



Waste Zero Educational Resources for Elementary School



These resources have been compiled to teach students about reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting in conjunction with a unit on natural resources, conservation, or environmental science. We hope to help spark a meaningful discussion and inspire students to make a positive environmental impact at home and at school.



Recommended Activity: Material Life Cycle Analysis

- Ask students to pick a material that they frequently encounter (i.e. cardboard delivery boxes, plastic bottles, aluminum cans, plastic bags, paperboard pasta boxes, etc.). Ask them to complete a Life Cycle Analysis on this material.
 - How was this item made? What natural resources were used?
 - What happens to this item when they are done using it?
 - Can this item be recycled or composted? You can refer students to our website www.Recology.com/RSMWhatBin.

Recommended Activity: Visual Waste Assessment

- Have students complete a “waste log” for one week, where they keep track of:
 - What they are disposing of
 - How they are sorting each material
 - Connected to the life cycle analysis activity: what happens once they put their items in the garbage, recycling, or compost?
 - A visual estimation of what percent of their waste is garbage, recycling, and compost (this can be a good opportunity to connect to fractions or percentages, if students are learning those concepts)
 - Reflect on the experience:
 - Were they surprised by how much they threw away?
 - Were they surprised by the amount of garbage, recycling, or compost they had?
 - Have their observations led them to think of ways to change their behaviors?

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Games:

- “Recycle Round Up” from National Geographic
 - This game has students prevent waste from being littered at the park – they need to sort it into garbage, recycling, or compost.
 - <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/games/action-and-adventure/recycle-roundup-new/>
 - Recommended follow-up:
 - Do you ever notice litter at the park or in other public places?
 - Why is it important to prevent litter? What harm can it do?
 - Why is correct sorting important?



Songs:

- Jack Johnson’s “The 3Rs” song talks about reducing, reusing, and recycling. Don’t forget to talk about the 4th R: rot!
 - Link to sing-along video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USo_vH1Jz7E



Video Resources:

- “How Recycling Works!” (4 minutes)
 - Gives a good high level overview of what happens to different kinds of waste after they are disposed of.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlRVPum9cp4>
- “Composting for Kids” (2 minutes)
 - This video is meant for elementary school students and gives a good, concise overview of the benefits of composting and how it works.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHYzRaepeMw>
- “The Story of Plastic” from The Story of Stuff Project (4 minutes)
 - Details what is going on behind the scenes with our plastics, and what happens to them after we put them in the recycling bin.
 - https://youtu.be/urFZ5o0az_4
- “The Story of Stuff” from The Story of Stuff Project (20 minutes)
 - Focuses on how our linear “stuff” economy can’t work on our finite planet with finite resources.
 - <https://youtu.be/9GorqroigqM>
- “The Story of Bottled Water” from the Story of Stuff Project (8 minutes)
 - Explores how the water bottle industry created demand for a product we do not need, and why we should opt for refillable water bottles.
 - <https://youtu.be/Se12y9hSOM0>

