

How do our attitudes effect waste?



Contact Information

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Grades

9-12

Objectives

Students will assess typical purchasing practices to determine the influence of packaging on consumer choices and to determine if consumers consider waste disposal and recycling when making purchasing decisions.

Materials

Handout: Survey of Disposable Products (included)

Vocabulary

recycling, waste stream, packaging

Background

\$1 out of every \$11 is spent on packaging. While we need to protect the contents of the products we are purchasing, the amount of unnecessary packaging can be excessive. Buying reasonably packaged products would decrease the amount of waste we throw out.

Procedure

1. Discuss the leading questions:
 - What influences our purchasing choices?
 - Why is there so much waste?

Use the Survey of Disposable Products handout or develop your own questionnaire with the class to use in interviewing people in a grocery store to find out why they are purchasing the items in their cart.

Hypothesize from class discussion what the outcome of the poll will be.

2. For homework, have students interview family members for practice. Then have them interview shoppers, asking each about several items in their cart. Before the students do the interviewing, discuss with them the following points:
 - a. When surveying people you do not know in a store, first get permission from the store manager for conducting the survey.
 - b. Introduce yourself and ask the shoppers if they would mind answering some questions for a school survey.
 - c. Thank them, and be polite.
3. As a class, chart and analyze the results of the poll. Compare with class hypotheses. Identify the most common reasons for buying a food product. What percentage of the shoppers are concerned about waste disposal costs and options when deciding what to buy? How often was recyclability taken into account? How many shoppers knew of local recycling opportunities?

Follow Up

Discuss:

- What are the major influences on consumer habits?
- How can we change our purchasing habits to reduce solid waste?

Have students write a Positive Action Checklist for themselves or for others to help people become aware of solid waste problems and solutions.

Publish the class findings in the local newspaper.

How do our attitudes effect waste? continued

Survey on Use of Disposable Products

1. What types of products do you buy?

Durable products: (example: cassette tapes, pens, mechanical pencils, combs, appliances, etc.)

Disposable products: (examples: shampoo bottles, fast food containers, toothpaste pumps, plastic packaging, juice boxes, razors, plastic bags, etc.)

2. How much of these types of products do you buy? (be specific)

How often?

3. Do you consider buying alternatives to disposable products? (examples: reusable canvas bags rather than plastic or paper ones, unpackaged products versus packaged ones, washable dishes rather than disposable ones)

4. What do you do with disposable products when you are finished with them?

5. Are you aware of opportunities for plastic recycling in your community?

Yes ___ No _____

Do you save plastics for recycling?

Yes ___ No _____

6. Are you aware of opportunities for glass recycling in your community?

Yes ___ No _____

Do you save glass for recycling?

Yes ___ No _____

7. What types of things do you recycle and why? (example: to claim deposit, for environmental reasons)

8. How often do you buy clothes? (number of items per week, month or year)

How do you decide what to buy? (Are you conscious of fashion, etc.? Be specific.)

What do you do with clothes you don't want anymore?