

Recycling Activity

Description

In this activity, children will learn about the materials that our everyday products are made of and what happens to them once we are done using them. Create a mini recycling centre in your own home and teach children how to sort recyclable materials. By reducing the amount of waste going into landfills we can ultimately lessen our environmental impact on earth!

Ages: 4 - 12+ years old

Background

Everything we use is made from earth's materials, including toys, houses, cars, clothes, etc. Once we are done using these things, we throw them away. But where does everything go? The garbage truck takes all of our waste to a landfill, which is a large area where garbage is collected into a pile. When the garbage pile gets too big a new landfill will be created. But what happens if we keep making new landfills? We only have one earth after all! We might run out of space to put it eventually and already our waste ends up in places it shouldn't be, like our rivers and oceans. This can be very harmful to ecosystems but even more so to the animals that live there. Every year, more and more animals, such as whales, turtles, fish and birds are dying because they are eating our garbage. That is why it is really important that we do what we can to reduce the amount of waste we throw away!

We can be a part of the solution by practicing the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. We can **Reduce** by buying less things so that we have less waste. We can **Reuse** by using things multiple times, instead of throwing them away after one use, as well as find new ways to use old things! For example, we can use reusable bags for our groceries so that less plastic grocery bags end up in the landfill. To **Recycle** means to turn something used into something new. For example, if we recycle all of our old paper instead of throwing it away, it can be turned into new paper. The more we use the 3 R's, the less waste we will bring to the landfills and help to protect our planet!

For this activity we are going to focus on **Recycle**. Your household might already have a blue recycling bin that is used to collect recyclable materials once you are finished with them. These materials are usually sorted into categories such as glass (e.g. glass jars), paper (includes cardboard), metal (e.g. aluminum cans), and plastic.

Materials

Use paper to make 4 signs: Paper, Metal, Glass, and Plastic. You can put each sign on a bin or cardboard box. If you don't have 4 containers to use then you can either tape them to the wall or



put them on the ground so that the items can be sorted into piles instead.



Gather as many recyclable materials as you can, making sure to have at least a couple different examples for each category (e.g. cardboard, paper, milk carton, plastic container, glass jar, aluminum can, plastic bottle, soda can, egg carton, etc.). If there are older children involved try to include items that can be recycled but need to be taken to the local depot, such as plastic bags, glass bottles and foam packaging, etc.

*Refer to [RecycleBC Guide](#)

Directions

Begin with the background discussion so that there is an understanding of what recycling is and why it is important. Next, show an example of each material, ask what it is made of and whether or not

it can be recycled. Demonstrate where each item can be disposed of properly (in the matching bin or pile). Now instruct them to sort all the materials into their respective bins/piles.

For a fun challenge, this sorting activity can easily become a timed race. To do this, put the pile of items on one side of the room and the bins/signs on the other side. Children must choose one item at a time and run to the other side of the room to put it in the proper pile/bin before they can return for another item. If there is more than one child in the house, this activity can be turned into a relay race by creating separate piles of recyclable items for each (you can also create teams, where they must take turns by waiting until the first person returns to the pile before they can go). Whoever completes the race first and gets the most items in the correct bins/piles wins!

To make this activity a little more challenging for older children, have them sort the recycling based on local guidelines. Explain that some recyclable materials can go in the blue bin to be picked up, but there are other materials that need to be dropped off at the local recycling depot. Add a "Drop-off Only" category and include items such as plastic bags, food packaging, foam containers, glass bottles, and plastic beverage containers. Make it trickier by adding a "Non-recyclable" category and include items such as plastic straws, shrink wrap, dishes, foil-lined bags, coat hangers, books, etc.





RECYCLING GUIDE

NORTH OKANAGAN

RECYCLE



(IN BLUE BIN)

RECYCLE



(DROP OFF ONLY)

CAN'T RECYCLE

