



Adapted from the 5 Gyres World of Waste Lesson Plan

Lesson: Track your Trash - Where can you Reduce, Reuse, or Recycle?

Consider starting this lesson plan with an acknowledgement that we are all living and working on what are traditional land and territories of native tribes. Around Lake Tahoe, we are living and working on the traditional lands of the Washoe Tribe. If you want to find out what tribes you should acknowledge in your area you can check it out here. <https://native-land.ca/>

Overview & Purpose:

This lesson is to introduce the younger students to the terminology of recycling and the materials that they need to understand in order to recycle well. We will start with a brief introduction to CUTL and what we do. Then we will talk about how trash ends up in the lake/environment. Then we will talk about the good habits we can all form to reduce the trash that we create so we can put less pressure on the environment.

Estimated Time to Complete:

Time Needed to Complete: 60 minutes (more for the optional extensions). Suggest 30 minutes for the introductory presentation before lunch to introduce CUTL and the exercise and 30 minutes after lunch to do the tally and sorting exercise. CUTL representatives do not have to be present for the tally exercise. If there is time in the teacher's lesson plan, the students can do the tally exercise for a whole week and see how much trash they generated over the time period and then discuss how reducing, reusing and recycling could really make an impact.

Procedure:

1. Hold up some items from around the classroom for students to see. Ask the students if the items are made from paper, plastic, glass, or metal. Ask students to identify words or phrases to describe each of

the materials and write the descriptors on the board (i.e. metal = hard, rigid, shiny...; plastic = see-through, shatter-proof...; paper = easy to tear and crumple)

2. Tell students that they are going to look for items made from paper, plastic, glass, and metal from the trash they generate at lunchtime. Be sure students understand that they will NOT be looking through any trash cans. Rather, students will eat their lunch as normal, but before disposing of any of the material, they will take notes of all the trash they have generated. Teachers will then provide students with a tally sheet (Lunchtime Trash Survey below). Prior to cleaning up, ask students to tally the number of paper, plastic, glass, or metal items they have collected as trash from their meal. Refer them to the words or phrases on the board to help identify each material. Encourage students to place the sorted items into an appropriate recycling bin.

(Note: If recycling bins are not yet available at your school, provide students with labeled boxes in which to place the recyclables.)

3. Create a class graph (bar graph, pictograph, or circle graph) to show the amounts of paper, plastic, glass, and metal generated from the lunchtime trash for the whole class. Analyze and discuss the graph as a class. What type of trash was generated most by the students' lunches? Can they figure out how much trash their lunches generate in a week? A month?

4. Write the vocabulary words on the board (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Recover). Explain each term to the students.

- a. Reduce refers to using less of an item.
- b. Reuse refers to using an item more than once before discarding it.
- c. Recycle refers to taking out useful materials that otherwise might be thrown away so that they can be used again (often in a different form.)
- d. Recover refers to changing waste into useful products like compost or energy.

Read the following examples to students. Students should shout out the correct vocabulary word to match each example. Ask students to explain their thinking.

Example Answer:

Using a cloth bag at the grocery store instead of plastic REDUCE the number of plastic bags

Using composted soil for gardening RECOVER

Using newspaper for gift wrapping REUSE

Mashing up A Paper Carton and Using The Paper Fibers To make Tissue RECYCLE

5. Ask students to think about their lunch trash and come up with ideas about where they could reduce, reuse, recycle or recover.

Objectives:

Students will collect and record data of the trash they generate.

Students will describe strategies for using resources wisely (reduce, reuse, recycle, and recover).

Materials Needed:

- Various items made of plastic, glass, metal, and paper
- Student Lunches
- Recycling Bins
- Graph paper for class graph
- Copies of Student Pages:
 - Lunchtime Trash Tally
 - Crossword Puzzle

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Student Page – Lunchtime Trash Survey

Directions: After eating your lunch, what trash is left behind? Count the different types of trash you've made from your lunch on the chart below

Type of Trash	How Many?
Paper	
Plastic	
Metal	
Glass	

Other (describe)	
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