

Discuss the different types of renewable energy

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Each type of renewable energy contributes different amounts to our electricity mix, alongside non-renewable energy types such as fossil fuels or nuclear energy.

Find out about the different types of renewable energy sources that we currently use for electricity and how they'll be used in the future to help further tackle climate change.

Renewable energy is energy that comes from a source that won't run out. They are natural and self-replenishing, and usually have a low- or zero-carbon footprint.

Burning fossil fuels to create electricity has long been a major contributor in the emission of greenhouse gases into our atmosphere, so these renewable sources are considered vital in the race to tackle climate change.

Wind power is the largest producer of renewable electricity in both the UK and the US. Onshore and offshore wind farms generate electricity by spinning the blades of wind turbines. The turbines convert the kinetic energy of the spinning blades into electric energy by turning a drive shaft and gear box, which is connected to a generator. Electricity is then converted into higher voltages and fed into the national grid.

Sunlight is one of the planet's most freely available energy resources, which you'd assume would make it the number one source of renewable energy. But of course, the amount of sunlight we get can vary greatly depending on location, season and time of day.

Hydro power is created using the movement of flowing or falling water. Hydroelectric power plants are found at dams and generate electricity through underwater turbines that turn a generator. Hydro power also encompasses wave and tidal power, which rely on ocean forces to generate electricity at the mouths of large bodies of water, using similar technology.

Electricity can be generated when organic matter is burned as a fuel source. These fuels are known as biomass and include anything from plants to timber to food waste. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is emitted when bioenergy is made, but these fuel sources are considered renewable because they can be regrown and absorb as much carbon as they emit across their lifespans.

Fossil fuels, such as coal, natural gas and oil, are examples of non-renewable energy sources. These sources can occur naturally, but they are finite in their amount.

A disadvantage of non-renewable energy sources is that they often take hundreds of thousands of years to form, and have to be extracted from the earth and burned in order to create the energy that generates

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electricity. They also emit harmful greenhouse gases like CO₂ when they're burned.

As they're in much more plentiful supply, compared to fossil fuels, governments across the world are looking to develop renewables to exclusively power their nations.

Perhaps most importantly, renewables produce little or no harmful emissions when used, so the clean energy they provide will play a crucial role in preventing further global warming. It's why so many of our net zero goals in the future hinge on increasing their use today.

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