

Which "R" is it?

Understanding when to Reduce, Reuse, or Recycle

Grades: (K-2)

Time: 45 minutes

Overview

Students study ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle disposable garbage and discuss the importance of each.

Materials

Disposable items (paper towels/plates, plastic wrap, etc..)

Reusable items (lunchboxes, small tupperware containers, cloth napkins, sponges)

Recyclable items (plastic drink containers, yogurt containers, aluminum cans, etc..)

Latex gloves

Paper and markers

Poster board (6 sheets)

3 colored pencils, markers, and/or crayons

Scissors

Glue or tape

Magazines to be cut up

Teachers Note: Prior to conducting this activity, you'll need to gather the items listed. Then, make three signs with the words REDUCE, REUSE on the second, and RECYCLE on the third. Draw a large arrow pointing down below each word. The three signs will point to three piles described.

Procedure

Warm-up: Display the Items so the students can see them.

Review the definitions of REDUCE, REUSE, and RECYCLE and write them on the Board. As you talk about REDUCE, explain, "One way to cut down on the amount of waste that we produce is to use fewer disposable items. An example of disposable garbage is a paper plate. Which items here are examples of disposable garbage?" Get responses and group the disposable garbage items. Hang the REDUCE sign above the collection.

Then ask the students, "Which items here can be reused?" Record the students' responses and group the reusable items together. Hang the REUSE sign above the pile. Ask the students, "Can you compare an item of disposable garbage from the REDUCE pile with something from the REUSE pile? One example might be a paper napkin from the

REDUCE pile, and a cloth napkin from the REUSE pile. What are the differences?"

Ask, "Which of these things can be recycled in this area? Get responses and group the recyclable items together. Hang the RECYCLE sign above this collection.

Go over the grouped items and make any corrections. Ask students, "Can you compare the things in this REDUCE pile with these items in the RECYCLE pile? For example, we throw a paper plate away after using it once, but an aluminum can might be recycled and used countless times."

Wrap-up: Divide the students into three groups, one for REDUCE, one for REUSE, and one for RECYCLE. Ask each group to make a poster of their items. Provide them with magazines that can be cut up, scissors, glue, and large poster board. Ask the students to write the name of the item next to it on the poster. These posters can be displayed near the garbage areas in the school lunchroom or in a main hallway. Each group can also make a poster that compares disposable items to reusable items, like paper napkins versus cloth napkins. These posters can also be displayed.

ENDNOTES:

1 Activity adapted from Recyculum: Resource Recycling Magazine, Portland, OR (out of print).

2 <http://recycleroom.org/html/fun.htm>