



# Why Rainforests Are Disappearing and Why It Matters

KS2 GEOGRAPHY

KS3 GEOGRAPHY

Ages 9-14 ⌚ 4 min read

## What Are Rainforests?

**Rainforests** are enormous jungles found near the equator where it rains almost every day. The biggest rainforest is the **Amazon**, mostly in **Brazil** in South America. These forests are packed with millions of plant and animal species living together in layers – from tall trees at the top to thick plants on the forest floor.

## Why Are Rainforests Being Cut Down?

People cut down rainforests for several reasons. The most common is to create space for **cattle ranches** and **soy farms** – about **80%** of Amazon destruction is for farming. Logging companies chop down valuable trees like mahogany to sell the wood. Oil and mineral companies also clear forests to dig for resources underneath.

Think of it like clearing a library to build a car park – you lose something precious to gain something else temporarily valuable.

Governments sometimes allow this because it brings money into their countries, and poor families may cut down trees just to survive. It's a difficult problem because people need jobs and food, but the rainforest is irreplaceable.

## What Disappears When Rainforests Are Cut Down?

Rainforests are home to roughly **10% of all species on Earth** – creatures we've never even discovered yet. When forests disappear, animals like **jaguars**, **macaws**, and poison dart frogs lose their homes and often go extinct.

Many medicines come from rainforest plants. Scientists estimate that **25% of modern drugs** originally come from rainforest ingredients, yet we've only tested **1%** of rainforest plants for medicine. By destroying them, we might lose cures for diseases like cancer.

## The Global Impact

Rainforests produce about **20% of the world's oxygen** and store enormous amounts of **carbon** – a greenhouse gas. When trees are cut and burnt, this carbon escapes into the air, speeding up **climate change**. This affects weather everywhere, causing stronger storms and longer droughts.

Think of it like breaking a air purifier – suddenly the whole house gets dirtier, not just the room where it was.

The loss of rainforests also harms indigenous people who have lived there for thousands of years and depend entirely on the forest to survive.

## **What Can We Do?**

We can support rainforest protection by choosing products that don't destroy them, supporting conservation charities, and telling leaders that protecting rainforests matters for everyone's future.