

Don't Waste That

Lesson Description

Explore how garbage can hurt the environment. Learn different ways to manage the waste and make a difference.

Lesson Objective

Discover how waste can negatively impact the earth. Also, learn to sort waste in various categories such as recyclable, reusable, and compostable to reduce the amount of waste produced.

Materials

- notebook/sheet of paper
- pen/pencil/crayon
- assorted items, examples may include:
 - empty bottles
 - whole fruits
 - empty cans

Vocabulary

- compost
- e-waste (electronic waste)
- organic waste
- recycle
- reduce
- reuse
- upcycle
- waste

Introduce

Did you know that every person creates more than 4 pounds of **waste** every day? Think about how much trash that would be in your home. Think about how much trash that would be at your school. Think about the neighborhood - that is A LOT of trash! If everyone continues to make that much trash, we may not be able to get rid of all of it in time.

The good news is we can do something about it! Each person has a choice to think about where their trash goes before tossing it out. Pause and think before throwing something away. Certain items can be **reused** or repurposed for something else. Some materials like plastic, aluminum, and glass can be cleaned and **recycled** instead. **Organic waste** such as fruit peels and old food can go in the compost for gardening! While you are thinking about the different ways you can keep something out of the trashcan and into a recycling or compost bin instead, do not forget to consider if you did not need the item in the first place! You can **reduce** trash altogether by not using single-use items, such as straws, plastic utensils, and plastic water bottles! The biggest challenge is breaking the mindless habit of producing waste. Remind people they can reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost. Gain knowledge, change habits, and make a difference!

This year, the world will generate

2.6 trillion pounds of garbage,

the weight of about 7,000 Empire State Buildings, more than

75%

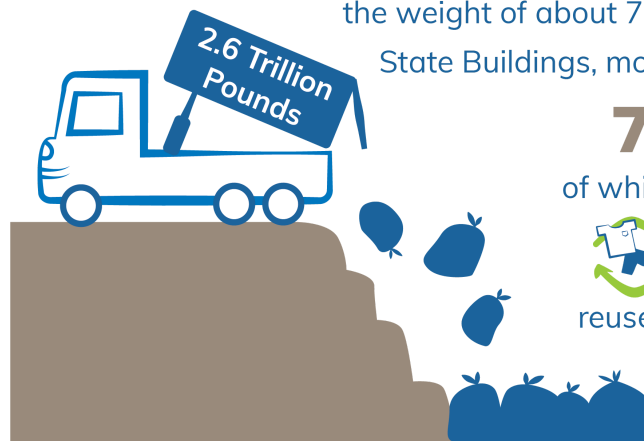
of which could be



reused



or recycled.



Investigate

Your Challenge: Reduce waste at home!

1. Create a chart like the one below. Make a list of items around your home that would usually be put in the trash.
2. Check if any of the items could be reduced, reused, recycled, or composted instead!
3. Figure out which item goes into which category.



- To **reduce**: Think about single-use items like plastic straws, utensils, water bottles, grocery bags. Is there a reusable alternative you can use to reduce your total waste?
- To **reuse**: Go online to find some do-it-yourself (DIY) crafts and take old objects around your home to turn them into **upcycled** works of art! You can take anything old and repurpose it into something new and useful. Ask an adult for support if you need ideas or special tools.
- To **recycle**: Many items will have the **recyclable label** (a triangle with a number in the middle) on them to help you - these could include anything that is paper, plastic, aluminum, and glass.
 - Many electronics can be recycled as well, and these items are called **e-waste**. We need to recycle electronics at special facilities. Look online to see how! You may need to get an adult's permission to collect items.
- To **compost**: Collect food scraps and put them in your compost bin at home if you have one. If not, ask an adult for support to build a worm bin or a compost bin at home!

Household Item	Reduce	Reuse	Recycle	Compost
Example: Plastic water bottle	✓	✓	✓	

Wrap-up

Challenge Questions:

1. How can you inform others (friends, family members, or classmates) about how to reduce waste?

2. What are some ways to upcycle household items?
3. How can you change your day-to-day actions to decrease the amount of waste in your home?

Watch and read it!

With an adult or an adult's permission,

- [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle](#) - Student-friendly article explaining the basics and importance of the 3 R's.
- [The 3 R's](#) - A cartoon video that teaches the 3 R's (featuring an animated genie).
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Glossary

Word	Part of Speech	Definition
compost	noun	The result of living organisms digesting organic material into fertilizer for the soil.
electronic waste (e-waste)	noun	Used, discarded electronics such as phones, computers, TVs, and household appliances.
recycle	verb	To divert useful materials from a landfill and reprocess them to become useful again.
reduce	verb	To bring down to a smaller extent, size, amount, number, etc.
reuse	verb	To use again, especially after saving from being thrown away.
upcycle	verb	To create a new product from something that otherwise would have been thrown away. Example: using old tires to create carpet tiles.
waste	noun	Anything unused; garbage or trash.

Works Cited

Environmental Protection Agency. (2016, March 29). *Municipal Solid Waste*. EPA. Retrieved July 10, 2017, from <https://archive.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/web/html/>.

Improve Recycling in America! Keep America Beautiful. (2019, October 28). Retrieved from

<https://www.kab.org/resources/improve-recycling>.