

Sort It Out

Activity Overview

This activity will remind students to think about Peel Region's list of acceptable recyclable and organics items each time they make a visit to the trash can. Through a fun, hands-on activity, students will learn to think before throwing away.

Objectives

Elementary students should learn how to:

- Think about waste reduction when choosing products.
- Properly dispose of waste items.

Materials

- 4 buckets: 1 representing a recycling cart, 1 representing an organics cart, 1 representing a garbage cart, and 1 representing the Community Recycling Centre (CRC)
- Laminated school Recycling, Garbage and Organics posters indicating acceptable items
- Discs with various garbage/recycling/organics/CRC items

Setup

Set up buckets so that the garbage is against the tent wall, creating a "back board," making it the easiest bucket to shoot the discs into. Have the recycling, CRC and organics buckets spread out and away from the garbage bucket. Ensure that the labels on each bin are facing the tent wall so students CANNOT see them.

Takedown

Stack the buckets and place the discs, waste items, and posters into the bin.

Safety & Accessibility

- Remind students to be careful while playing.

Vocabulary

Organics Cart – a cart for your compostable/organic materials such as food scraps and household plants.

Recycling Cart – a cart for recyclable materials. Remind students that things that are thrown in the recycling cart are turned into new products that they can use, but not everything can go in the recycling.

Garbage – Items that cannot be recycled or put into the green cart, or brought to the CRC.

Community Recycling Centre (CRC) - disposal centres for household hazardous waste, garbage, recyclable, and reusable items.

What Will I Be Doing? (Procedure)

Before you start your presentation check with the teacher or chaperone that the entire group is present and ready to start.

Remember that **doing** an activity is more powerful than watching and listening to someone, so try to involve as many children as possible.

Part 1: Activity

Say: "Welcome to Sort It Out! This activity will teach you about some of the great things we can recycle in Peel

Red Colour Group

Region, items that can go into our green cart, and items that we can bring to the Community Recycling Centre (CRC). We will learn all about these items today in a very fun way.”

Ask the students what our options are for disposing of waste here in Peel Region.

Answer: Recycling bin, Organics/Green bin, Garbage bin and Community Recycling Centre (CRC).

Talk to the students about what happens when you put an item in the garbage.

Ask: “What if, at school, I had a juice box and an apple for snack. And when I was done, I put those items in the garbage bin, because it was easy. What’s going to happen to those items? Where will they end up?”

Answer: “They will end up in the landfill. Landfills may not be the best for the environment, but they are needed in our waste management system. If we fill up our landfills too quickly, we will have to create new ones. Instead, we can all try our best to send less waste to landfills and to reduce our impact on the environment.”

Ask: “But my juice box and apple core don’t belong in the landfill, do they? (Wait for the students to say “No”). “Where could I put my apple core?”

Answer: “I could take my apple core home to put it in my green bin/organics bin. Or, if my school has an organics bin, I could put it in the school’s bin. When we put something in the green bin in Peel Region, it is turned into compost, a special kind of soil we can use to plant flowers and gardens. In Peel Region, we can put food scraps and other items such as paper towels, food scraps and greasy pizza boxes in the green bin.”

Ask: “If my apple core goes to the green bin, where should my juice box go?”

Answer: “My juice box should be put into the recycling bin after I’ve ensured it’s empty and have taken the straw out and put the straw into the garbage. Recycling is an easy activity we can all do that helps the planet! When we recycle, we don’t need to send as many things to the landfill.”

Ask: “What types of things would you bring to the CRC? These could be items that you don’t use anymore but are still good, or materials that can be harmful for the environment if they were put in any of our bins.”

Answer: “Old books, toys, clothes, and any household hazardous waste e.g., batteries, light bulbs, paint, pills.”

Say: “Today we are going to play a fun game! We have four buckets for you to shoot these discs into. We will see how many discs you can successfully throw into a bucket. I will have you all line up. Each student will get to throw a disc, one student at a time and one disc at a time. You can throw the discs into any bucket, but remember, the largest bucket is likely the easiest one to aim for.”

Have the students play the game. If there are not enough discs for each of the students, take some out of the bins after some students have had a turn.

Part 2: Review Activity

Say: “You all did an awesome job! It looks like many of the discs ended up in this bin, which is the largest one, back here. It seemed to be the easiest one to get the discs into so most of you aimed for it. What I didn’t tell you before you played was that each of the 4 buckets represented the four ways we can dispose of our waste in Peel Region.”

Turn the buckets around to show the students.

Say: “The bucket representing the garbage bin was intentionally chosen because it is bigger and it was placed near the tent wall so that it could be used as a backboard to get the lids into. The 3 smaller buckets represent the recycling bin, CRC and organics bin. These were chosen on purpose as well. Can anyone guess why?”

Answer: “That’s right! The easiest one was the garbage one because it’s easy to put items into the garbage. But what did we learn earlier? That’s right, we should do our best to ensure that items that can be recycled or made into compost go into the blue and green bins, and items that can be donated or are hazardous should be brought to the CRC, because everything that goes in the garbage ends up at the landfill. Listen carefully to the answers because it’s also important that when we sort, we do it properly – if items aren’t properly prepared before putting them into the recycling bin, for example, it could contaminate other materials and then the whole bag or bin will end up in the landfill.”

Answers:

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1. **Plastic cutlery:** Garbage (they are plastic, but they are too small to be properly sorted at Peel Region's waste facility).
2. **Kool-aid jammer:** Garbage.
3. **Juice box:** Recycling but the straw goes into the garbage. Make sure all juice has been consumed before putting the juice box into the recycling cart.
4. **Paper Towels:** Green bin (at home or at school, depending on school). If schools do not have a green bin, they go into the garbage.
5. **Shredded paper (paper scraps):** These are too small to be recycled. They can go in the green bin where possible or in the garbage at school.
6. **Plastic bottle lid:** Garbage. Too small to be recycled.
7. **Paper plates:** Recycling or compost (if there is food residue on it).
8. **Aluminum can:** Recycling.
9. **Chip bag:** Garbage.
10. **Yogurt container:** Recycling. The lid goes in the garbage. Eat all the yogurt before putting it in the bin and rinse it out!
11. **Styrofoam container:** Recycling.
12. **Apple core:** Green bin.
13. **Cell phones (old):** Community Recycling Centre.
14. **Household hazardous waste:** Community Recycling Centre.
15. **Takeout cup with lid and straw:** Garbage.
16. **Paper takeout bags:** Green bin.
17. **Chicken bones:** Green bin.
18. **Ziploc bags:** Recycling. Bags must be collected and put into one Ziploc bag, sealed, and then they can be put in the blue bin.
19. **Plastic cup:** Recycling.
20. **Tin container/tray:** Recycling.
21. **Calculator:** CRC
22. **Half-eaten sandwich:** Green bin. Students are encouraged to eat all their food or save it for later rather than disposing of it.
23. **Lunchables container:** Recycling
24. **Foil wrapping:** Garbage.
25. **Paper:** Recycling.
26. **Box for markers:** Recycling.
27. **Finished tape dispensers:** Garbage.
28. **Chocolate bar wrapper:** Garbage.
29. **Newspaper:** Recycling.
30. **Clothing:** CRC
31. **Old marker:** Garbage
32. **Old batteries:** CRC
33. **Cupholder tray:** Recycling
34. **Tea bag (used):** Green bin
35. **Banana peel:** Green bin
36. **Milk carton:** Recycling.
37. **Muffin wrapper:** Green bin if paper, garbage if waxy.

Remind students to:

- Practice the 3 Rs at home and reduce and reuse when they can so that they don't produce waste.
- Take the time to think if an item is garbage or if it can be put into the recycling cart or organics cart. At school, they can look at their Peel Region recycling and garbage posters. Show the students the examples of these posters. Remind them that common organics items (tissues, paper towels) are on the school garbage poster because at most schools, there are no organics bins. This is why it is so important that they bring home organics waste to put in their kitchen catchers. If their classroom doesn't have the garbage and recycling posters, they can ask their teacher to contact Peel Region for free copies.

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- Visit <https://www.peelregion.ca/waste/> if they are at home and unsure where an item belongs. They can type in their item in the “How to sort your waste” box to find out where it belongs.

Background Information:

- Reducing the amount of items, we buy and use (ex: buying something with less packaging) is the first and most important step in reducing the amount of waste we create.
- Re-using items is an efficient way of producing less waste. Buying reusable containers, water bottles, bags, etc. prevents us from having to produce, use and throw away less single-use packaging like plastic water bottles, Ziploc bags, plastic wrap, etc. as we can use items that are reusable over and over again. When we reuse, we reduce our waste.
- Recycling is the last step in the waste reduction process. Once something can no longer be reused, it can be recycled. When an item such as an aluminum pop can is recycled, those old recycled cans can be turned into new cans!
- Recycling plays an important role in maintaining water quality by reducing contaminants created during the manufacturing of new products and by diverting unnecessary waste from landfill sites.

What Can I Do?

- Become a smart consumer and **reduce** your waste by buying in bulk, buying items with less packaging, packing smaller lunches, etc.
- Instead of buying things like plastic water bottles or Ziploc bags, try to purchase things that you can **reuse**. By buying items that you can **reuse** like water bottles, containers for lunches, bags for groceries, etc. we create less waste, because you can use reusable items over and over again, so we are also **reducing** as well!
- Once we can no longer reuse an item, if we **recycle** it, it can be turned into something new that we will be able to use again later. Many of the items we use every day are accepted for recycling in Peel Region.
- If we **REDUCE** the number of things we buy and use, then we don't have to **REUSE** or even **RECYCLE** that item because it never existed!

