

RENEWABLE vs NONRENEWABLE vs INEXHAUSTIBLE

What are RESOURCES?

The things we use every day come from the earth. Nearly all of our daily activities use some kind of resource that is grown on a farm, harvested from the wild, mined, or extracted from deep below the soil.

You may awaken in the morning on sheets made of cotton, under a blanket made of wool or synthetic polyester. Cotton is grown on a farm, wool comes from sheep raised on a farm, and synthetic polyester—like most plastics—is made from petroleum, which is extracted from the earth. The soap you use in the shower might contain cottonseed oil, while the tile, metal, and glass in your bathroom are made from mined materials. Wallpaper can be adhered to the wall using wheat paste, and paint contains compounds from trees. The linoleum on the floor is made from soybean oil, the wood flooring came from trees, and the nails holding it together are made from materials that were mined from the earth. The electricity powering the lights may come from water running through a hydroelectric dam or from coal burned at a power plant. It's difficult to imagine what our lives would be like without the natural resources that provide us with electricity, materials for the everyday items we use, and food to nourish our bodies. It can be an eye-opening experience to consider the resources that one uses in a single day.



What are **RENEWABLE** resources?

Renewable resources can be replaced by human efforts. These resources can be used up without proper management, but with proper management they can be renewed.



FORESTS



WILDLIFE



AGRICULTURE



PLANTS



ANIMALS

Crops are a renewable resource because they can be managed so that they replenish themselves regularly. For example, a tree farm can be managed so that some trees are ready for harvest each year. After trees are cut down to be turned into paper or lumber, more trees are planted that will renew the supply several years in the future. Crops like wheat and corn are planted and harvested within a single growing season, so they can be used up and then renewed each year.

What are **NONRENEWABLE** resources?

Nonrenewable resources are natural resources that cannot be replaced or reproduced within a generation. Humans cannot manage them for renewal. Once they are gone, they are gone forever.



OIL



MINERAL RESOURCES

(lead, iron, cobalt, zinc, etc.) used for metal and other structural building materials



SOIL

(takes 1,000 – 5,000 years to make)

Fossil fuels and soil are two important non-renewable resources. Both are formed very slowly by natural processes and both play central roles in our lives. While the act of using fossil fuels depletes the supply, this is not necessarily the case with soils, which can be managed for long-term use. Erosion destroys topsoil, but good management can prevent erosion. Soil that is managed well can support many years of growing crops.

What are **INEXHAUSTIBLE** resources?

Inexhaustible resources are natural resources that can last forever regardless of human activities.

They renew themselves continuously.

Humans can damage the quality of the resource but cannot use them up.



People cannot destroy these resources or create more of them, but we can affect their quality. Pollution can render air unbreathable and water undrinkable. Because we depend on natural resources to survive, it is important that we use them carefully.

Can you identify if these resources are

RENEWABLE, **NONRENEWABLE**, or **INEXHAUSTIBLE**?

Q | Let's find out!