

## The Shopping bag – game

Tips for a smart consumer: (Adapted from Pauli Välimäki)

1. I will not buy what I do not need
2. I will borrow, if possible
3. I will favour long-lasting products that are easy to repair
4. I will buy recycled products
5. I will avoid buying multiple packages
6. I will favour loose products and large packages
7. I will avoid buying products that cannot be recycled or re-used

For more tips about sustainable consumption see [www.kuluttajavirasto.fi/ekok](http://www.kuluttajavirasto.fi/ekok) (in Finnish)

What is an eco-product?

Source of information [www.kuluttajavirasto.fi/ekok](http://www.kuluttajavirasto.fi/ekok)

All consumption harms nature. Therefore, no product can be called 'environmentally friendly'. This is quite a common opinion. However, this approach only works in theory. People are consumers in the ecosystem. Life can be seen as consumption, i.e. eating, drinking, moving and living. Eco-consumption is a life style that harms nature as little as possible. By doing small actions for nature and by reducing unnecessary consumption we can create a better environment.

Disposability, waste mountains and wastage of materials have become very common during the last few decades. Life in the modern society is not only very materialistic, but also alienated from nature. It is as if we do not need nature anymore.

The environmental disasters of the last few years have awakened many people from this kind of thinking. Sustainable consumption requires recycling and minimisation of material use (e.g. avoiding unnecessary packaging).

Durability and recyclability are the main concepts of ecological R&D. Eco-products help the progress of sustainability.

Consumers are tempted by colours, smells, tastes and fancy packages. The chemicals used in the production of different goods can be damaging for the environment and health. Sustainable consumption requires using raw materials that are safe for people and nature. Eco-products do not endanger people or the environment.

Eco-products can be described as above. Good R&D requires taking the environment into consideration at every stage of the life-cycle of the product, from manufacture to retail and recycling. In the end it is up to the consumer to decide what kind of products he or she wants. Every choice we make is a message for the manufacturers and the retailers. Every choice is a choice for the environment – for better or for worse.

## The game

There are 13 products in the shopping bag:

1. a plastic bag
2. a re-usable bag (e.g. cotton)
3. a box of Kellogg's cereals
4. a box of Kellogg's cereals
5. a bag of sweets
6. a carton of juice
7. a toy car
8. a plastic toy
9. a glass bottle of ketchup
10. a plastic bottle of ketchup
11. a disposable plate
12. a tooth brush with a disposable brush
13. a bag of chewing gum.

## Tips for the leader

The aim of the game is to consider sustainable consumption choices that are eco-efficient and do not create much waste. Try to think of small actions that everyone can do for the environment. The actions should be easy to perform in every day life. For one person it can mean choosing cookies that are not wrapped in layers of plastic, for someone else it can mean using a re-usable shopping bag. In the game children go to a fictional store and all the products are sorted in two piles. Products that the children consider to be environmentally friendly go to one pile and the ones that damage the environment go to the other pile.

First, take out the two shopping bags. You can either ask the children which one of the bags is more environmentally friendly or just ask them to place the products that you will soon give them on the bag.

Place the bags on the table, one on each end of the table. The children should now put the products on the right bag. If they think the product does not belong to either one of the bags, they can put it on the table between the bags.

You can either give the products to pairs or to a voluntary shopper. The shoppers then have a few minutes to think where to put the product and to do it. It might be a good idea to only give one product to the shopper or to a pair and to wait until they have made their decision. In that way the products stay in good condition for the next players.

If there is not much time or the children are restless, the leader can take out the products one by one and ask the children where the product belongs and why.

When all the products have been put on the bags or between them, go through them as a group. You can think why they have been put on this certain bag and if everyone agrees. Try to find alternative products for the environmentally damaging products (see tips below). There are no right or wrong answers in this game – one

might need something someone else never uses. However, there are some tips for placing and assessing the products listed below.

You can of course change the “rules” of the game. The children can for example bring something from home or take home a product that they thought was easy/difficult to assess. You can also take the children to a real store for virtual shopping, to see different kinds of products and to talk about their environmental impact. The children can even talk to the storekeeper.

Hopefully this game inspires you to find more ways to help the environment – one small thing for the nature is a step to a better tomorrow.

Happy learning!

The Metropolitan Area Recycling Centre Ltd.

## How to assess the environmental friendliness of products?

Common criteria for assessment

**Necessity** – do not blow your money on useless things

**Locally produced** – short transportation saves energy and causes less emission

**Environmental labels** – products with environmental labels cause less environmental impacts during their life cycle from getting raw material to disposal (e.g. organic food).

**Minimal packaging** – no unnecessary packaging waste, less raw materials used in manufacture

**Family size package** – more product, less package

**Durability** – your ecological back bag gets smaller, when you do not have to buy a new product very often

**Suitability for re-use and recycling** – produces no excessive waste and gives raw material to recycling industry.

## Tips for placing the products

Plus (+) under the product means a good quality for the environment

Minus (-) under the product means a bad quality for the environment

The products have been divided into two groups, some of them belong to the re-usable bag and the others to the plastic bag. All of the products have both good and bad qualities for the environment and this classification is not the only correct choice. And, as we know, products are never assessed solely by environmental criteria. It is ok to use a happy disposable plate for a change.

Below there are as well listed more ecological choices for the environmentally more damaging products.

### **Re-usable bag**

+ long-lasting

### **Toy car**

+ long-lasting  
+ possibly recycled

### **Toothbrush with a disposable brush**

+ only a small part is disposed of, when the brush is changed

### **A bag of chewing gum**

+ larger package, not as much package waste  
- plastic package is non-recyclable

### **A glass bottle of ketchup**

+ organic  
+ recyclable packaging  
- possibly long transportation consumes energy  
- breaks easily

### **Plastic bag**

- almost disposable, non-recyclable

#### **more ecological options:**

a paper bag, a white paper bag can be recycled with paper, a brown paper bag can be used as a bag for organic waste  
a re-usable cotton bag

### **A box of Kellogg's cereals (x2)**

- small package, excessive waste per portion  
- possibly long transportation for both raw material and the product itself

#### **more ecological options:**

bigger package  
muesli or porridge made from domestic ingredients

### **A bag of candy**

- individually wrapped  
- excessive packaging

#### **more ecological options:**

pick & mix – candy in a paper bag

### **A carton of juice**

- small package  
- non-recyclable package

#### **more ecological options:**

juice in a recyclable can or glass bottle  
domestic made juice

home made juice

**Plastic toy**

- breaks easily

**more ecological options:**

a toy that is long-lasting and easy to repair

**Ketchup in a plastic bottle**

- non-recyclable

- long transportation

**more ecological options:**

domestic made ketchup

organic ketchup

larger package

ketchup in a recyclable package

**A disposable plate**

- disposable

**more ecological options:**

a re-usable plate