

# Recycle Right

... to avoid contamination

## Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Articulate what is recyclable in their local kerbside recycling and what is not;
- Discuss the impacts of contaminants on the recycling process;
- Describe in detail the impacts and alternatives for one specific contaminant;
- Design an educational campaign seeking to correct contamination problems.

## Background

Recycling through council kerbside collections is a simple and effective way to reduce our impact on the environment. However, when non-recyclable items are placed into recycling bins at home, recyclable material becomes contaminated.

Contamination makes it difficult for recycling facilities to process recyclable material. Problems associated with contaminated material include:

- Workers must sort through the material to take out contaminants (these are often dirty and dangerous materials such as nappies and car batteries).
- Plastic bags cause the recycling machinery to break down; this is dangerous for workers to fix.

- Recycling material that is placed inside plastic bags cannot be processed and is sent to landfill.
- Batches of recyclable material can become unusable because of the contamination and are sent to landfill (eg. just 5g of drinking glass can spoil a tonne of recyclable glass; polystyrene contamination spoils recycled paper).
- Costs, both financial and environmental, of recycling increase.

## Introduction

In this lesson students will look at the different contaminants that find their way into the recycling stream, and devise an educational campaign aimed at reducing recycling contamination of a specific item.

## Duration

This activity will require up to three lessons to complete: one each for research, campaign development and presentation.

## Materials

- Internet access
- A range of craft resources (and multimedia resources where possible)

## Activity

### 1 Class discussion:

- a. As a class log on to RecyclingNearYou.com.au, enter your postcode and go to your local council page. Then click on 'Kerbside Recycling Collection' (at the top of the left menu). This displays a list of what is acceptable for recycling in your local area and what is not.
- b. Write the items listed in the non-recyclable category on the board.

Are there any items in the list students thought were recyclable?

What might be some of the problem associated with placing non-recyclable items (contaminants) into the recycling bin? What problems might they cause?

See information in the Background section above.

### 2 Individual research:

- a. Each student chooses one of the kerbside contaminants (non-recyclable items) from the board to research (e.g. plastic bags, clothing, batteries, gas tanks, paint etc). Make sure there is a range throughout the class.
- b. Students should research the problems that their assigned form of contamination causes as well as the correct way of dealing with the item (there may be drop off collection points for some items, reuse options, or it may have to go into landfill). This will help to inform their educational campaign.

Information on contaminants can be found at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/warr/MurfyProgram.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/warr/MurfyProgram.htm) as well as through internet searches. Information on what can be done with kerbside contaminants can be found at [RecyclingNearYou.com.au](http://RecyclingNearYou.com.au) under the product search.

### 3 Campaign design:

- a. Students design their educational campaign. This could be through a poster, short video ("community service announcement"), PowerPoint presentation, or other educational medium.
- b. Students are encouraged to be creative and to consider how to make their campaign entertaining as well as educational and effective. This may include creating a slogan or jingle.

### 4 Campaign presentation:

- a. Students present their campaign to the rest of the class, another class, or the school within a specified timeframe (e.g. 2 or 5 minutes).
- b. The audience can be invited to give constructive feedback on each campaign. What was effective? Why? What did they learn that they didn't know before?
- c. Once presented, display the finished campaign materials in the classroom, around the school, or even in the local community as an educational message to everyone.



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