
HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES



Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence points out six **key characteristics** of high quality environmental education materials. For each of these characteristics, there are listed some

guidelines for environmental education materials to follow. Finally, each guideline is accompanied by several **indicators** listed under the heading, “What to Look For.” These indicators suggest ways of gauging whether the materials being evaluated or developed follow the guidelines. They are simply clusters of attributes you might look for to help you figure out whether the characteristic is embodied in the materials you are reviewing or developing.

There is a glossary at the end of the *Guidelines*. Words that are defined in this glossary are underlined the first time they appear in the text.

The *Guidelines For Excellence* can help educators, administrators, curriculum designers, or materials developers evaluate the quality of environmental education materials. They provide direction while allowing flexibility to shape content, technique, and other aspects of instruction.

These guidelines offer a way of judging the relative merit of different materials, a standard to aim for in developing new materials, and a set of ideas about what a well-rounded environmental education curriculum might be like. It is not reasonable to expect that all environmental education materials will follow all of the guidelines. For example, a set of materials might not present differing viewpoints, as outlined in guideline 1.2. (Balanced presentation of differing viewpoints and theories.) This shortcoming does not necessarily mean that the materials should not be used. An instructor could work them into a larger set of activities that explores different viewpoints and helps learners discern opinion and bias in individual presentations of the issue. In cases such as this one, the *Guidelines for Excellence* can point out a weakness that instructors can compensate for in the way they use the materials.

Of course, no set of guidelines could be complete, and there are bound to be important characteristics missing. *Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence* provides a foundation on which to build evaluation systems that work for different people in different situations. As a tool to inform judgment, these *Guidelines for Excellence* can contribute to more effective environmental education.

Sample format for the guidelines:

#1: Key Characteristic

1.1) Guideline

What to look for:

- Indicator
- Indicator

1.2) Guideline

What to look for:

- Indicator
- Indicator
- Indicator

Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence Summary

#1 Fairness and accuracy: EE materials should be fair and accurate in describing environmental problems, issues, and conditions, and in reflecting the diversity of perspectives on them.

- 1.1 Factual accuracy
- 1.2 Balanced presentation of differing viewpoints and theories.
- 1.3 Openness to inquiry
- 1.4 Reflection of diversity

#2 Depth: EE materials should foster awareness of the natural and built environment, an understanding of environmental concepts, conditions, and issues, and an awareness of the feelings, values, attitudes, and perceptions at the heart of environmental issues, as appropriate for different developmental levels.

- 2.1 Awareness
- 2.2 Focus on concepts
- 2.3 Concepts in context
- 2.4 Attention to different scales

#3 Emphasis on skills building: EE materials should build lifelong skills that enable learners to address environmental issues.

- 3.1 Critical and creative thinking
- 3.2 Applying skills to issues
- 3.3 Action skills

#4 Action orientation: EE materials should promote civic responsibility, encouraging learners to use their knowledge, personal skills, and assessments of environmental problems and issues as a basis for environmental problem solving and action.

- 4.1 Sense of personal stake and responsibility
- 4.2 Self-efficacy

#5 Instructional soundness: EE materials should rely on instructional techniques that create an effective learning environment.

- 5.1 Learner-centered instruction
- 5.2 Different ways of learning
- 5.3 Connection to learners' everyday lives
- 5.4 Expanded learning environment
- 5.5 Interdisciplinary
- 5.6 Goals and objectives
- 5.7 Appropriateness for specific learning settings
- 5.8 Assessment

#6 Usability: EE materials should be well designed and easy to use.

- 6.1 Clarity and logic
- 6.2 Easy to use
- 6.3 Long-lived
- 6.4 Adaptable
- 6.5 Accompanied by instruction and support
- 6.6 Make substantiated claims
- 6.7 Fit with national, state, or local requirements

