

Interactive: The Risks and Benefits of Nuclear Energy

Directions: Rank the following Advantages and Disadvantages in order of importance to you. Look on the next page for a sample answer.

Advantages	Disadvantages
We have a large supply of uranium that can last, perhaps, thousands of years	Getting to uranium supplies requires surface or subsurface mining and its associated disruption of the land, cutting down of forests, and removal of wildlife.
It can extend our supply of fossil fuels because it would mean using fewer fossil fuels	Providing funds and research money for nuclear power could divert money from the development of other energy sources that might be less polluting, like wind and hydropower
It produces much fewer carbon dioxide emissions than fossil fuels and does not contribute to global warming during its service stage	Carbon dioxide is still emitted during the mining and transportation stages, just not during the service stage. This is because oil-burning vehicles are used to mine and transport the nuclear fuel and its wastes.
It produces much less sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury than fossil fuels	It produces hazardous radioactive waste that has to be disposed of safely.
There is a low risk of accidents and low risk of radiation exposure to people and the environment	When nuclear power plant accidents do occur, they can be deadly for people and wildlife.

Sample answer: The order is really a matter of personal opinion. That is why nuclear energy is so controversial.