

What is Litter?



Contact Information

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Grades

K-5

Objectives

Define litter, identify seven sources of litter and litter dynamics, identify littering norms.

Materials

One set per group of the following: paper sack, disposable cup, small glass bottle, yarn, snack bag, six pack ring, cigarette butt, balloon, orange peel, beverage can, and straw; a piece of string 3 ft. long, with the numbers 1-11 taped on it.

Procedure

1. Background:

Litter- Litter is misplaced solid waste. To eliminate litter, it is necessary to address the behavior called littering.

Seven Sources of Litter- There are seven major sources of litter that result from improper waste handling, litter dynamics, and behavioral norms.

- Motorists and boaters
- Pedestrians
- Households
- Hauling
- Loading Docks
- Commercial Refuse Storage Areas (dumpsters)
- Construction/Demolition sites

Litter Dynamics- Litter is often carried from its point of origin by water, wind, traffic, and animals until it becomes trapped by fence lines, walls, curbs or other barriers.

Behavioral Norms- A norm is a pattern of behavior that is accepted, expected and reinforced when others behave in the same manner. Some people feel it is acceptable to litter:

- Where it is someone else's job to cleanup.
- Where there is no sense of ownership
- Where litter is already accumulated

2. Assemble litter bags with the following clean items in them: disposable cup, small glass bottle, yarn, snack bag, six-pack ring, cigarette butt, balloon, orange peel, beverage can, straw. Prepare scale strings with numbers taped on them, one for each group.
 3. Divide into groups of 4-6 people each. Give a litter bag and a string marker 1-11 to each group. Explain that the bag and the items in the bag are clean examples of commonly littered items.
 4. Instruct the groups to empty their bags and arrange the items so that everyone in the group can see and touch them. Set out the string scale, numbered 1-11, and place each litter sample in rank order from "1, least offensive" to "11, most offensive."
 5. Define litter and why it is offensive.
 - Nothing in our bag is acceptable as litter; all waste belongs in its place.
 - Litter is pollution; it is an eyesore that destroys the aesthetics of a place.
 - Litter can be dangerous. Sharp metals littered at beaches, at playgrounds or on a neighborhood sidewalks can cause cuts on bare feet.
 - Litter can be a threat to public health: illegal dumps can be breeding grounds for disease carrying mosquitoes or rodents.
 6. Discuss why people litter, litter norms, the seven most common sources of litter, and litter dynamics.
 7. Through dialogue identify local examples of litter sources.
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What is Litter? continued

Discuss alternative behaviors for handling waste or potential litter. Be sure to include:

- Placing waste in covered trash receptacles
- Placing waste in recycling containers.
- Placing biodegradable waste in compost collection containers.

9. Discuss the importance of cleanup and beautification in litter prevention.