

Recycle Right

... at lunch



Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify what is recyclable and what is not in their local area;
2. Carry out a lunchtime waste survey to determine how much lunch packaging in their school is recyclable;
3. Draw conclusions about the results of their recyclable waste survey;
4. Discuss ways that packaging waste can be reduced.

Background

In Australia, only around 20% of our packaging is recycled. This means over 2 million tonnes of packaging is cast into landfill each year. Furthermore, Clean Up Australia research has found that 85% of all litter is made up of packaging waste. Much of this packaging waste could be recycled, including cans, bottles, containers and foil.

Introduction

In this lesson, students will survey and analyse lunchtime packaging waste in order to identify how much of it is recyclable.

Duration

This activity is carried out over a week of lessons. The first and last lesson may require up to an hour to complete, while the interim sorting periods may only require 20 minutes each day.

Please note that before you begin, you may need to obtain parental consent for participation in this activity as students will be handling waste. Check this with your year supervisor or head of school.

It is also helpful to announce this activity to the whole school at the school assembly preceding the waste survey to ensure maximum participation.

Materials

- 5 large boxes with labels (as below)
- Washing up gloves
- Magazines or supermarket catalogues
- Glue and scissors
- Poster board/butchers paper
- Plastic ground sheet

Activity

1 Class research

- a. Find out what is recyclable in your local area by visiting RecyclingNearYou.com.au. Enter your school's postcode and go to your local council page. Then click on 'Kerbside Recycling Collection' (at the top of the left menu).
- b. Write up on the board, or in workbooks, what is and is not recyclable in your area.
- c. Pay particular attention to the different types of plastic. Are students aware there are seven different types and which are recyclable in their council collection?
- d. If there is a recycling system in place at your school, discuss the way this system works (what is accepted and where it goes for processing). This will most likely be through a private contractor and not through the council's residential kerbside collection.

2 School announcement

- a. Choose a representative from the class to make an announcement at the school assembly, asking all students to place recyclable packaging from their lunch into the recycling bins organised by the class in the week you have selected. Explain that this is part of a class survey on recyclable playground waste.



3 Recyclable packaging survey

- First, label each of the 5 large boxes with one of the following labels: plastic containers (soft drink bottles, milk bottles, takeaway containers etc.), glass, cartons (milk and juice cartons), paper (including cardboard), and metal (aluminium cans, steel cans, foil).
- Divide the class into 5 groups and allocate a box to each group. This will be theirs to monitor and sort over the week-long experiment. To start, each group could decorate their box with pictures from magazines and supermarket catalogues that represent the category on its label.
- Each recess and lunchtime for five days, students put the 5 boxes out into the part of the playground that receives the most waste. Other students in the school are asked to separate their rubbish into the 5 categories. Where their rubbish doesn't fit any of the categories (food scraps, chip and biscuit packets, cling wrap etc) it should go into the normal school bin. A 'bin monitor' from each group should supervise their box each day to ensure the other students are separating their rubbish correctly and not putting any food scraps, liquids or non-recyclables into the boxes.
- At the end of each day, each group sorts their allocated box. This is best done on a plastic sheet in a sheltered area outdoors. Any student handling waste should be given a pair of gloves to wear.
- Using a table (like the one below), each group should fill in the number of items in their box for that day. Slowly across the week, the content for a recyclable waste graph will build up. Once the details have been recorded for that day, dispose of the recyclable waste correctly (either by taking it home or through a school system if available).

4 Thinking it through

- At the end of the week, design a large wall chart as a class, summarising the results of the survey.

Approximately what proportion of the school's lunchtime waste was collected as recycling rather than rubbish?

How many items of each category were collected throughout the week?

Which was the most commonly thrown out? Which was the least common?

How much of each category would there be over a month or a year if the same amount of packaging was collected every week?

The data could be used to work out pie graphs and percentages if this fits within curriculum stage.

- These results could be presented to the parent's group or school board as an encouragement to institute a recycling program at the school.
- Discuss as a class how the students rate their own lunchbox when it comes to recyclable and reusable packaging (very good, good, okay or bad). How could they reduce the amount of packaging they have in their lunchboxes?

Use re-useable containers and drink bottles, eat more fruit and vegetables that come in their own "natural packaging" etc.

Additional Activity

A competition could be held between classes to see which class can have the 'least waste' in their lunch boxes, or the whole school or grade could hold a "waste-free" lunch day.

School Lunchtime Recyclable Waste Tally

Item	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Total
Plastic Containers						
Glass						
Cartons						
Paper						
Metal						



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