

Electric cars

The UK government is planning to encourage drivers to buy electric cars. However, disagreement exists as to whether electric cars are really environment-friendly or not.

1 Match each word (1–5) with its definition (a–e).

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| (1) hybrid | (a) something that makes you want to do something, as you will benefit |
| (2) congestion | (b) to put more power into a battery |
| (3) battery | (c) a mixture of different things e.g. a car which runs on petrol and electricity |
| (4) incentive | (d) an object which supplies electricity |
| (5) re-charge | (e) a situation which is crowded with vehicles |

Definitions from or based on *Macmillan English Dictionary* © Macmillan Publishers Limited 2007.

2 Look at the chart about two makes of electric car. Scan paragraph 2 below and fill in the missing information.

	Range	Top speed	Time to recharge
G-Wiz	___ miles	___ miles per hour	___ hours
Th!nk City	___ miles	___ miles per hour	___ hours

Motorists in the UK will be offered incentives of £2,000 or more to buy an electric car under new plans unveiled by the government. It wants to create so-called "electric car cities." In order to do this, it needs create charging points for these cars which will involve a total investment of around 20million pounds. The government claims that this will create new jobs, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. Drivers of electric cars will not have to pay the famous congestion charge which motorists now pay when they drive into London.

The electric car was first developed in the 19th Century. For well over 100 years, it has not been taken seriously. The problem with these vehicles in the past is they were slow and have a very short mileage range. Now global warming has become a serious issue, attitudes are changing. The small G-Wiz is available in Britain with a top speed of 51 miles per hour and a range of 75 miles. It takes six hours to recharge

them, making them are suitable for commuters. Elsewhere, drivers in Norway and Denmark can buy the Th!nk City, which can do 65 mph, has a range of 124 miles and a longer recharge time of ten hours. The US is developing a new generation of hybrid vehicles which run on electric batteries for short journeys and change to petrol for longer ones. This year, China is set to launch a family electric car, the E6.

Many people disagree that the electric car offers a low-carbon alternative. They point out that energy is needed to create the electricity to recharge such vehicles. The energy is supplied by coal fired power stations, which of course cause pollution. At the end of the day, electric cars may be less efficient than diesel cars. At the moment, less than 0.1% of the 26 million cars on Britain's congested roads are electric. By 2020, the government hopes that all new cars sold in Britain are electric or hybrid vehicles.

3 Read the complete article. What are the pros and cons of electric cars?

4 Match the words in box one with the words in Box 2 to create some collocations found in the article.

charging	carbon	power
global	congestion	air

charge	emissions	stations
warming	points	quality

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report back on your findings to the class.

- Is it possible to buy an electric car or any kind of hybrid car in your country today?
- What kind of incentive would encourage you / drivers in your country to buy an electric car?
- Do you think sales of electric cars and hybrid vehicles will take off in your country? Why / why not?