

Kid's Activity #9

Where Does it all Go?

Help save
food scraps
from going to
landfill

Organic matter is anything derived from plant material.

Because it originates from the earth, when we separate it from other waste and compost it, it decomposes easily and naturally into nutrients to make fresh, rich soil.

When we put something in the garbage, we say we “threw it away,” but there is no such place as “away.” Anywhere we send our food waste affects the quality of the land, water or air where it ends up. This creates environmental impacts that won’t just “go away.”

Our best strategy against food waste is *prevention*. We need systems in place to ensure that edible food does not get wasted on farms, in stores, in restaurants or at home.

But there will always be food scraps—like pits, skins or other organic or inedible food waste—that contribute to climate change when they end up in landfills (just like avoidable food waste).

This is why we also need good easy-to-use systems to make sure we organize our waste so that food scraps can get composted, recyclable materials can get reused and as little waste as possible goes to landfills.

Design your own Green Bins and Labels

Time: 1-2 hours

Study the waste bins around your building or neighborhood. Are there separate bins for different things like garbage, recyclables and organic waste? Is it clear what should go in each bin?

If there is only one bin, this is your opportunity to get composting. Complete Activity #18 first to learn how to build a composter or composting program, then return to this activity to design your bins and labels.

Now's your chance to design your very own customized bin system.



Making it Happen:

1. In pairs or a small group, look around your school, park, streets, shopping or public transit areas to identify different bins for collecting waste. What did you find?
2. Photograph or draw the bins, labels and signs, instructions or colors. Are the bins the same or are they different near transit, main streets or in stores?
3. If possible, choose a set of bins in a busy spot and watch for 10 minutes. Are people putting the right things in the bins? Do they seem confused about which bin to use? Are the bins conveniently located? What do you think would make it easier for people? Put together your results in a booklet or poster.
4. Using your research, design your own label or bin to make separating waste easier for people. Where would be the best spot to locate it?

Want to do More?

- Conduct before-and-after waste audits (see Activity #15) with the old bin and your new design to measure how much better your design works.
- As a group project, connect with [pen pals](#)⁴⁵ or others in a similar youth group in another city or country. Share this activity with them and compare bin design ideas.
- Share your cool design on Instagram and Twitter: #FoodMattersActionKit



Did you know?

In North America, 39 million litres of space is taken up in landfills every year with wasted food. That's equivalent to 13 football stadiums full of food that could have been eaten or composted and is now contributing to climate change.⁴⁶

CLAIM
5 Systems Thinker points

CLAIM
Claim 5 Influencer points



⁴⁵Students of the World (2001). <http://www.studentsoftheworld.info/menu_penpals.php>

⁴⁶CEC (2017). Characterization and Management of Food Loss and Waste in North America—White Paper. Montreal, Canada: Commission for Environmental Cooperation. 48 pp. <<http://www3.cec.org/fw/organic-waste-reports/>>