

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Did you know that 100 million tons of wood could be saved each year if all that paper was actually recycled! *(American Forest & Paper Association)*

Introduction to 3R's:

Explain students the concepts of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Ask them to categorize some examples from the garbage which you present to them in one of the three classes. Ask them to provide more examples of each one. Then, distribute a few items taken out of the trash to different groups of students and have them think of specific ways to reduce, reuse or recycle those things. Another option is to present something you have made into something else that would normally be regarded as garbage.

Activity:

Give students different garbage items and have them work in groups to discuss the following question: Imagine that you come from another planet and find these objects. What would they use them for? Then, ask each group to present their ideas to the rest of the class.

Discuss with students the notion that waste is a cultural concept. Explain that some things we regard as trash can be considered useful in other cultures, and also proved useful by other people in our own culture. Show images of art or recycled materials that have continued to be useful after they could have been trash.

Give students other garbage items (in this case, the same items to all groups) and have them find ways to reduce, reuse or recycle them. What parts of the object (for example, the packaging) could be avoided? What would they use the item for again? How would they recycle it into another useful thing? Each group will present their ideas to the rest of the class. Write students' answers on the board and discuss how a single item can be reused or recycled in many ways, using students' different examples for the objects provided.

Follow-Up: Weigh Trash

After having discussed these concepts, propose students to conduct a second trash weighing experiment (See "That's Just Garbage!" lesson plan) Have them weigh the classroom garbage during a second week, in the same way they did in the previous activity. Ask them to throw away as little garbage as they can, using the principles learned. Talk to your students about the importance of conducting a fair experiment, for example, noting that it would not be fair to keep garbage that they usually throw away in the classroom bin to throw it somewhere else. Compare the results from the first and second week. How much were they able to reduce the amount of garbage they generated?

