

Forest Family Forever!

Facts about Wood

Wood is something we all use in our daily lives. Wood is made into things like paper products, furniture, buildings, pencils, rayon fabric, photographic film, and even food additives that end up in cheeses, cake mixes, and ice cream! Some of the wood we use for these products comes from very old trees that live in ancient rainforests. These ancient, or *old growth*, rainforests have been standing for hundreds and sometimes thousands of years. They are home to millions of types of animals, plants, insects—and even people! When old growth forests are logged to make products for us to use, many animals lose their home, or *habitat*. Sometimes these animal species become *extinct*, which means they disappear forever like the dinosaurs. Many native or *indigenous* peoples lose the land that their families have lived on for thousands of years.



Some logging companies say that they replant the trees they cut down. While planting trees is always a good thing to do, we must remember that planting trees in an area that has been *clear-cut* (this means that almost every single tree in the area was cut down) is not the same as planting a forest. A forest is much more than just the trees it

contains. While it is possible for a company to replant trees, it is impossible for the company to replant an ancient forest full of all the plants, animals, insects, and people that once lived there.

Since cutting down trees for wood is one of the main reasons old growth forests around the world are being destroyed, we must find ways to use fewer wood products in our daily lives. There are many easy things that we can do to help.

First, since one quarter of all the trees that are cut down are used to make paper, using less paper is a great way to help save our ancient forests. Here are some ways that you can use less paper:

- Write on both sides of every piece of paper, and try to use scratch paper or half-sheets whenever possible. Recycle paper when you are finished with it.
- Put a cloth napkin in your backpack, purse, or lunch pail and use it instead of paper napkins.
- Take a canvas bag to the grocery store instead of using paper bags.
- Use cloth towels at home instead of paper towels, and use real cups and plates instead of paper ones. Paper plates and cups may be easy to use, but they are bad for the forests!

Second, when purchasing paper at the store, try to buy paper that says “100% *post-consumer* recycled paper” on the label. *Post-consumer* means it is made from paper that someone has already used and put into the recycling bin.

