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Earth Rangers Engages Kids in Environmental Action



By **Gemma Alexander**

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There are a lot of good reasons to limit kids’ screen time, but the digital world isn’t all bad. The number of educational apps that kids enjoy exploring is growing quickly. Some of them even encourage offline activities. One of those is Earth Rangers, a kids’ app designed to empower environmental leadership. Previously only available in Canada, the app has now expanded to the United States.

Earth Rangers

Earth Rangers is a Canadian charity dedicated to empowering kids to take environmental action. Founded in 2004, Earth Rangers is active in Canadian schools, offering classroom resources as well as school assemblies and eco-clubs. It also offers professional development for teachers to develop lessons

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that counter eco-anxiety. Outside of the schoolroom, ^{CLOSE} Earth Rangers provides parents with information and resources through a [blog](#) and engages with its youth membership [through its app](#).

Downloading and activating the app enrolls the child as a member of Earth Rangers. Membership in Earth Rangers is free, but some activities do involve money. Kids can host an Earth Rangers fundraiser birthday party where donations are accepted in lieu of gifts (a themed party kit is available for purchase). And because saving animals is one of the environmental topics that kids connect to most strongly, Wildlife Adoptions, where kids get a poster, a certificate, and a plushie of their chosen threatened animal, are a major campaign to raise funds for conservation research.



In the Earth Rangers app, kids can participate in community challenges and environmental missions, explore educational videos and articles, and listen to the Earth Rangers Podcast.

The App

Earth Rangers made their free app available in the U.S. for Apple and Android early in 2023. Kids sign up with their parents' permission (accomplished through an email confirmation) and receive a free membership card and welcome package in the mail. In the app, kids can customize their avatar and participate in community challenges and environmental missions. They can also explore educational videos, articles, and listen to the [Earth Rangers Podcast](#). (The podcast is also accessible without the app.) As kids engage online and in the real world, they can earn virtual badges, points, and rewards.

[Common Sense Media](#) gives the app four stars, rating it as a standout for positive messages, saying that it "Inspires kids to take care of the world around them and provokes a sense of responsibility toward their favorite wild critters." They also note that the app has real educational value in "allowing kids to figure stuff out instead of simply memorizing facts."

There are no Common Sense Media warnings for violence/scariness, sex/nudity, language, or drinking/drugs. Although there are no concerns for commercialism, it does receive a Product & Purchases warning because it encourages fundraising and offers additional virtual rewards for purchase of a Wildlife Adoption. Overall, Common Sense Media approves the app for ages 10+, while Common Sense Media users suggest it is appropriate for kids as young as six.

Environmental Action

It's always nice to find online educational materials to pull kids' attention away from doomscrolling and video games. But what makes this app unique is its efforts to translate virtual efforts into real-world action. Throughout the year, new challenges are released through the app. Each challenge combines environmental science learning with practical steps that young people can take at home and school to fight climate change and protect animal species.

These actions, or "missions," include activities that can range from turning down the thermostat to organizing a litter clean-up. There are also science projects like building their own renewable energy device like a water wheel or solar oven. Kids log their completed missions to receive online rewards, which enables Earth Rangers to track the actions their members take and to demonstrate how collective efforts add up to achieving big goals. Earth Rangers reports that since 2020, members have completed over 724,000 environmental missions and raised over \$500,000 for conservation.

The current active challenge (as of March 2023) is "Rangers vs. Plastic," which aims to guide kids in reducing the amount of plastic waste they generate. Examples of recent past actions include "All Taste, No Waste" and "Tree Hugger." The first of these helped kids understand how food waste relates to climate change and take action to reduce the amount of food waste they create. "Tree Hugger" taught kids how trees help protect the climate and provide animal habitat. Kids could create their own creature habitats by building a backyard bug oasis or a bee hotel.

For kids who don't have their own electronic devices, parents can use the Earth Rangers website for inspiration to plan many of these [same activities](#) with their kids.

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Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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