

Trash Trivia



Objectives

Students will classify trash components and select appropriate ways of recycling

Materials

For class:

- paper
- pencil or pen

Action

1. Before the activity, ask the students to write down 10 items they see people throwing in the trash, or items they throw into the garbage. The day of the activity, have students bring their lists to class.
2. To begin the activity, read the following story. "Imagine yourself living in a small town with several neighboring areas of forest and wildlife. You receive word that one of these neighboring forests has been slated to become a landfill. The landfill will destroy the forest ecosystem and the odor, rodents, and potential fires associated with landfills concerns you. The landfill that the town currently uses still has space left. However, the town would have to drastically reduce the amount of discarded garbage to make the landfill last another 10 years. During that time, a new site could be chosen for the next designated landfill. The town decides to launch a massive recycling program to conserve space at the present landfill and save their neighboring forest and wildlife."
3. Using the items on the students' lists, create a data table categorizing the trash. List the item, then mark how many pieces of that item students recorded. Every student should have some of their items on the data table. Items should not repeat. Next to the data table, list the following five words: plastic, aluminum, paper, glass, and compost.
4. Open a class discussion by asking each student to select one of the items on the garbage list and recycled it into any of the "bins." For example, soda cans and aluminum foil in aluminum; milk, salad dressing and other containers in plastic; magazines, wrappers, and newspapers in paper; jars and bottles into glass; fruit peels and plant trimmings into compost. If it is a product that does not fit any of the above mentioned recycling categories, mark it with a star. The starred items will go to the landfill. After all the items have been classified into the recycling bins or the landfill, discuss how much of the trash was able to be recycled (not put into the landfill). Could the town last another 10 years using the old landfill?

Deeper Depths

The students can select an item of trash and make it into something useful. They can then present their creations to the class on the day of the discussion. For example, mobiles out of aluminum cans or empty milk gallon-containers poked with small holes and filled with water. Place the containers halfway in the ground in a flower bed. The holes will let the water slowly drain to provide a continuous water source for the plants until the container is empty.