



It's Your Trash!

Much of what ends up in our trash was once considered valuable, necessary, or desirable by us because of what was wrapped in it. Once discarded, it loses its value and becomes part of a messy, dirty problem called "trash." There are many kinds of trash and many different ways to help alleviate our trash problem. Since we all generate trash, all of us need to do our part to help solve the problem.

Procedure:

1. On the day before this lesson is taught, ask your students to help their family make supper that night. Have them save all the containers that any food came in and bring the containers to school. Send a note home with each student to request adult assistance. Also, before you start this activity, find out what items can be recycled in your community.
2. At the start of class, have each child bring his/her empty food packages to the front of the room and put them in a pile on the floor. Ask students to explain what they had for supper and how the food was packaged.
3. Ask your class what they usually do with all of this packaging. They probably will say, "Throw it away."
4. Ask your students what they might call this pile of stuff. Write a definition of trash on the blackboard. *Trash: things we throw away because we don't want them anymore.*
5. Ask them what this pile of 'stuff' would be called if it was scattered all over the playground. Write a definition of litter on the blackboard. *Litter: trash that's been thrown in an inappropriate place, such as the floor or ground.*
6. Have two or three volunteers sort the trash into several piles of similar items. Ask your students these questions:
 - What are these things made of? (glass, paper, plastic, metal, etc.)
 - Are all of the cans the same? *Using the magnet, give several students the opportunity to sort the magnetic metal (steel) from the aluminum.*
 - Were these items trash when you first bought them?
 - Why did you buy them?
 - What makes them trash now?
 - What do you think about trash? What words can you use to describe trash? Write their responses on the blackboard.
7. Next, ask them:
 - Whose trash is this?
 - What should we do with it? Put it in your desk? Keep it in this room? Why not?
 - Where should we put it?
 - Whose job is it to take care of trash?
 - Do we make too much trash?

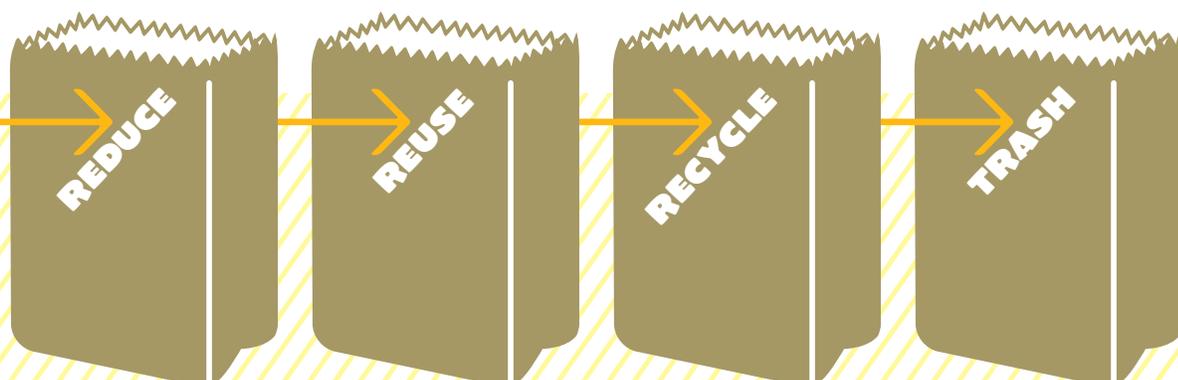
Learning Objective: To help students become aware that everybody contributes to the solid waste problem and that we should work together to solve it. To introduce the practices of reducing, reusing, and recycling as a means to help reduce the amount of waste we generate.

Subjects: Science, Environmental Science, Family and Consumer Education.

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards: SC C.4.2, C.4.5, EE A.4.1, A.4.2, E.4.2, FCE A.2, D.2

Grades: 2-3

Materials: small magnet, four boxes or grocery bags labeled: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Trash



8. For older students, write "Throw Away" on the blackboard. Ask: Where is "away?" What happens to trash?
9. Place four boxes or shopping bags labeled: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Trash, next to the pile of trash.
 - Discuss with your class what each of these terms means.
 - Ask students to help you sort out items that can be recycled and reused.
 - Discuss *how* each can be recycled and reused as you place it in the appropriate container.
10. Next, ask them how the amount of trash that's left could be reduced. (e.g., buy food in bulk so there won't be as much

packaging, buy food in containers that can be recycled or reused, etc.) Put items that could have been reduced in the 'Reduce' container.

11. Put what is left in the 'Trash' container. Ask the class:
 - What can you do to reduce, reuse, and recycle at home?
 - Is it better for the environment to reduce, reuse, and recycle? Why?
12. Finish the activity by properly placing the recyclables and the "trash" to their appropriate containers.

SINCE WE ALL GENERATE TRASH, WE ALL NEED TO DO OUR PART



GOING BEYOND

1. Copy and give your students the "Recycling Maze" worksheet found in this guide. Ask them to follow the path from their house to the recycling center, collecting all the recyclable items along the way.
2. Encourage your students to recycle at home. Find out what is recyclable in your community and how to sort and prepare those items for recycling. Contact your local municipality for more information.
3. Copy and give your students the "Trash It or Recycle It?" worksheet. Ask them to draw a line from each item to the proper container it should be placed in.
4. Set up a "Reuse Box" in the classroom for paper that has been used on only one side and encourage students to use it.
5. Collect aluminum cans, plastic soda, milk and detergent bottles, and other items that can be recycled in your community. Take them to a recycling center and use the money to support your school recycling project or to take an environmental field trip.
6. Ask the custodian not to empty the waste basket for several days (do not put food waste in basket). What are your students' reactions? Discuss these with the class.



FAMILY LETTER

Dear Family,

Tomorrow we will be learning about recycling in class, and we need some examples of food packaging. Please ask your child to help you make supper tonight and save all of the packaging or containers that your food came in. Assist him/her with opening, emptying, rinsing, and drying the containers, and please send them to school with him/her tomorrow.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,
