



Objectives

Students will be able to: 1) state why litter is undesirable; and 2) state that littering is a behavior that can be changed.

Method

Students will rank a variety of litter items from “most undesirable” to “least undesirable” and discuss their reasoning.

Materials

One set per group of the following: paper sack, disposable cup, small glass bottle, string, snack bag, plastic six-pack yoke, cigarette butt, balloon, orange peel, beverage can, straw; writing materials.

Vocabulary

biodegrade, litter

Procedure

1. Put together “litter” bags with the following items in them: paper bag (use it to hold the rest of the items), disposable cup, small glass bottle, string, snack bag, plastic six-pack yoke, cigarette butt, balloon, orange peel, beverage can and straw.
2. Divide the class into small groups of 4-6 each. Give a “litter” bag to each group. Explain that the bag and the items in the bag are commonly littered items. Assure students that their bags are filled with “clean trash” and not items that were actually littered, so it is all right to touch them. Each group should also have a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.
3. Instruct the groups to empty their bags and arrange the items so that everyone in the group can see and touch them. Write a list of the eleven items on the blackboard (the paper bag is included).

LITTER BAG

4. Tell students that they are to rank the litter items from “most undesirable” to “least undesirable.” Remind students that the ranking should be a group decision. Do not give the groups any further guidelines or suggestions on criteria to use to rank the items. Let them discover their own criteria for labeling items.
5. When groups have ranked all 11 items, they should write their order down on a sheet of paper from “most undesirable” to “least undesirable.” (Or students may arrange the litter items from “most” to “least” undesirable.) Below their list, they should also write the reason why they chose one item to be “most” and one item to be “least.”
6. After all the groups have finished, have them report their decisions to the class. On the blackboard, keep track of the reasons groups are giving for choosing items as undesirable. Look over and discuss the list of reasons on the blackboard. Stress the fact that there is no one right answer. Define litter (see the Glossary of Terms.)
7. Reinforce the concept that littering is an inappropriate behavior. No item can be acceptable as litter. No matter where it ends up on our scales, “waste must be in place.” Litter attracts litter; therefore, because a material is biodegradable does not make it acceptable as litter.
8. Ask the class if they had discussed why litter is undesirable. Add these to the list on the board. Many of the following points may be raised:



- Litter is pollution; it is an eyesore that destroys the aesthetics of a place.
- Litter can be dangerous. Broken glass or metal pop tabs that have been littered at beaches, at playgrounds or on neighborhood sidewalks can cause cuts if children are playing barefoot.
- Litter can be a threat to public health; illegally dumped tires are breeding grounds for mosquitoes that carry encephalitis, and disease-carrying rats flourish in waste piles.

Assessment

Ask students to name three examples of litter. Have them explain why it is undesirable to find these three things littered.

Enrichment

Group the "litter" items using the categories of reusable (i.e. most reusable to least reusable), recyclable (most recyclable to least recyclable), and compost (most able to be composted to least able to be composted.) Discuss various ways to properly dispose of litter.