



HOME ENERGY AUDIT: ELECTRICITY USE STUDENT LAB TEMPLATE

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Abstract

In this student-centered laboratory activity, you will investigate the amount of electricity that you use in your home and design a plan to reduce your consumption. You will investigate the links between electricity use and the effects on the environment.

Objectives

This activity allows you to:

- Conduct an energy audit/survey of electrical appliances in your home, in terms of the energy used and the costs involved
- Determine the amount of energy used by different appliances
- Interpret a monthly electric bill
- Make calculations and conversions relating to energy use
- Increase your understanding of energy units such as watts, volts, amps, and kilowatt-hours
- Evaluate the relationship of electricity generation and use to environmental consequences
- Design and implement a specific strategy or conservation plan that will lead not only to a reduction in the amount of electricity that you use but also to a lower monthly cost

Introduction

The demand for electricity continues to rise as the population grows. Methods used to generate electricity have an impact on the environment, despite the fact that electricity is often looked on as a clean source of energy by consumers. As an environmentally conscious citizen, you are to determine how much electricity you use in your home, identify the main appliances/items that use the most, and design a plan to reduce your overall electricity consumption. In addition, you are to determine how this reduction will affect the environment, for example, the impact it may have on global warming. Energy issues have received much attention in the media recently, and it is important for you to increase your level of awareness of this important topic. Many people take for granted how much our society depends on electricity, only realizing its importance when we experience a power outage! This investigation will increase your environmental literacy with regard to electricity use and production.

This lab activity requires you to conduct research and find out how to go about the task of measuring electricity in your home. Your teacher is not going to simply give out an instruction sheet for you to follow! You need to determine the best course of action to take in assessing how to monitor electricity use in your home. There are several ways to do this, and through your research you should be able to select which method you wish to use!

Background Research Information

Environmental science textbooks have several chapters on energy production, use, and conservation.

You can search the Internet for useful Web sites. There are many good Web sites that will provide you with all the information you need for this activity; if you are having trouble, your teacher may be able to point you in the right direction!

Hint for getting started: Remember, you have to find out about electrical supply and use in your area. How can you determine how much electricity each home appliance uses? What energy conservation measures can be taken? How does electricity use affect the environment? These and many other questions are waiting to be answered as you conduct this lab activity!

Materials

You have a wide variety of electrical appliances available in your home. Your teacher may also supply you with meters to monitor the electricity usage by different electrical items.

Procedure

Your first task is to brainstorm with the class how you can determine the amount of electricity that is used in your home. There are a number of ways that you can obtain this information, and your teacher will facilitate the brainstorming session to help focus your research. Once you have identified each method, you can decide on which one to use so you can collect your data and analyze the results. Based upon the specific demand and use of electricity in your home, you can then produce an individualized strategy to reduce the amount of electricity that you need to use. How this reduction in energy use relates to the environment can then be assessed. At an appropriate point, your teacher will distribute a handout containing information to help you in your calculations.

Lab Tips

There is always the potential for danger when using electricity. Care should be taken when handling any electrical device. **Make sure to unplug electrical appliances before examining them.**

Data/Observations/Analysis

Before starting this activity, make a list of what you consider to be the top 10 items in your home, in terms of their electricity consumption, going from the most to the least. After performing this activity, you can refer to this list and see how it compares. If you had to eliminate four electrical items from your home, which would they be and why? Similarly, make an argument for keeping four electrical items that you consider to be essential in your home, explaining your reasoning.

At the conclusion of this lab activity, you will be evaluated on both an oral presentation to the class and a written report on the analysis of your findings. Be creative! Choose what you think will be the best format to use in presenting your results to the class!