

Start Recycling Today Lesson Plan
Ages: 1st - 5th grade
Suggested time: 45 minutes

**DON'T
THROW
AWAY
OUR
FUTURE**



INTRODUCTION TO RECYCLING

Part 1- Introduction to Recycling

Most students today are already familiar with the concept of recycling. The purpose of this lesson is to:

- Educate students about the importance of recycling.
- Teach students which items can be recycled.
- Motivate students to recycle whenever possible, at school and at home.

Section 1: How much trash is there?

The average person in this country creates more than four pounds of trash daily. You can give students a visual by showing a bag of trash or passing a four-pound dumbbell around the room.

Teaching Tip: To show how quickly this can add up, multiply four pounds by the number of students in class; and that number by seven to show how much trash the class produces in a week and then by 52 to illustrate how quickly this can add up.

Explain that there is only so much room in landfills and many items sit for hundreds of years before “decomposing, or breaking down to become dirt.” And some materials, like Styrofoam and glass, never break down and they take up space in landfills forever. In addition to taking up ground space, trash in landfills pollutes the air we breathe. It has become necessary to keep trash out of landfills and in the product chain for years- that’s where recycling comes in.

Section 2: What is recycling?

To “recycle” something means to use it again. Ask students what they know about recycling and why they think it is so important.

Questions to encourage classroom participation:

“Does your family recycle at home?”

“Do they separate the recycling or collect it in one bin?”

“Do they take the recycling to a facility or put it on the curb with the rest of the trash?”

“How do you help with recycling at home?”

Explain that when recycling is picked up, it goes to a facility where the different materials are separated.

The materials are then cleaned, broken down and turned into new products. Sometimes the material from one item will be used to create an entirely different item. For instance, a water bottle can be recycled into an article of clothing or an area rug.

More Recycling facts are available at:
<http://www.recommunity.com/education/>



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Part 2 - VIDEO

The videos explain how products go from the bin, through the recycling process and back on store shelves to be enjoyed again.

How Recycling Works



Materials Recovery Facility



Recycling Cans



Part 3 - In-class activity

Section 1: Which Items Can Be Recycled?

Test students' knowledge by listing off various items and asking whether they can be recycled. To make the lesson more engaging, bring in each of the items you plan to list and place two bins in front of the class, one labeled "Recycling" and the other labeled "Trash." Let students line up, pick an item and place it in the bin where they think it belongs. "Can you guess whether each of these items can be recycled or not?"

YES

Glass jars
Plastic water bottles
Cardboard boxes
Newspapers
Notebook and printer paper
Plastic yogurt cups
Soda cans

NO

Plastic Wrap, like Saran Wrap
Plastic bags
Shredded paper
Light bulb

List of Recyclables



http://www.recommunity.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/re_acceptable_materials_residential_print.pdf

Dirty Dozen



<http://www.recommunity.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/DirtyDozen.pdf>



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Section 2: If you're not sure, check the symbol

Explain that in order to make recycling easier, all recyclable products feature a recycling symbol and a code that can usually be found at the bottom of the item. The recycling symbol means the product can go around the usage chain many times. The code inside the logo tells us what type of material the product is made from and whether it can be recycled in your area. Print the recycling code chart below to review with students.



The Recycling Symbol



Polythylene Terephthalate Ethylene

PETE goes into soft drinks, juice, water, detergent, and cleaner bottles. Also used for cooking and peanut butter jars.



Polypropylene

PP goes into caps, disks, syrup bottles, yogurt tubs, drinking straws and film packaging.



High Density Polyethylene

HDPE goes into milk and water jugs, bleach bottles, detergent bottles, shampoo bottle, plastic bags and grocery sacks, motor bottles, household cleaners, and butter tubs.



Polystyrene

PS goes into meat trays, egg cartons, plates, cutlery, carry-out containers and clear tray.



Polyvinyl Chloride

PVC goes into window cleaner, cooking oils, and detergent bottles. Also used for peanut butter jars and water jugs.



Other

Other Includes resins not mentioned above or combinations of plastics.



Low Density Polyethylene

LDPE goes into plastic bagss and grocery sacks dry cleaning bag, flexible film packaging and some bottles.

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Homework

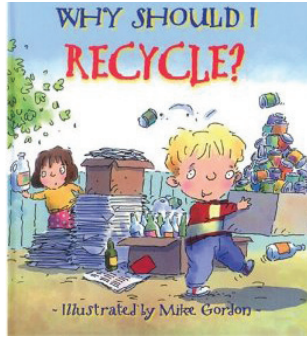
Recycling Audit: Send each student home with a recycling code chart and a list of items that are recyclable in your city. Have them collect and bring to class five clean trash items that can be recycled and a few that cannot. The next day, chart the different materials that were collected and have students separate the items into “recyclable” and “trash” bins.

Read About It!

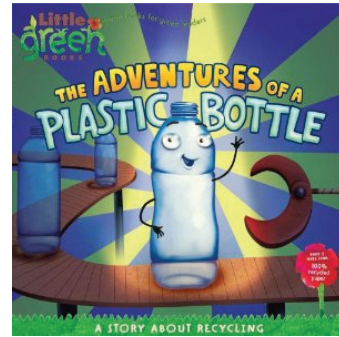
There are a number of entertaining children’s books that can support your recycling lesson. Considering class time with story from one of the below books.



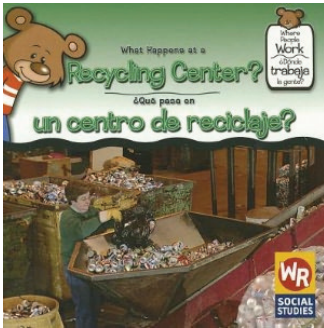
Michael Recycle
by Ellie Bethel, Alexandra Colombo



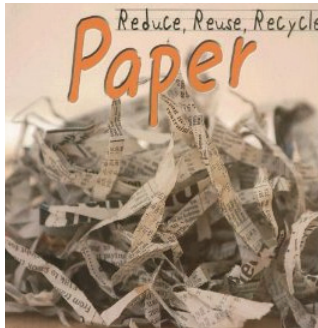
Why Should I Recycle?
by Jen Green, Mike Gordon



The Adventures of a Plastic Bottle
A Story About Recycling
by Alison Inches



What Happens at a Recycling Center?
By Kathleen Pohl



Paper (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)
By Alexandra Fix