

Purchase Power



Objectives

The student will distinguish, from a list of consumer products, which products are environmentally friendly to purchase.

Materials

- copies of Purchase Power Products and Production Information pages
- paper
- pencils

Background

There are no right or wrong answers to this activity. Oftentimes, consumers purchase items and don't realize that they may be contributing to endangered or threatened species. This activity will help students become aware of their purchasing power and inspire them to learn more about the products they buy. Throughout the activity, please encourage students to discuss their personal feelings about purchasing various items.

Action

1. To prepare for activity, enlarge the Purchase Power Products cards, cut apart, and mount on construction paper.
2. Distribute paper and pencils. To begin activity, ask students to number their papers from 1 to 16. Hold up a card in front of class and ask students to write yes or no on their papers to indicate whether they think purchasing this item would contribute to endangering or threatening a species. If they don't know, ask them to guess.
3. When finished, ask for a vote by raising hands "yes" or "no" on each item. Read the Purchase Power Information to your students, then ask them to vote again. Point out that some people believe that no animal product is okay, whether it was raised on a ranch or not. Ask students to think about how they feel about animals raised to create wildlife products.



Purchase Power Product Information

boar's bristle hairbrush: The bristles are taken from the hides of hogs processed for food.

brain coral: Coral reefs create habitats for many specialized tropical fish and invertebrates. Corals may need hundreds of thousands of years to grow into a mature reef habitat. Coral has become a popular item to use for jewelry and other decorative items. Harvesting coral can severely threaten the future of complete reef systems.

cactus: It's alright to purchase most small cacti, but very large ones may have been illegally collected. Some cactus, like the saguaro, are protected by law. Make sure you buy from a reputable dealer.

cloves, cinnamon, vanilla spices: These three spices grow in rain forests. When harvested, the whole tree does not need to be cut down. These are good examples of how harvesting goods from the rain forest can help preserve the habitat.

conch shell: Most of the shells you see used on jewelry boxes, lamps, and other objects came from live animals, not from shells lying on the beach. Empty shells on the beach often serve as shelter for other animals. Taking live animals and empty shells disrupts the cycle of the ecosystem.

cow-leather belt: Leather comes from the hides of cattle killed for food.

eelskin wallet: Some eels (and hagfish) are farmed for making wallets, shoes, and belts. Others are mass fished from the ocean. Mass fishing takes large numbers from small areas, and, if not monitored, can cause species extinction.

elephant hair bracelet: All elephant products are illegal in this country, but natives on the streets of some African cities sell them to unsuspecting tourists who try to bring them home.

ivory jewelry: Ivory comes from animal tusks, mostly African elephants.

Although protected by law in many nations, the demand for ivory has made poaching worth the risk for some people. The U.S. government has banned the sale of ivory, but some people may have bought items before the ban.

natural sea sponge: Divers in small villages make their livings collecting and cleaning sponges to sell.

ostrich feather duster: The feathers are taken from farm-raised birds.

rattan basket: Rattan comes from the spiny stems of certain palms found in the rain forests of Southeast Asia and Australia. Only about one sixth of the rattan are grown on plantations. More could be farmed as a secondary crop in fruit orchards and as growth in heavily logged forests.

snake skin watchband: Some types of reptile skin are approved for use in this country, but there are endangered species that are carefully protected. Know what you are buying! When in doubt, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or U.S. Customs Service.

teak bowl: Teak trees grow in rain forests. Although small bowls don't require much wood, the furniture industry takes large numbers of teak trees for tables, chairs, cabinets, and more. Mass cuttings of trees can permanently destroy rain forest habitats.

tortoise shell hair ornament: Tortoise shell comes from sea turtles. Hunters also kill sea turtles for meat and skin. U.S. regulations prohibit sea turtle products, but Americans visiting other countries may not know this.

tropical fish: Some fish are raised by breeders, others are collected from their natural habitat. Check by asking when you buy fish! If fish are taken from tropical reefs, native collectors often pour a chemical in the water to paralyze them. Collected fish are revived in buckets, but the chemical remains in the ocean water to poison other animals.

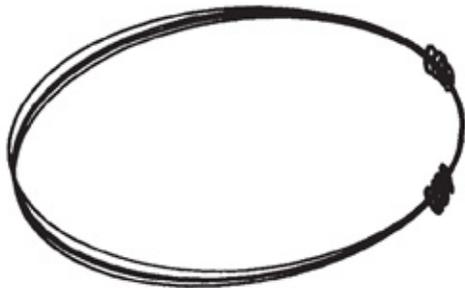
Purchase Power



rattan basket



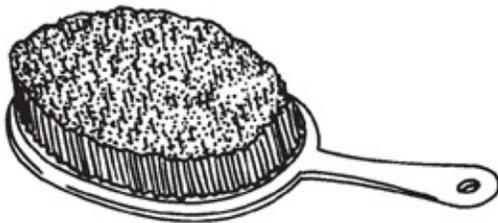
cloves, cinnamon, vanilla spices



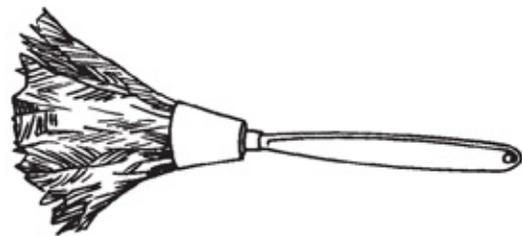
elephant hair bracelet



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boar's bristle hairbrush



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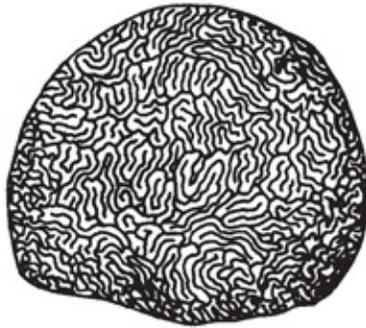


tropical fish

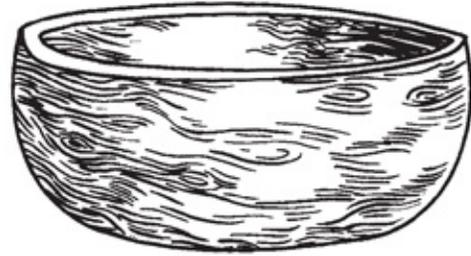


cactus

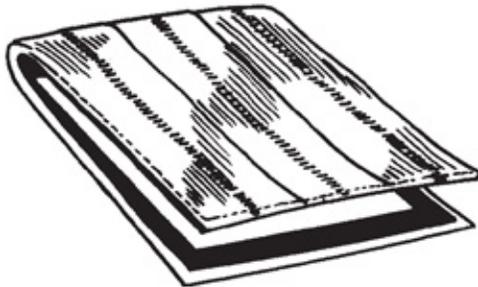
Purchase Power



brain coral



teak bowl



eelskin wallet



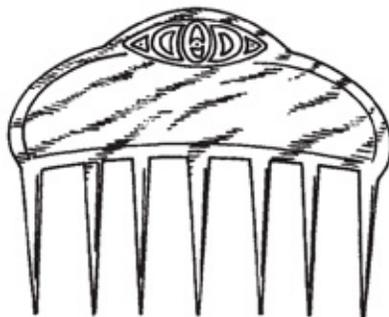
conch shell



ivory jewelry



cow-leather belt



tortoise shell hair ornament



natural sea sponge