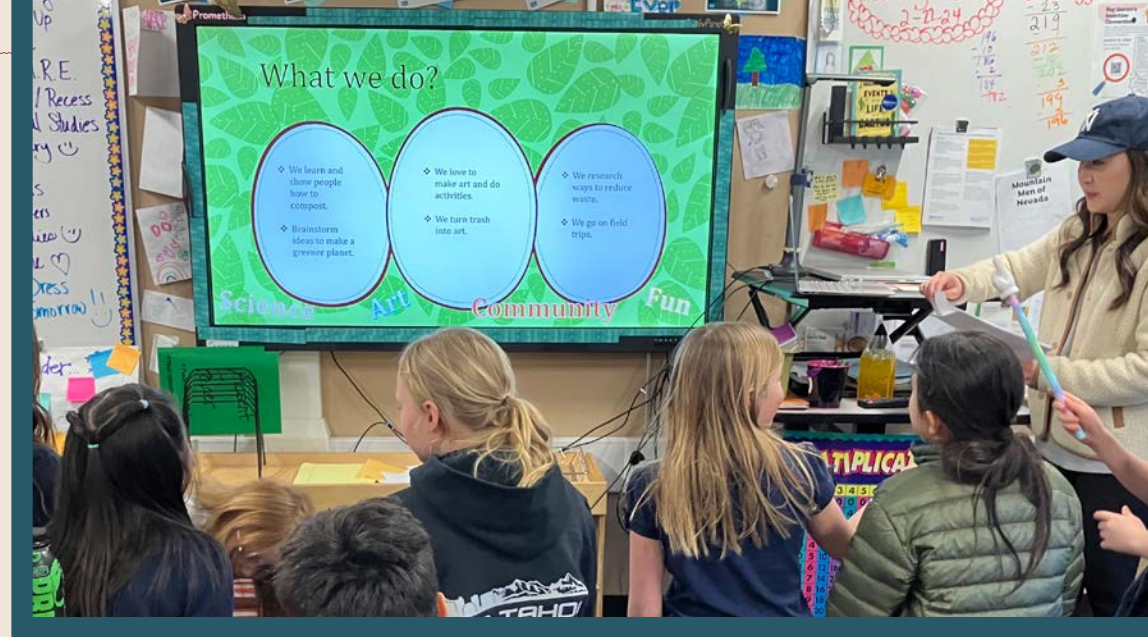


STEP 4

SET CLEAR, ACHIEVABLE GOALS

Define the specific goals of your project. Make them SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound). Example Goal: “Reduce plastic waste in our school by 50% through a month-long recycling campaign.”

- **Break the project down into smaller steps** to make the goal more achievable.
- **Define at least two or three actions** and prepare yourself to complete them
- Encourage every team member to **prepare for team meetings** and make sure everyone’s voice is heard.



TACTICS:

- **Break Down the Big Goal into Actionable Steps:** Identify several smaller actions that contribute to your main goal. For example, if your goal is to reduce plastic waste, actions could include setting up clearly labeled recycling bins, hosting a schoolwide awareness day, and tracking recycling progress weekly.
- **Assign Roles and Responsibilities:** Ensure each team member has a specific task, like tracking data, designing campaign materials, or coordinating events. This keeps everyone engaged and ensures all aspects of the goal are covered effectively.
- **Create a Timeline and Track Progress:** Set deadlines for each step of your project and check in regularly to measure success. Use tools like a shared calendar or a simple checklist to monitor tasks and celebrate milestones as a team.



STEP 5

CREATE A TIMELINE FOR YOUR PROJECT

A clear timeline keeps you on track and ensures you meet the Earth Day, April 22, 2025 deadline. Here's an example of how to break down the process:

3–6 Months Before Submission:

- Choose a project focus.
- Research the environmental issue you're tackling.
- Set SMART goals.
- Start reaching out for resources (e.g., mentors, community organizations, sponsors).

2–3 Months Before Submission:

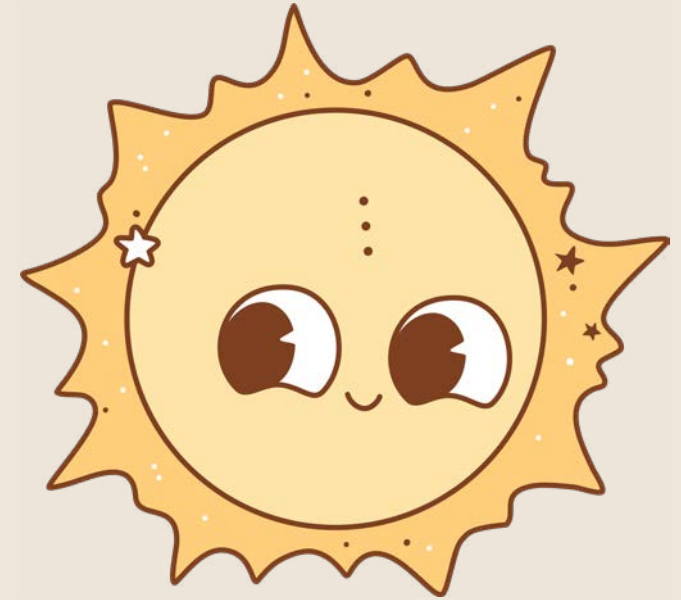
- Begin implementing your project (e.g., start your recycling campaign or community garden).
- Keep track of your progress and adjust as needed.
- Start documenting your efforts (take photos, collect data, gather testimonials).

1 Month Before Submission:

- Finalize your project.
- Prepare your presentation or project report.
- Double-check that all requirements are met (check the EcoChallenge guidelines).

Submission Deadline (Earth Day 2025):

- Submit your project on time.
- Celebrate your success and share your achievements!



ECOCALLENGER TIP

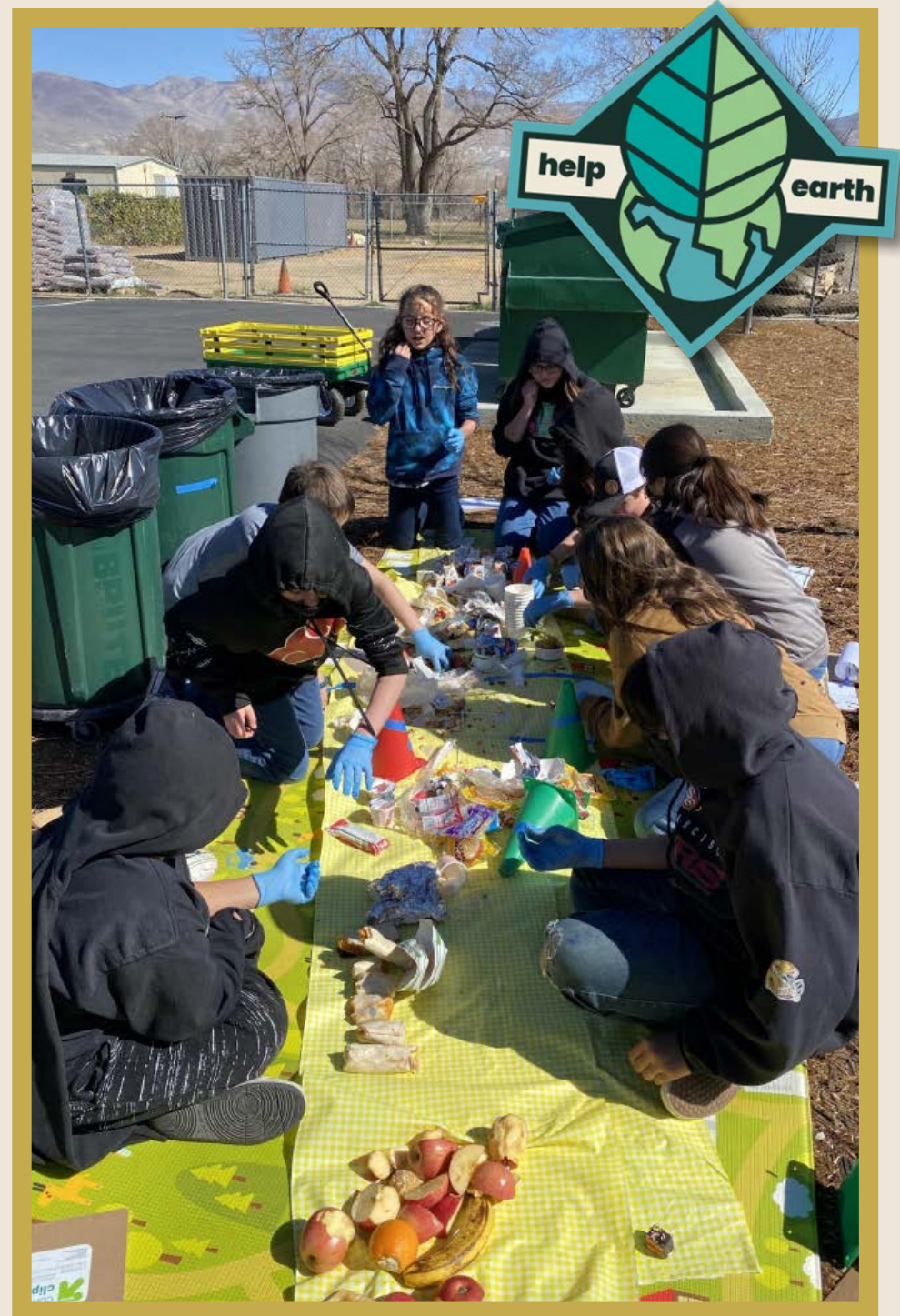
Consider using an online Calendar and shared Cloud document to keep your whole team in the loop. Be sure to update this document often.

STEP 6

ACTIVATE YOUR PROJECT

It's time to enact your plan! Hold an assembly, host a cleanup, present to your class, create the gadget ... whatever the action step for your team is, now is the time to take it.

- **Keep your team's morale up** and encourage each other with frequent calls or meetings.
- Nudge your team members to consistently **check off completed actions** and explore real-time collective impact.
- **Give shoutouts!** It's important to spotlight successes and celebrate incremental achievements.
- Be sure to **take photos and video**. We have a special prize for the best media submissions.



STEP 7

DOCUMENT YOUR PROGRESS

Documenting your process is key to demonstrating the impact of your project. Keep detailed records, including:

- **Before-and-after photos** to visually show the impact on the area or issue you're working on.
- **Data that shows measurable results** (e.g., tons of trash collected, amount of energy saved).
- **Narrative of your experience** (what worked, what didn't, and what you learned).
- On our online entry form, you will need to **answer the following questions**:
 - **DEFINE THE ISSUE:** Tell us a little bit about what environmental issue your team chose to address. Why is your team passionate about this issue?
 - **YOUR PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION:** Outline your team's action plan and explain how each step was implemented.
 - **REPORT YOUR RESULTS:** Explain how the project was successful. What challenges were faced? How did you raise awareness? What did you learn from the experience? What are the quantifiable outcomes?



TACTICS:

- **Start a Project Journal:** Use a notebook, app, or shared document to record your progress weekly. Include challenges, successes, and any changes to your plan.
- **Capture Visual and Data Evidence Regularly:** Take before-and-after photos and collect measurable data (e.g., items recycled, hours volunteered) as you go. Save everything in a dedicated folder for easy access.
- **Reflect and Share Insights:** Write short summaries after major milestones to document what went well, what could be improved, and what your team learned.

STEP 8

GET HELP AND STAY MOTIVATED

Building a team can make the process easier and more fun. Involve your classmates, family, or local environmental organizations. Their expertise and support will boost your project's impact.

Tips for staying motivated:

- **Break big tasks into smaller chunks** to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **Celebrate small wins** along the way (like collecting your first batch of recyclables).
- **Keep a journal** to track your thoughts, progress, and any challenges you face.



TACTICS:

- **Create a Visual Progress Tracker:** Use a big poster, whiteboard, or digital tool to track your project's progress. Include milestones and a timeline so everyone can see how their contributions are making a difference. Celebrate with stickers, checkmarks, or even quick shoutouts when milestones are achieved to keep energy levels high.
- **Plan Regular Check-Ins and Rewards:** Schedule regular team check-ins to share updates, address challenges, and stay on track. Keep the meetings short and fun by including a motivational quote or a quick recap of recent wins. Offer small rewards, like snacks, eco-friendly swag, or even verbal recognition, to keep everyone engaged and motivated.

STEP 9

PREPARE YOUR SUBMISSION

When you're ready to **submit your project to us on our website** through a simple form, make sure you've followed all the submission guidelines. Double-check to be sure that:

- Your project aligns with the EcoChallenge's goals.
- You've included all required documentation (photos, data, reports).
- Your submission is well-organized and clearly presents the impact of your project.

TACTICS:

- **Gather your results** and hold a team meeting to discuss how to address our EcoChallenge questions.
- **Visit shanemcconkey.org/ecochallenge** and click 'Submit Project' this will open a Google Form. Fill out the complete form and upload photos and video.
- The **form is editable** after you upload.
- **Submit the form before Earth Day, April 22, 2025.**





STEP 10

CELEBRATE AND SHARE YOUR SUCCESS

- Once you've submitted your project, **share your success** with your community!
- **Congratulate yourself and your teammates** for completing the EcoChallenge!
- **Host a small event**, post on social media, or create a presentation for your school to encourage others to take action for the planet.
- Once you hit 'Submit', that is not the end, we hope that you will **continue making positive impact** for our environment.

TACTICS:

- **Organize a party to celebrate your accomplishment**—using sustainable practices—reusable plates, compostable items, and homemade snacks. Watch a fun eco-themed documentary, share stories about the project journey, or plan a small nature walk or cleanup to celebrate your impact together.
- **Share your achievements online.** Post about your project on social media. Share before-and-after photos, or make a short recap video to inspire others to get involved. Tag @shanemcconkeyecochallenge.
- **Present at school or in the community.** Organize a presentation for classmates, teachers, or local organizations to showcase your project results. By sharing what you learned and accomplished, you can inspire others to adopt sustainable practices, sparking a ripple effect of eco awareness!



BONUS TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- **Start Small:** Focus on a specific issue that you can realistically make an impact on. Small wins build momentum.
- **Be Creative:** Think outside the box! The EcoChallenge encourages innovative solutions.
- **Collaborate:** Team up with local businesses, schools, or environmental groups to amplify your impact.
- **Get Inspired:** Look at past EcoChallenge winners for inspiration, but make sure your project is original.

RESOURCES FOR YOUR PROJECT

- **Local Environmental Groups:** Reach out to them for advice, resources, or partnerships.
- **Teachers and Mentors:** Ask for guidance on your project, especially with research or project planning.
- **Online Tools:** Use free resources like Google Docs, Canva, or Trello to organize and share your project.



WINNER HIGHLIGHT

2024 EXPERT 1ST PLACE

Sammié's Buddy Benches

FORT WAYNE, IN

Sammié's project started out as a mission to acquire buddy benches for her school. But when she found a company that took plastic caps and recycled them into benches the project grew. A buddy bench is a place on the playground where children can sit signaling to other students they're feeling lonely and need someone to play with or talk to. Not only is Sammié addressing loneliness and bullying in schools but she is also producing these benches with plastic donated by her community. After creating three buddy benches for her own school, Sammié helped other schools start similar programs. She has helped over 300 groups get buddy benches and she has saved millions of pounds of plastic from landfills and the ocean.

INSPIRATION PREVIOUS WINNERS

Previous winners of the Shane McConkey EcoChallenge have completed a variety of impactful and innovative projects. Here are some examples:

RECYCLING PROGRAMS: Teams have implemented recycling programs in their schools and communities including setting up recycling bins, educating peers about the importance of recycling, and organizing events to collect recyclable materials.

POLLUTION CLEAN-UP EFFORTS: Many projects focus on cleaning up local environments, such as beaches, parks, and rivers. Teams organize clean-up events, remove trash and pollutants, and work to restore natural habitats.

WATER CONSERVATION PROJECTS: Participants have created initiatives to conserve water, such as installing low-flow faucets and toilets, promoting water-saving techniques, and educating the public about water conservation.

SUSTAINABLE GARDENING: Some teams have developed community gardens or school gardens using sustainable practices. These projects teach others about organic farming, composting, and the benefits of growing local food.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION:

Projects have included efforts to protect local wildlife and their habitats. This can involve creating birdhouses, building bat boxes, planting native species, and removing invasive plants.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS:




Winners have developed educational programs to teach others about environmental issues. These can include workshops, presentations, and interactive activities designed to raise awareness and encourage sustainable practices.

PLASTIC REDUCTION INITIATIVES:

Teams have launched campaigns to reduce plastic use by promoting alternatives to single-use plastics, organizing plastic-free challenges, and encouraging businesses and schools to adopt plastic-free policies.



ECOCALLENGER LEVELS

	Green Circle	Blue Square	Black Diamond
Lead			
Organize			
Involve			
Educate			



GREEN CIRCLE BEGINNER

Green Circle is the ski slope rating symbol for beginner runs with ample room for wide turns.

These projects are wide open for interpretation. You are free to use upcycled materials, words or any medium to express a concern, passion or commitment to the environment. Can be an individual or team effort.



BLUE SQUARE INTERMEDIATE

Blue Square is the ski slope rating symbol for intermediate runs with a few bumps for added challenge.

These projects deliver measurable results and rely on research and data to prove a problem exists. This should require an action plan that involves support from your school or local community.



BLACK DIAMOND ADVANCED

Black Diamond is the ski slope rating symbol for advanced runs with steep gradients and confidence-building bumps.

These projects tackle complex issues by engaging your community, local government agencies, the media, and influential voices to get involved with your initiative to create meaningful change.



DOUBLE BLACK DIAMOND EXTREME

Double Black Diamond is the ski slope rating symbol for the most difficult runs that have fewer skiers, variable conditions, and more obstacles.

These projects address large-scale environmental issues and provide solutions that disrupt the status quo. Their impact goes beyond your local community.



Good Luck!

Following these steps, you'll be on the path to creating a meaningful, impactful project that can help make the world a greener place. Best of luck with the Shane McConkey EcoChallenge! Together, we can make a big difference.

Have questions?

Email us at info@shanemcconkey.org
Learn more at shanemcconkey.org/ecochallenge

