

Waste sorting game

The hierarchy of waste management according to EU legislation

1. Avoid producing waste
2. Recycle the material
3. Use the energy of the waste
4. Treat safely

Waste management should be taken into consideration already when purchasing products. You can avoid producing waste by avoiding:

- Unnecessary consumption
- Disposable products
- Multiple packages

And by choosing:

- Recyclable packages
- Products you can borrow.

Recycling the material is a better alternative than using the energy of the same material, because good raw material can – and should – be used many times. By recycling materials we can reduce consumption of natural resources.

Landfill is not a good place for waste, because

- good material for recycling is wasted
- landfills are expensive to build and to maintain
- landfills cause environmental problems, they for example produce methane that speeds up the greenhouse effect, they cause smell and noise problems, pollute soil and ground water and provide food for many unwelcome animals.

Waste sorting game for primary school

What you need for the game:

1. Sorting bases, big “cards” on which the waste is placed

One set includes 8 bases:

- organic waste
- paper
- glass
- can recycling
- milk and juice cartons
- general waste
- reuse

2. The garbage bag

Includes 14 products, “pieces of trash”

- a tea bag
- an envelope
- a news paper
- a glass jar
- a soft drink can
- a milk carton
- a juice carton
- a battery
- a mobile phone battery
- a plastic mug
- a plastic bag
- a yoghurt package
- a towel/pillow case
- a returnable soft drink bottle.

Advice for the game

The objective of the game is to learn why and how waste is sorted and to talk about reducing the amount of waste produced in daily life. The players can sort the trash themselves and think what alternatives there are to avoid producing so much waste.

In the game the players sort the trash in the sorting “containers”. The containers, that the bases represent, should be shown to the players beforehand. It is good to tell shortly what is collected in each container. You can also ask the players where they have seen similar containers in real life. When you have shown every container, the bases are placed on the floor.

The game can be played as a competition or as an exercise. In the competition the players are divided in two groups and each group is given 7 products. The products given to the groups should be quite similar, so both groups have a chance to win! Ask the first group to place the trash above the containers. When the first group is ready, the second group can place their products below the containers. Then you can go through every product and see if they are in the right place. Every product in the right place gives the group one point, or alternatively every product in the wrong place gives one minus point. The group that has more products in the right place wins.

In the exercise you can give one product per pair and they bring it in the container. In the end you again go through the trash and think whether they are in the right place or not. The teacher should help the kids notice how much less waste goes to landfill when everything is sorted right (only 3/14 of all the products go to landfill in this game). You can also let the kids suggest alternative products for those that should go to landfill. For example, yoghurt can be bought in big cartons instead of buying 5-6 small yoghurts.

Happy learning,

Metropolitan Area Recycling Centre.

What is the right place for each piece of trash? Check the right answers below.

Organic waste – decomposable waste

- a tea bag

Paper – material for recycled paper

- envelope, all envelopes can be recycled
- a news paper

Glass – coloured and non-coloured glass is collected separately, but in this game both types of glass can be placed on the same base. Glass waste is used as material for making recycled glass.

- a glass jar, the label does not have to be removed, but lid has to.

Can recycling – material for metal industry

All soft drink cans should be returned to the store, even those without a deposit. In that way they do not end up in a landfill, but are used for recycling.

Milk and juice cartons – material used for making recycled carton

- a milk carton
- a juice carton

Hazardous waste – hazardous waste is processed separately and made safe

- a battery, all batteries should be taken to hazardous waste or battery recycling containers
- mobile phone battery, all mobile phone batteries are hazardous waste.

General waste – the waste that goes to landfill, for example all plastic products and materials that consists of several different materials, except envelopes – they can all be recycled with paper.

- a plastic mug, plastic cannot be recycled
- a plastic bag
- a yoghurt package

Reuse – products that can be reused as such

- a towel/pillow case, these products may have to be washed, but are still usable, do not throw them away!
- A returnable soft drink bottle, the bottles are taken to the drink factory, washed and reused as such.