



Topic based resource

Litter

Upper Key Stage 2

Background information

Litter is something that most children are aware of from a young age. Unfortunately, it is all around them, but it is something that they can actually make a difference to and feel empowered doing so. A litter pick allows children to see the results of their actions immediately which is important to small children. They can then consider the consequences of littering and maybe help to influence their family and friends.



Climate perspective

Plastic is one of the most persistent pollutants on Earth. It can last for 400 years or more. At every step in its lifecycle, even long after it has been discarded, plastic creates greenhouse gas emissions that are contributing to the warming of our climate. As it breaks down in the environment it creates micro plastics which are polluting the

ground and sea. It is important that we cut down on our use of plastic, particularly single use items. As children begin to realise what happens to items once we have finished with them, hopefully they will look at their own use of items and how they are disposed of.

Let's pick some litter!

Upper KS2

Litter picking with a true or false game

This activity encourages children to look at their own area and take some responsibility. By doing a litter pick they can feel like they are making a difference. They will also learn some interesting facts about litter, some of which they will have trouble believing are actually real!

Materials needed:

- Litter collecting equipment (you may already have some in school or there often local organisations, such as councils, who will lend equipment)
- True or False cards
- Litter facts sheet

Before the session check the area you will be litter picking to ensure there is no litter that could be harmful and make sure you have an appropriate risk assessment in place.



Step 1



Talk to the children about the importance of litter picking and the damage litter can do to the environment e.g. danger to animals and birds and polluting the eco system. You may want the children to collect litter from their own school grounds or the local area.

Step 2



Sort the litter to see what there is most of. This could be done using tally charts or creating a physical bar chart with the litter. Discuss why there might be more of one type of litter.

Step 3

True or False

Place the 'True' sign on one side of your area and 'False' on the other. The children need to stand in a group in the middle.

Read out one of the litter facts and ask the children to decide whether they think it is true or false and then run to that sign.

Step 4



Which is the most dangerous type of litter?

Print out the cards below and ask the children to work in groups and discuss which is the most dangerous type of litter and why.

Once the groups have finished, they can share their decisions with the other groups.

Curriculum Links

Area of Learning and Experience - Humanities

Statement of What Matters:

Informed, self-aware citizens engage with the challenges and opportunities that face humanity, and are able to take considered and ethical action.

Human societies are complex and diverse, and shaped by human actions and beliefs.

Next steps and other ideas

- Discuss what to do with the litter they have collected. Can it be sorted for recycling?
- Write a creative story thinking about the journey of a piece of litter e.g. a crisp packet from manufacture, through being filled with crisps and sold in a shop then being discarded on the ground and the adventures it has with the other litter on the street.
- You could try making art with the litter collected.

Useful Websites with litter activities including detailed instructions on carrying out a litter pick.

<https://www.changeworks.org.uk/sites/default/files/Waste-education-resources-for-primary-and-secondary-schools.pdf>

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/13401/stop_the_drop_primary_school_litter_resource_pack.pdf

<http://www.litteraction.org.uk/images/Whole%20School%20Litter%20Campaign%20pack.pdf>

<https://www.cprenorthants.org.uk/primaryschools/>

True or False

- There are more than two million pieces of litter dropped in the UK every year – *True*
Meaning a cost of over 1 billion pounds to the tax payer (<https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/faqs/advice/litter-and-law>)
- A banana skin takes 1 year to decompose on the street – *False*
It can take up to two years if left on the street. This process is quicker if composted ([keepbritaintidy.org](https://www.keepbritaintidy.org))
- A paper bag takes up to 1 month to decompose depending where it was dropped. (Keep Britain Tidy) -*True*
- Chewing gum dropped on the floor takes 500 years to bio-degrade – *False*
It never biodegrades just breaks down into smaller pieces
- Nasa once got a fine for littering after a piece of space debris landed in Australia – *True*
The fine was \$400
- A man in Singapore was fined \$15000 for throwing a cigarette end out of the window. – *True*
- Litter is just crisp packets and plastic bottles and sweet wrappers – *False*
Litter is everything that is discarded from cigarette ends and apple cores to glass bottles fridges and mattresses. Everything should be disposed of properly.
- More than 180,000 bags of litter are cleared from motorways and major A roads by Highways England every year. - *True*
- Only 20% of plastic bottles are recycled globally each year – *False*
It's only 7% (Friends of the Earth)
- 2.5billion disposable coffee cups are binned each year in the UK alone – *True (Friends of the Earth)*

TRUE

FALSE

Balloons –

- Helium balloon releases can look spectacular but when they come back down, they can be eaten by animals and marine creatures. They can then become lodged in their digestive systems.
- The ribbons and tags also cause problems as they can become tangled.

Latex balloons take about 6 months to degrade on land but longer in water. Foil balloons never degrade.

Plastic bags –

- Floating in the water these look like jellyfish so are eaten by marine creatures accidentally. This can kill the creature as their stomach becomes full of plastic and they are unable to digest their real food.
- The plastic takes a long time to breakdown and eventually becomes microplastic which enter the food system.

Plastic bags take 500-1000 years to breakdown.

Tins cans –

- Tins from food that are left in the environment can cut and injure mammals who try to eat any food remnants.
- Hedgehogs in particular can become stuck as their spines get stuck as they try to go backwards.
- Young foxes often get tins stuck on their heads which leads to injuries and death.

Tin cans take approximately 50 years to decompose.



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