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Do You Like to Do Errands With Your Parents?

Imagine that it is Saturday morning. Your mother wakes you up at 8:00 from a sound sleep and asks you to get dressed. "Wait a minute, this isn't a school day," you say to yourself. But your mother has errands to do and you must tag along. You complain as you get ready, and to make matters worse, it starts to rain. "Oh, yuck, now I have to dodge raindrops as we run around," you think to yourself. Your mother is calling you to hurry up, and you quickly take a few bites of cereal as you rush out the door.

The first stop is the bank where your mom transfers money from her savings to her checking account. Next your mom needs to buy some new pants and shirts for work. You go to several stores in the first mall, but she doesn't find what she is looking for. You hop back in the car and visit a second mall. After looking in several stores, your mother finally buys two pairs of pants and three new shirts. "Whew," you think to yourself, "finally, we can go home." But no. Now your mom tells you that you need to stop at the bookstore to pick out two new books for your book reports at school. You know that one book needs to be fiction and the other book has to be a biography. You trudge into the store and look through the millions of books on the shelves. Finally, you find two books that you think you will like to read even though you really don't like doing the book reports. Now it is time to go home! You are wet, tired, and hungry. But your mom has to stop at the gas station and fill the car up with gas because she has used so much fuel doing these errands. "Why do our Saturday mornings have to be this way?" you wonder.

Letting Your Fingers Do the Shopping!

The next Saturday morning, you wake at 10:00. "How nice to sleep in. I hope that I can watch T.V. for awhile," you think to

yourself. Then you remember all those errands of last Saturday and hope there are no more today. You walk to the family room and see your mom seated at the computer. She looks comfortable and relaxed in her sweatsuit with a coffee mug next to her. Your mom smiles at you, points to the computer monitor, and asks if you like the sweater she is ordering for your aunt's birthday gift. You nod as she asks you what CD's you would like for your birthday. Your mom has entered the age of Internet shopping! She can buy books, clothes, pay bills, do her banking, and even order groceries with the click of a mouse! Hurray, no more Saturday morning errands! And hurray, this is good for the environment!

Let Me Count The Ways!

Doing errands and shopping on the Internet can help the environment in many ways. Try to think of as many ways as you can before you read the next paragraph.

As you could probably guess, one of the important ways that doing your banking and shopping on the Internet can reduce air pollution and save energy is that you don't use your car as much. Gas use is lowered. Not as many **greenhouse gases** enter the atmosphere and not as many particles pollute the air we breathe. Companies do not have to print as many catalogs and this saves trees, energy, and postage cost. Because people "visit stores" on-line, not as many buildings have to be constructed. This saves energy and resources. Some companies may not even have physical stores, but will only offer their products on-line. These companies still have to ship their products to your home, but transportation costs are not as much because they only have to be shipped from the warehouse to you. The goods do not have to be held in a big warehouse, shipped to a store, and then transported by you to your house.

One very interesting experiment in on-line shopping is being conducted by Lands' End. This company was spending a lot of money printing and shipping big catalogs to people. Now they

have all their items on their website. They are even trying to make Internet shopping like going to the mall with your friend. Your friend can log onto the Lands' End website. You can "travel" around together from your separate homes. Your friend can give you an opinion about items you want to buy, just like when you go to the mall together. This is called "Shop With a Friend."

Another way that the Internet can help reduce pollution and save energy is by the creative publication of books. A company named *Sprout* has teamed up with *Border's Books* to print paperback books when they have been requested by customers. A customer can go into a store and buy a book or order it on a website. Then only the copy that has already been sold is produced. This saves the printing of many books that people do not wish to buy. Energy to print unwanted books is saved and paper is saved, too. Books that people do not want, do not have to be stored or shipped to stores. This also saves energy.

Shopping through the Internet is a way that people all over the world can connect with each other and share ideas. It also has the added benefit of cutting down on transportation, paper use, and the construction and maintenance of stores and warehouses. Everyday, people think of new ways to use the Internet. Perhaps, someday, you will come up with a good idea to make life easier and more environmentally safe!

You're an Expert!

1. You may want to work with a group of friends to complete this activity. Get a very large piece of paper like the kind your teacher uses on the bulletin boards in your classroom. Write "Let Me Count The Ways" on the top of the paper. Get index cards or cut pieces of construction paper to approximately the size of index cards. Think of all the ways computer use can help the environment. Write one way on each card. Arrange the cards in a logical way on the large paper. When you are happy with your presentation, glue the cards down. You may want to illustrate each card.

2. Adults seem to need a lot of instruction about computer use. Make a list of all the ways that computer use can help the environment. Find an older person who doesn't know much about computers. Sit down and, in a friendly way, tell them about the benefits of computers. Later you should share your experience with your class.

Take Action.....

Is there someone your family knows who does business on the Internet? Prepare a set of good questions to ask him/her. Then interview the person and report back to the class what you learned.