

SEL Activity

What and How to Recycle



grades 4-5



20 minutes

Objectives

- Students learn what kinds of items are recyclable.
- Students learn the benefits of recycling and its impact on their communities.
- Students learn about the problems caused by littering and how to dispose of trash and/or recycle properly.

Essential Questions

- What are the effects of littering?
- What are the benefits of recycling?
- How can you be mindful and take action to recycle?

Vocabulary

Littering: verb; knowingly leaving trash in places where you are not allowed to leave trash.

Recycle: verb; to convert waste into reusable material; use again.

MATERIALS + MEDIA

Word search: Trash or Recyclable? ([PDF](#))

Video: [What Happens to Your Recycling After It's Collected?](#) (5:46)

(Optional) Video: [Recycling for Kids | Recycling Plastic, Glass and Paper](#) (4:43)

SEL CORE COMPETANCIES

Responsible decision-making
Self-management

Before you Begin

Print out the Word search: Trash or Recyclable? ([PDF](#)).

Program Connections

This activity focuses on giving to the environment—a theme that runs through our core programs. To learn more, visit our [PROGRAMS](#) page.

THINK • GIVE

This SEL Activity was written by ThinkGive Student Advisory Board member Alex Chayrigues (2023).

The World Around Us

Students write down what they love about the environment and/or nature in their neighborhoods and communities. Ask volunteers to share, recording answers on the whiteboard/chart paper.

Discuss:

- What do you think of when you hear the word “littering”?
- What impact does littering have on our communities?
- What actions can we take to care for the environment in our neighborhoods and communities?
- What do you know about recycling?
- What happens to something when it is recycled?

Watch: [What Happens to Your Recycling After It's Collected?](#) (5:47). This video explains the recycling process, highlighting its importance.

(Optional) Watch: [Recycling for Kids | Recycling Plastic, Glass and Paper](#) (4:43). This video explains how to properly dispose of trash and recyclables.

Discuss:

- What kinds of objects and materials should we recycle?
- (Revisit) What happens to something when it is recycled?
- What are the benefits of buying recycled goods instead of brand-new goods?
- What recyclable item(s) do you use the most?

CONNECT + CLOSE

Trash or Recyclable?

Hand out [Word search: Trash or Recyclable? \(PDF\)](#). Students find the words and then sort them into recyclable and non-recyclable items.

ACTION

Explain: In the coming days/weeks, take action(s) to responsibly care for your community(ies) and the planet. You might dispose of trash properly, buy more recycled goods, or share information about recycling with your family and friends.

REFLECTION

Lead a discussion or allow students to journal. Use the following questions as a guide:

- How are you paying more attention to recycling?
- What other actions might you take to change your recycling habits?
- Why do you believe that recycling is important?