



## Activity sheet

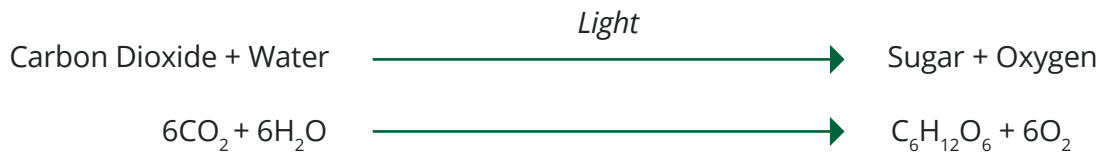
# Calculating carbon in a tree



## Trees and carbon

Through the process of photosynthesis, trees use light energy to change water and carbon dioxide into sugar (in the form of glucose) and oxygen. The glucose contains carbon, and this is transported around the tree and used as energy to grow during respiration. Trees do produce carbon dioxide during respiration; however, they absorb much more carbon than they produce.

### Photosynthesis



Any extra glucose that isn't needed straight away is stored as starch within the tree's trunk and roots. This starch can be broken down and used in respiration during the night and through winter when photosynthesis is limited.

## What happens to the carbon once a tree dies?

More carbon is stored in the centre of the tree where it is locked away until the tree dies or is cut down. If the tree is harvested for timber then the carbon stays locked up in the wood. If the wood is burned, or if the tree is left to rot then the carbon is slowly released back into the atmosphere.



# How much carbon can a tree store?

We can calculate how much carbon is stored in a tree by working out the dry weight of a tree. Head out into your school grounds, local park or woodland with a tape measure to investigate.



Circumference (cm)	Dry Weight (kg)
50	106
100	668
150	1964
200	4221
225	5771
250	7641
275	9842
300	12410
325	15350
350	18700
400	26674

- First measure 1.3m up the tree trunk from the ground.
- At 1.3m measure the circumference of the tree.
- Look at the table and find the nearest value closest to your measurement to find an estimation of the dry weight.
- Approximately half of the dry weight is carbon so divide your dry weight by 2. This answer tells you how many kg of carbon is stored in the tree.
- If you multiply that number by 3.67 you will find out how many kgs of carbon dioxide has been absorbed by the tree through it's lifetime.



## For example

An Oak tree has a circumference of 220cm

Its dry weight is approximately 5771kg

The carbon stored in the tree is  $5771 \div 2 = 2885.5\text{kg}$

Over its life time the tree has absorbed  $2885.5 \times 3.67 = 10,590\text{kg}$  which is 10.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide



# How much carbon does your tree store?

Circumference: \_\_\_\_\_

Dry weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of carbon: \_\_\_\_\_

Lifetime amount of CO<sub>2</sub> absorbed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Estimated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

Boiling the kettle	5g per cup	Manufacture of a mobile phone	75kg
Using a laptop for 1 hour	8g	Using 50L petrol in a car	115kg
Average UK household electricity usage	13kg per week	Return flight: London to Madrid	350kg per passenger
Return train trip: London to Glasgow	21kg per passenger	Manufacture of a new Range Rover	8 tonnes

**Look at the table to see how your tree compares to the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted during everyday activities.**

How many weeks of electricity use has your tree offset in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions?

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What is the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> absorbed by your tree most comparable to?

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How does it compare to what you were expecting?

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