

Packaging Problems

Directions What do you know about the waste materials that end up in landfills? This growing problem needs awareness if a solution is to be found. Read the article below. Then complete the steps that follow and the Discovery activity to increase your understanding of packaging problems.

Packaging makes up a large percentage of the solid wastes in landfills. Packaging can be made from paper, plastic, metal, glass, or a combination of several materials.

Packaging was not always such a large part of waste. Before settlers came to North America, Native Americans made packages and containers from natural materials. Baskets were woven from grasses, and pottery was made from clay. Early settlers used glass jars and barrels for food storage. Later, people shopped at local markets where they bought

flour and beans in bulk and locally grown produce that they placed in cloth shopping bags.

As products began to be manufactured and shipped from one part of the country to another, the need for packaging grew in order to protect products and make transportation convenient. As lifestyles changed, people purchased more convenience items and disposable products. The result has been an endless number of boxes used for packaging that end up in the trash and eventually in landfills.

- 1 Examine packaging.** Choose 12 different products to examine. They may be found in your home, at the supermarket or other stores, or in catalog or newspaper ads. You might include frozen foods, dry foods, drink containers, toys, health care products, and household items. List each product in the chart on the next page.
- 2 Identify materials.** In the chart, record the materials the package is made from: paper, plastic, metal, glass, or a combination.
- 3 Identify uses.** Place an X in the appropriate boxes to identify the uses for the packaging.
- 4 Evaluate the packaging.** Does the product have too much packaging? Enter an X in the chart if you think so. Also, enter an X if the packaging can be reused or recycled.
- 5 Analyze your findings.** What percentage of the items can be recycled? What percentage of the items do you think have too much packaging? How could consumers reduce the amount of waste created by packaging?

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CHAPTER 30 Clean and Safe Environments (Continued)

Focus on *Environment*

Packaging Survey								
		Uses for the Packaging				Analysis		
Product		Type of Material	Protects Contents	Gives Directions	Prevents Theft	Attracts Attention	Too Much Package	Can Reuse or Recycle
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

Discovery

Better Packaging Choose one of the products that you identified as having too much packaging. Think of a way to eliminate some of the packaging. On separate paper, draw your new packaging idea. Describe how it would be different and better than the current packaging. Present your idea to the class.

Make a Reuse/Recycling Map

Directions Reusing and recycling materials can help the environment by cutting down on resource and energy use. You could help people in your community reuse and recycle by creating a reuse/recycling map of your neighborhood. Follow the steps below.

- 1 Identify places.** Make a list of places where people in your area can recycle items and take them for reuse. Some possibilities include:
 - Recycling Centers and Other Locations Where People Can Drop Off Goods To Be Recycled* For instance, some grocery stores have large bins for used plastic bags. Eye care providers may have boxes for collecting old eyeglasses. You might also include local government offices that provide information about recycling.
 - Stores that Carry Secondhand Merchandise* Possibilities include thrift shops, used bookstores, and vintage clothing shops. Also include any stores that carry both used and new merchandise.
 - Stores that Carry Recycled Products* Buying recycled goods helps people complete the cycle. You might list stores that carry recycled paper goods, soft-drink bottlers that refill old bottles, and local publishers who use recycled paper in their newsprint.
 - Charitable Groups that Accept Donated Goods* By giving away unwanted household goods, people can keep these items from becoming trash. Of particular importance are places that accept old computers and electronic goods. These items contain toxic materials that make them unsafe to throw away. People who want to dispose of them safely may have to pay a fee.
- 2 Learn more.** Gather information about the places on your list. What local government office deals with recycling? This may be the recycling department, the department of public works, or the waste disposal office. Find out where this office is located and how it can be contacted. Then contact the office to ask about recycling centers in your area. If there is a curbside recycling program, ask where people can get information about the program.
- 3 Identify locations.** Check the phone book to find addresses and phone numbers of businesses on your list. To find stores that carry secondhand goods, try looking in the business listings under “thrift shops,” “secondhand goods,” or “clothing, secondhand.” To find stores that carry recycled merchandise, you may have to call stores in your area, such as grocery stores or gift shops, and ask whether they stock any recycled goods.

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CHAPTER 30 Clean and Safe Environments (Continued)**Focus on *Citizenship***

- 4 Make contact.** Contact the places on your list and find out what recycled and secondhand items they sell. Find out their hours as well. Finally, ask them to describe their location as precisely as possible. Although phone directories provide an address, such as “223 Main Street,” a description like this may be more helpful: “on Main Street halfway between First and Second Avenues.”
- 5 Mark locations.** Consult a map to find out where each place on your list is located. Using an old map that you can mark up, put a dot or star where each place can be found. This marked-up map is the basis for your new map.
- 6 Draw a map.** Draw a map of your neighborhood that includes all the locations on your list. Instead of putting in all streets, however, only draw the main streets and those where the places on your list are located. It may not be possible to make your map accurate to scale and still include everything. For instance, if two locations are at opposite ends of the area covered, you may not have room to include them both and still show the streets in between. If you make a map that is not to scale, note this fact somewhere on the map.
- 7 Assign numbers.** Give each place on your list a number or letter. Then insert these numbers or letters on the map at the appropriate locations. This takes up less room than the full name of each business or facility. Consider color-coding the numbers and letters for easy reference. For instance, recycling centers could be placed in a blue block or circle. Secondhand clothing stores could go in a yellow circle, secondhand book stores in a red circle, and so on. Users can tell at a glance where to find the kind of business or facility they are looking for.
- 8 Add information.** At the bottom of the map, list all the numbers or letters in order. Next to each one, write its name, address, and phone number. If you wish, include a brief description of the facility. For example, you might list a store’s hours and what recycled or secondhand products it sells.
- 9 Make the map available.** Make copies of your finished map and post them in public locations. Possibilities are your school, the local library, and a community bulletin board.

Discovery

A Larger Map Combine forces with other students to make a recycling map of the entire city. You and your team could cover one area, while other teams handle different areas. After the businesses and facilities are located in each area, meet with the other students to combine your findings and create a large map that covers all the locations. Show a copy of your city reuse/recycling map to local officials. They might like to make it available to the public.