

Practice Litter Pick

Learning objectives:

Children begin to understand

- what litter is,
- why it matters,
- how they can help care for their environment through safe, hands-on exploration.





Practitioners Knowledge:

Litter is something many children may notice in everyday life.

This makes it a real-life learning experience as children can see the difference their actions make straight away. Taking part in a simple litter pick helps children develop care for the environment, a sense of responsibility, curiosity for the world around them and a real sense of achievement.

Keep the experience positive, practical, with lots of time to notice what they find, talk, about their observations and of course celebrate their efforts.

The focus should be on working together, making a difference, and encouraging children to care for the spaces they use and enjoy.



Activity

In this activity, children can go on a pretend or real litter pick in a safe area in the setting. They collect items using tools, talk about what they find, and then sort and count the litter together.

Quick safety check: It is important you choose a safe area that is away from hazards, supervise the children closely, use appropriate tools, and wash hands after the activity.





What you will need

- Clean, safe items that represent litter, such as empty plastic bottles, cartons, wrappers, lids, and crisp packets.
- Litter pickers or child-safe grab tools, tongs can work really well.
- Buckets, bags, or baskets for collecting the litter.
- Hoops, trays, or labelled spaces to make sorting easier.
- Optional: clipboards, tally marks, or a simple counting sheet.



Set the scene

Whilst children are away from the area, create a safe “littered” space using your clean collected items.

Outdoors works best, but this can also be done indoors if space is limited.
Before children begin, check the space one last time and remove anything unsafe.



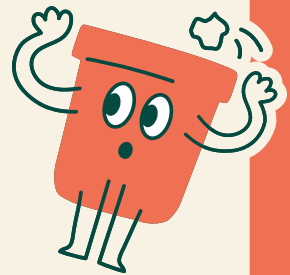
Talk together before you begin

Introduce the challenge in a playful way, for example –

“Oh no! Our play space needs the help of the Tidy Team!”

Use a few of the simple points below to introduce the activity in a gentle, child-friendly way.

- Litter is rubbish left in the wrong place, like wrappers, bottles, cans, and bags.
- Wind and rain can carry it into drains, rivers, and the sea. It can harm animals and make places unsafe.
- Natural items like leaves and feathers are not litter.
- We can help by putting rubbish in the bin, reusing items, and recycling.





Go on the litter hunt

Invite the children to search carefully and to collect one item at a time, encourage the children to talk about what they notice.

Model language such as *“I found a wrapper”* or *“This belongs in the bin.”*

Use lots of thinking and talking prompts such as –

- “What have you found?”
- “Is it litter or not litter?”
- “How can we make this space tidy again?”

Main message – ‘*Be part of the Tidy Team! Put rubbish in the right place and keep our space clean and safe.*



Sort and count

Lay out hoops, trays, or sorting spaces and work together to group the litter by type.

Count what is in each group, compare which group has more or fewer, and notice colours, shapes, and materials.





Reflect and celebrate!

Talk together about what might have happened if the litter had stayed there.
Where could it have gone?
Who or what could it have affected?

Finish by celebrating the children's teamwork and care for their environment.



Ideas to extend the learning

You could follow this activity with a simple floor book page, a class tally chart, a “natural or litter?” sorting game,

Practitioners may also wish to use litter-picking guidance from Eco-Tots Cymru page and the Keep Wales Tidy website when planning future outdoor clean-up activities.

