

Composting Made Easy

Learning objectives:

Children begin to understand that food and garden waste can be reused instead of thrown away.

Children learn that worms, insects and other living things help materials break down.

Children see how compost helps plants grow and supports the natural world.





Practitioner knowledge:

Composting offers practical, environmental and educational benefits. It reduces waste, supports children's understanding of change and growth, and creates regular opportunities for outdoor learning, observation and discussion. It can also provide useful compost for planters and garden areas, helping children see a clear link between everyday actions and caring for the environment.

The key is to keep it simple: use the right materials, layer them well and avoid foods that attract pests.



Why compost?

Pros

- Helps children learn about nature and where waste goes.
- Reduces food and garden waste.
- Creates compost for flower beds, pots and outdoor areas.
- Supports hands-on, sensory learning.

Cons

- It needs a small amount of regular care.
- It can smell if the balance is wrong or it becomes too wet.
- Wrong materials can attract pests.





How to compost simply

- Start with a layer of browns at the bottom, such as shredded cardboard, dry leaves or small twigs.
- Add a thinner layer of greens, such as fruit or vegetable peelings.
- Keep repeating this pattern, using more browns than greens.
- Keep the compost damp, but not soggy.
- Turn or mix it regularly to let air in.



What to put in your compost?

Greens	Browns	Do not add
Fruit and vegetable peelings	Dry leaves	Meat or fish
Tea bags and coffee grounds	Shredded paper or cardboard	Dairy products
Fresh grass clippings	Twigs and egg boxes	Cooked food leftovers
		Pet waste





FAQ

Is my compost too wet or too dry?

If the compost is very dry, it may need a few more greens and fewer browns. If it is too wet, add more browns and fewer greens. Weather can affect this too. After a lot of rain, open the bin on a dry day to help it air. In a very dry spell, you may need to add a little water.

What is happening inside the compost?

Inside the compost bin, worms, insects and other tiny living things help break down the materials into smaller pieces.

You can explain to children that these living things are nature's helpers. As they work, the materials slowly turn into dark, crumbly compost that helps plants grow.

What about vermin?

Many worry that composting will attract vermin, but this risk is usually reduced by using the right materials and managing the bin well.

- Use a lidded bin if possible.
- Only add suitable compost materials.
- Do not add meat, dairy or cooked food.
- Cover fresh food scraps with a layer of browns.
- Keep the compost balanced, damp and well-aired.
- If managed well, a compost bin should not become a vermin problem.

▶ **Choosing the best composter**

For an early years setting, the most suitable composter is usually a lidded stationary compost bin placed outdoors in an easy to reach area. It is simple, safer for children to use with adult support, and large enough for regular fruit, vegetable and garden waste from the setting.

▶ **Why this is better for children**

Children can help collect peelings, add dry leaves or shredded paper, and watch how the materials change over time. They can also help sprinkle in browns and gently look for worms and minibeasts.

A tumbler can compost quickly, but it is often harder for children to access independently because it sits higher up and needs more strength to turn. A worm bin can be excellent for observation, but it needs closer management and more careful handling.

Overall, a simple outdoor stationary bin with a lid is likely to be the best choice for the setting because it is practical, cost-effective and accessible for children to help with as part of everyday routines.





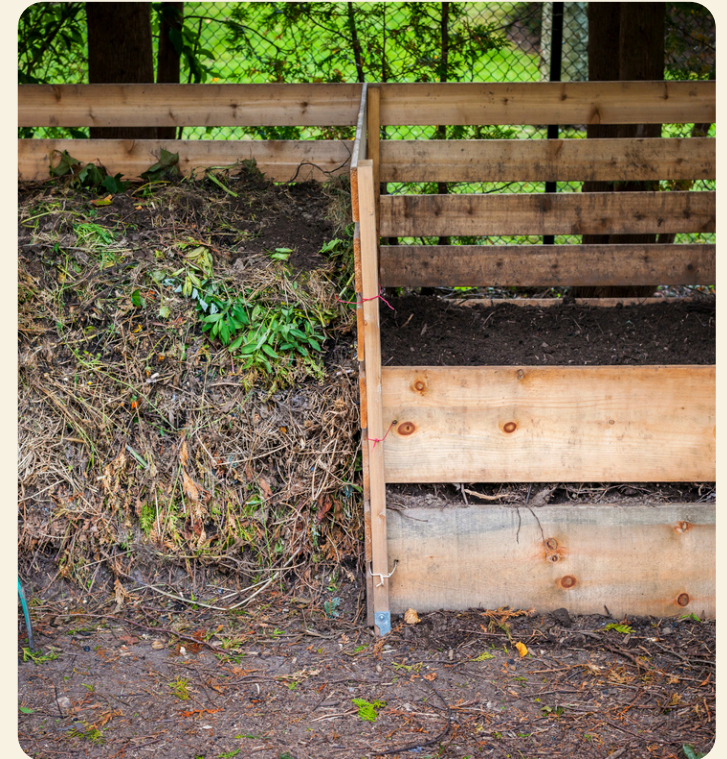
If you have the space

You can create a compost bin at little or no cost by fixing together reused pallets and covering the top with a secured sheet of tarpaulin. There are many online videos available that show how to do this.



In conclusion

composting is a simple and valuable way for the setting to reduce waste while giving children meaningful hands-on experiences. By using a child-friendly compost bin and involving children in small, manageable tasks, the setting can help them develop an early understanding of responsibility, sustainability and how to care for the world around them.



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gymru'n wales
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**Reduce
and Reuse**