

Packaging Overload

Grade Level 3rd

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Think critically
- Demonstrate teamwork
- Identify wasteful packaging

Duration 45 minutes

Standards

- SS.3.G.3.Pa.b: Recognize an example of a natural resource.
- SC.3.L.17.b: Interdependence.
- LAFS.3.SL.2.AP.6a: Produce (e.g., through dictation, writing, word array, picture) complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation.

Materials

- Packaging Overload Worksheets

Display Items

- Large juice bag
- Juice containers with straws
- Large bag of popcorn
- Individually wrapped popcorn bags
- Box of cereal
- Mini boxes of cereal
- Plastic bag
- Reusable bag
- Drink in plastic bottle
- Drink in reusable bottle

At A Glance

Students will discuss the issue of wasteful packaging and observe several packaging stations that demonstrate better and worse choices when it comes to our daily packaged items.

Background

Nearly everything we purchase or use comes in some sort of packaging. Packaging, such as bottles, bags, plastic or paper, is often used to contain a product or protect it from damage. However, this uses a great deal of resources and creates unnecessary trash. We can drastically reduce waste by choosing options that have the least amount of disposable packaging (for example, purchasing in bulk instead of buying single-serve packages) or using reusable items, such as a cloth bag or reusable bottle.

Preparation

1. Prepare 5 stations with the following materials
 - **Station 1:** Large juice jug & pack of small juice containers with straws
 - **Station 2:** Large bag of popcorn & pack of small, individually packaged popcorn bags
 - **Station 3:** Box of cereal & pack of mini boxes of cereal
 - **Station 4:** Plastic bag & reusable bag
 - **Station 5:** Drink in plastic bottle & drink in reusable bottle
2. Prepare to divide students into 5 groups, so that there are as many groups as there are stations. Groups will be allowed a few minutes at each station, and will rotate until they have visited all five.



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Vocabulary

3R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - By following the 3 R's, we can reduce our waste and help save resources.

Natural resources - things we use that come from nature.

Teacher Tips

1. **Examples of packaging:** cereal comes in a box, which often has even more packaging on the inside (the cereal may be contained in a plastic bag within the box). Chips, crackers, and many other food items are packaged, but so are toys and equipment, like a new TV box. Even a water bottle counts as packaging!
2. **Examples of how to reduce packaging:** many fruit and vegetables don't need packaging. Things like pasta, grains, and nuts are also often over-packaged, and can be put into your own reusable container at grocery stores.
3. Bulk items, such as the larger box of cereal or the larger jug of juice, will make less waste than the individually wrapped items.

Follow Up

For homework, ask them to find two items at home they think have minimal or excessive packaging. Use the attached homework worksheet.

Procedure

1. Ask students if they know what the 3 R's are.
2. Ask them to give an example of a natural resource. Use the example of paper: paper comes from trees, a natural resource. Why is it better to recycle paper than throw it in the trash? When we reuse or recycle paper instead of throwing it away, we are saving Earth's resources!
3. Students will learn about the first word in the 3 R's: Reduce. They are going to learn to reduce waste by using less packaging in their everyday items.
4. Ask the students what they know about packaging, and to give examples of something they buy that comes in packaging.
5. Discuss what happens to packaging after we are done with it. Although it sometimes can be reused or recycled, it is often thrown in the trash, where it gets sent to a landfill. Remind students that it is important to keep the Earth healthy and save valuable resources.
6. Do we always need packaging? Have them think of examples where packaging isn't needed, or how we could use less of it.
7. Split the class into groups and have them visit different packaging stations. Each station will have two packaged items and students have to decide which of the items will make less waste. Each student will be given a worksheet and will work together with their team to record their observations and answer the questions.
8. After the groups have rotated to all of the stations, reconvene and discuss as a class. Go through the results for each station, and write on the board which item has less packaging and creates less waste.
9. Remind students that it is important to think about how much waste an item will make, and to choose things with the least amount of packaging in order to save resources.

