

WHAT IS WASTE?



Contact Information

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Grades

K-12

Objectives

Students will compare and contrast characteristics of waste, garbage and trash.

Method

Students will brainstorm and categorize lists of waste.

Materials

None needed.

Vocabulary

Garbage, refuse, solid waste, trash, waste.

Procedure

1. Background: Waste is any material that is left over and no longer serves its original purpose. Waste can be gas, liquid, or solid. Before the Industrial Revolution, solid wastes were organic and biodegradable. However, with industrialization and the creation of synthetic materials, large amounts of nonbiodegradable and nonorganic substances are produced. These materials are essentially permanent in the environment.

Solid Wastes are generated by activities in homes, commercial establishments, institutions, industries, construction sites, agricultural and mining activities. People often use the words “waste,” “garbage,” and “trash” interchangeably when, for regulatory purposes, they have different meanings to governmental and solid waste agencies.

Procedure (continued)

Solid waste (refuse) is any of a wide variety of solid materials, as well as some contaminated liquids, which are discarded or rejected as being spoiled, useless, worthless, or in excess.

Trash is waste that usually does not include food wastes but may include other organic materials such as plant trimmings.

Garbage is refuse consisting of food wastes – either animal or vegetable wastes – that result from the handling, storage, sale, preparation, cooking, and serving of foods.

2. List the words waste, trash, and garbage on the chalkboard as column headings.
3. Ask the students to give examples of each and list them in the proper column.
4. There may be some confusion about the definitions of these words. To clarify, have the students define the words from their own experiences.
5. Read the definitions given in the background information and have the students rearrange the lists into the proper columns.