

# Fun School Recycling Activities

## A Compilation of Tried & True Activities From Around the Nation!

### Trash Pizza

**Materials:** A trash can from a classroom, teacher's lounge and cafeteria

**Directions:** Conduct a waste audit of each trash can, categorizing items by the following types: recyclable paper, non-recyclable paper (tissues, paper towels, construction paper), cardboard, plastic bottles #1 & #2, other non-recyclable plastics and plastic films, aluminum cans, steel cans, food waste, other organic material like old flowers or plant trimmings, Styrofoam, what else is in there? You can take this information and create a pie chart, develop percentages of each material, etc. This will also help guide you if you are looking to launch a recycling program at your school and will you a handle on what is in the school's waste stream.

### CD Case Picture Frame

**Materials:** Empty CD case, ribbon, buttons, puzzle pieces, shells, etc, wrapping paper, old felt or material, glue

**Directions:** This all takes place inside the case. Use the wrapping paper to create a background that will be seen through the back of the case. Adhere a wallet-size photo (or Polaroid, if needed immediately) on top of the paper. Cut a piece of wrapping paper, felt or material to fit inside the case. Cut out a portion in a square, heart or other shape to reveal the photo. Glue over the photo. Decorate with remaining items, add a ribbon border, etc. Close the case and enjoy!

### Where Does it Go?

Divide the students into groups of four-five. Assign each of them an end-point in the waste stream – recycling, landfill, litter/storm drain/Rio Grande, etc. Provide a description of the process and a few small props. Have the groups act out the process, charades-style, while the other groups try to guess what they are portraying.

### Scavenger Hunt

An event that I've done with kids is to have them find the recyclable items (like a scavenger hunt). Put a list together of recyclable items (plastic #1 and #2 bottles, various paper items, bottles, etc), and have them go through a pile of stuff and obtain one of each item. Not only does this educate them on what can be recycled, but it gets them to consider some options (like magazines) that they may not have known are recyclable.

### Bird House

Another one is to have them make a birdhouse out of milk cartons and other scrap recyclables that can function as one (not just decorative).

### Recycling Relay

What you need:

3 labeled boxes: 1 recycle, 1 reuse, and 1 trash

2 boxes of clean "trash" (assemble items that might typically be thrown away, include reusable and recyclable items).

Works well for many age groups. It is a relay race. Basically you get a pile of reusable, recyclable, landfillable items- maybe about 20 (depending on the age of your group). Then you have three buckets. One for Reuse, that is placed closest, one that is for Recycling that is placed mid-way, and one for Landfill/Trash that is placed the furthest away. The team figures out what to do with each item: reuse,

recycle, or landfill, and then they have to run to the bucket and place it in the appropriate bin. As you can tell, the more items they reuse, and then the more items they can recycle, the higher chance they have for winning. It also reinforces the idea that reuse is cheaper, uses less resources than even recycling, and that recycling uses less resources than landfilling (and making something with new materials). At the end you can review what was put in each bin, the team has to explain how they would have reused the items that they put in the reuse bin to count and confirm that the items they put in the recycling bin are really recyclable in your community. You can deduct points or do what ever you want.

## Recycled Bowling

Have students create bowling pins from used 2 liter bottles. You can decorate the bottles with paints or markers. You can also decorate by placing shredded paper inside the bottles; this adds color and weight to the bottles. Then set the pins up and begin bowling using a large ball such as a basketball or kickball.

## The Science of Reuse

Find a reusable or recyclable item (ex. Milk jug, flower pot). Have the students think of additional ways to use the item. Reward the student or group who finds the most uses for the item.

## Recycle Jeopardy:

<http://www.co.douglas.or.us/recycle/>

Click on Education on the left-hand side of the page, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on: You will also find some useful Teacher's aids at [Douglas County's Educator's Information](#)

THEN you'll see the link for Recycle Jeopardy which has all of the questions so you can make it up and get kids to play and hopefully give them a prize.

## Recycled Art

Bringing in trash and recyclables to create as an art project, be it a theme or let the kids just create an awesome project. Asking kids to develop their own art project and find the materials themselves from the waste stream is enlightening as well.

## Lid Mandala

Make a mural out of plastic different colored plastic lids. See the BRING website, photo on top right hand side (collect and keep separate different colored lids-draw a picture outline with chalk and have them add to the "lid mandala"- [www.bringrecycling.org](http://www.bringrecycling.org))

## Wastruments

Make musical instruments out of plastic bottles or other stuff (see wastruments on our website under Educational and Other Educational Ideas – link listed below.)

## Other Educational Ideas Online:

There are a bunch of other educational ideas on this website:

[http://www.uoregon.edu/~recycle/edu\\_promo.htm](http://www.uoregon.edu/~recycle/edu_promo.htm)

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### Thanks To These Great Sources:

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