
Sorting Relay



Background Information:

Before doing this activity, ensure students have a basic understanding of trash, recycling, composting, and reuse. Lessons 1 and 3 of the Don't Waste It! guide would be a great place to start!

This fast-paced game brings the practice of sorting your trash to life. Students will see how easy it is to sort their unwanted trash and just how few items need to be thrown out each day.

Important Vocabulary:

Composting – the process of making compost, a mixture that consists largely of decayed organic matter and is used for fertilizing and conditioning land.

Recycling – the action or process of converting waste into reusable material.

Reuse – to use again, especially in a different way or after reclaiming or reprocessing.

Trash – any items that cannot be recycled or composted when you are done with them.

Materials:

- 2 sets of signs: 1 recycling, 1 composting, 1 trash, 1 reuse. Can make them different colors if you want to have to have students complete the relay with two different sets of the exact same items. (Included in the Don't Waste It! Educator Check Out Program.)
- 2 sets of bins or areas for the students to put the items into the four categories during the relay: recycling, composting, trash, and reuse.
- A bin of materials containing recyclable items, trash items, fake food, and pictures of other items. Alternatively, you can use images of items if you cannot get the real items. (Items and images are included in the Don't Waste It! Educator Check Out Program.)

Instructions:

Note: it is helpful to have two adults to help with this activity, especially for younger students.

1. Before starting, divide the items and/or images up into two piles/bags/containers, ensuring that they have the same amount of each type of item. One will be for the each relay team.
2. Set out empty bins and signs beside one another in two groups.
3. Split students up into two groups and line them up so that their line is facing one set of the bins, at least ten feet away. Use a cone or other marker on the floor to designate starting point.
4. Explain that students will be responsible for sorting the item they are given into one of the bins. They can either be placed in the recycling bin, trash can, reuse bin, or compost bin.
5. Start the game by handing the first student in each line an item from the bag.
6. Once they have an item, students will run it to the bins and place it in the correct bin. Their teammates can help them decide where to put it, but once it's in the bin, it has to stay!
7. Once the player puts their item in a bin, they need to return to the end of the line. When they cross the starting line the next student will go and sort their item.

8. Continue handing items to team members (in line) until you run out of items.
9. Review and count each team's correct items. Use the answer key below to help determine if they put the items in the right place.
 - a. Almost all items can be considered reusable, but their proper disposal bin is listed on the answer key. If students place things in the 'reuse' bin and it is questionable as to how it could be reused, give them a chance to explain their reasoning.
 - b. Each item that was correctly sorted is worth one point. The team who finished first gets an additional point. See who won and play again!

Item Answer Key:

Recycling Bin	Compost Bin*	Trash Can	Reuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plastic bottle - Chipboard box - Junk mail - Steel cans - Glass bottles - Aluminum cans - Plastic soda bottle - Construction paper - Cardboard boxes - Soap & shampoo bottles - Newspaper - Paper grocery bag - Yogurt and butter containers - Notebook paper - Empty pizza boxes - Paper snack boxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grass clippings - Egg shells - Citrus peels - Banana peels - Grapes - Lettuce - Apples - Oranges - Lemons - Eggplant - Broccoli - Peppers - Paper plates and napkins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Old computers - Meat scraps - Toothpaste tubes - Styrofoam cup - Candy bar wrapper - Old tire - Paper towels - Disposable diapers - Spray cans - Empty paint can - Motor oil and motor filters - Bread - Pizza - Pie - Plastic to-go containers - Styrofoam containers - Chip bags - Straws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rechargeable batteries - Household cleaning bottle - Plastic bags - Too small t-shirt - Plastic bags (or take to your local grocery store) - Anything except food items!

This list is not all-inclusive. You may choose to leave out as many items as necessary based on amount of time you have to play the game and the number of students. Check with your local community or hauling company to double-check what they take in recycling.

*If your school or organization composts, ALL food can go in the compost bin. If your school does not compost, this is based on backyard composting and only fruits and vegetables can be composted. Adjust as necessary.

Follow-up:

Be sure to discuss with children that, when possible, reusing or donating our items is the best thing to do. Recycling and composting should be the next option. Items should only be thrown in the trash when it has been reused or has no recycling or composting option.