



Recycling

Eco-Schools

EY

From KEEP BRITAIN TIDY

Introduction

In the UK, we produce a huge amount of waste - around 200 million tonnes every year! This waste depletes natural resources, pollutes our environment, harms wildlife and contributes to the climate crisis by releasing carbon into the atmosphere. Through raising awareness of the waste hierarchy, we can all play a part in reducing waste and limiting its impact.

This resource supports you to explore Litter with your children over 3 steps:

- **Talk** - Introduce and discuss the theme of waste with stories or rhyme.
- **Play** - Explore the theme through a fun junk modelling activity.
- **Act!** - Embed simple recycling into your routine with children.

Eco-Topics:

 Litter

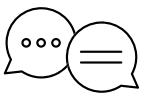
 Biodiversity

 Marine

 Waste

Learning and Development

Areas of Development:


Communication and Language


Expressive Arts and Design


Understanding the World

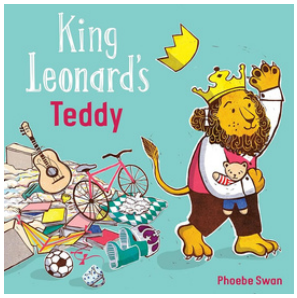

Physical Development

Children will Understand:

- Most items become waste when they are not used or needed anymore.
- Producing too much waste harms our planet.
- Many items we throw away can be reused or repurposed.
- Recycling is a last step, used when we can't reduce, reuse, or repair.
- How to sort waste correctly into different bins for recycling.

Talk

Reading Suggestions



King Leonard's Teddy
Phoebe Swan



The Great Paper Caper
Oliver Jeffers



Recycling Day: What Happens to the Things We Throw Away
Polly Faber

Key Words

Aim to include the following words in your discussions with children, developing their vocabulary and understanding of waste and recyling:

Reduce **Recycle** **Re-use**
Repair **Waste** **Repurpose**

Conversation Prompts

Use the following questions to inspire deeper conversation with children:

- Why is making lots of waste bad for our planet?
- What can we do to make less waste?
- What could we do with something when we don't need it anymore?
- What items have you reused, repaired, or recycled?
- What does recycling means?
- What could we try before we recycle something?

Play

Junk Modelling

The Activity

All nursery practitioners will be aware of the concept of junk modelling! This open-ended learning provides children with the opportunity to explore, be creative, develop their fine and gross motor skills, and problem-solve while learning about the different properties of everyday items. It's also a powerful way to introduce children to the waste hierarchy as they learn that waste materials can be reused and given a shiny new purpose.

You Will Need:

- A variety of safe, clean everyday waste materials:
  - boxes, bottle tops, cardboard tubes, yoghurt pots etc.
- A variety of child-friendly materials for construction:
  - safety scissors, sticky tape, pva glue etc.
- A variety of decorating materials:
  - coloured pencils, felt tips, paint & paintbrushes etc.

Set Up/Delivery

Choose a Provocation

This could be inspired by a story you've shared, such as building a recycling machine from Polly Faber's book, or something linked to Eco-Schools: Early Years, like an insect or plant. Follow your children's interests!

Allow Time to Explore and Create

Provide children with time to explore the range of junk materials available before choosing whether to work independently or as part of a group. Allow them to create freely, while being on hand to offer support, suggestions, or solutions when needed.

Celebrate Their Creations

Give each child time to explain the key features of their creation. Display the models for a few days, allowing children to revisit and play with them. Take photos to add to your eco-floorbook, then carefully take the models apart for recycling

Act!

Recycling

The Activity

This isn't a one-off activity - it can become part of your daily nursery routine! Gather a collection of clean, safe items from the previous day's waste and support a group of children to sort the items for recycling. Encourage discussion, problem-solving, and decision-making, turning children into recycling monitors and ensuring your nursery sends as little as possible to landfill!

You Will Need:

- Safe, clean waste, ready for recycling.
- Recycling bins or containers.
- Visual labels.

Set Up/Delivery

Label Bins

Ensure your recycling bins are clearly labelled, ideally using photos to show what belongs in each one (ie. paper/card, plastics etc...). If the bins in your nursery are too large to move or not safe for children to use independently, consider using smaller containers or cardboard boxes that are easier for children to access and handle. Taking these smaller containers to the larger recycling bin can become part of the activity.

Start With Simple Items

When children first begin sorting items for recycling, start with simple, easy-to-recognise materials, such as paper and plastic, or items that match the pictures on your bins. As their confidence, knowledge, and understanding grows, you can slowly introduce more challenging items.

Act!

Begin Recycling

Lay out the clean, safe recycling items on a mat or the floor. Invite children to take turns choosing an item.

As they make their choice, encourage discussion: 'What is it?' 'What does it feel like?' 'Which container does it belong in, and why?'

As children become more confident, these discussions will naturally become richer, especially as more challenging items are introduced.

Once a child has decided where their item should go, ask the group if they agree.

Recycle and Repeat

Once the group has agreed, place the item in the correct recycling and continue the activity, taking turns until all items have been sorted.

