

# Helping Our Environment: Reduce, Reuse, & Recycle

## OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the importance of protecting our environment.
- To be aware of actions that harm the environment.
- To become familiar with the words reduce, reuse, and recycle.

## GROUP SIZE:

6 to 8 children per adult volunteer.

## TIME FRAME:

This lesson is designed for a group meeting between 30 and 60 minutes.

## BACKGROUND:

Help children discover how our environment is precious. Reinforce a positive attitude about environmental issues by acknowledging helpful statements and suggestions. Encourage a sense of responsibility by letting the children know that they can make a difference.



### LIFE SKILL AREAS

Children will have an opportunity to practice social skills while participating in the scavenger hunt, games, and songs. Making "earth friendly" choices in the games will help build decision making and critical thinking skills. Eye hand coordination and fine motor skills will be enhanced by the use of scissors and markers.

### HELPS TO THE VOLUNTEERS

*Try these suggestions:*

- Choose one or two of the following activities from each section.
- Try to create appropriate atmosphere by decorating the room with posters and props, using costumes related to the activity, pre-meeting preparation by the 4-H members, thinking about special seating arrangements, and playing background music.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

### I. GETTING STARTED

- ☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Reduce, Reuse, or Recycle" (4 - 5 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** large bag of trash items (one for each child) such as food packaging, wrappers, newspapers, plastic bottles and containers, cardboard boxes, glass jars and bottles, and aluminum soda cans.

# HELPING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Show the children examples of common trash items. Start a discussion by asking the following questions:

- What is all of this? (Trash, garbage, refuse)
- What other kinds of garbage can you think of?
- What do people do with garbage like this? (Hold up an example)
- What happens to it after it goes into the trash can? (Sanitation workers take it away)
- Where do the sanitation workers take it? (To a landfill)
- What do you think happens when the landfill is full?
- Can you think of ways to help solve the problem?

Pass the bag around. While each child selects one item, introduce the concept of "reduce, reuse and recycle." Go around the circle and ask each child to identify their item, and what it is made of. Have them check for a recycling symbol. Ask if they think the environment could be helped by reducing (not buying it at all), reusing (using it again for something else), or recycling (collecting and giving to a company that recycles things and makes them into something else). Some items may fit more than one category.

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Making Recycled Paper" (12 - 15 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** old newspaper, rotary egg beater, cream or tartar, large bowl, large rectangular cake pan, screen cut to fit inside the pan, dish towels, wax paper, scissors.

Advisor's note: since this activity takes more time than others and some waiting is necessary, other activities can be done while waiting.

Make your own paper! Tear the newspaper into very tiny pieces and put in the bowl. Fill the bowl half full with water, let the paper soak for a minute or two, then add two tablespoons of cream of tartar. Beat the mixture until it is thick and "soupy" and place the screen in the rectangular pan. Pour the soupy mixture on it. Carefully lift the screen, catching the fibers. Stir and repeat until no screen shows through the pulp. Let the extra water drip into the pan. Lay the screen on top of several dish towels and cover it with wax paper. Press down on it to squeeze the moisture out. Put several heavy books on top of the wax paper. After a few minutes, take the books off and peel back the wax paper. You have just made recycled paper! Place in the sun to dry or in front of another heat source (oven, register, hair dryer). When the recycled paper is almost dry, gently peel from the screen. Cut into pieces so everyone can have their own sample of recycled paper!

Note to the Volunteer: Have the children make extra paper to use in the Art Exhibit and Cloverbud Display lessons in the subject area of Community Expressive Arts.

**Application:** The next time you go to the store, look at greeting cards, paper, and stationery.

Can you tell which are recycled?

Can you find any that look like the paper you made?



☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Recycling Mobile" (7 - 9 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** mobile patterns, markers or crayons, scissors, string, hole punch and wire coat hangers.

Give each child a mobile pattern. Invite them to decorate them any way they wish. If needed, help them cut the pieces out and punch holes in the tops. Thread strings of various lengths through the holes and tie to the coat hanger. Encourage the children to display their mobile at home and talk to their families about the importance of the three R's: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

**Application:** Be a recycling detective: pay attention to everything you see.

- What things can be reduced?
- What things can be reused?
- What things can be recycled?

## II. DIGGING DEEPER

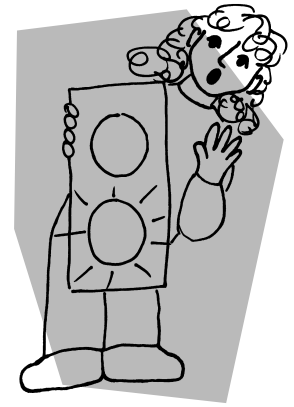
☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Recycling Red Light Green Light" (7 - 9 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** Activity cards, two large circles of construction paper, one green and one red.

Place the construction paper "traffic lights" on the floor. Ask the children what each color means. Explain that the cards they each will select have activities on them that can either help or harm the environment. Cards with activities that help the environment will be placed on the green light, while cards with activities that hurt the environment will be placed on the red light. Randomly select children to pick a card. Help them read it. Let them decide which light it goes on. Ask the rest of the group if they agree. Reward correct (and corrected) answers with a round of applause.

**Application:** Try to be aware of things you see everyday that harm the environment. Try to make smart choices, and help others to make them, too.



☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Make a Recycled Notepad" (5- 7 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** used paper with one blank side, scissors, stapler.

Show the children how to cut the paper into uniform pieces. Stack ten or twelve pieces together and staple across the top.

**Application:** Look around at home; what other things can you find to recycle?

## III. LOOKING WITHIN

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Grocery Store Scavenger Hunt" (15 - 20 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** none.

Visit a grocery store. Look for items that have been packaged with recycled materials or that can be recycled. Point out the recycling symbol on the packaging. Compare the packaging of similar products, one with the symbol and one without it. Investigate the following:

- Which package is more appealing?
- Is there a price difference? If there is, why do you think this is so?
- Do you think the items taste different?
- If you were buying the product, what would be the most "earth friendly" choice?

See how many "throw away" or disposable items the group can find and make a list. Explore the following questions:

- How does using disposable items harm the environment?
- Why do you think people buy these items?
- Why do you think the stores sell these items?
- What could people use instead?
- How can you help people change their shopping habits?

**Application:** Encourage the children to help their families make smart choices that protect the earth, not waste its' resources.



# HELPING OUR ENVIRONMENT

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Can You Find It?" (9 - 10 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** Reproduced Can You Find It? puzzles for each child, pencils.

## CAN YOU FIND IT?

Look from left to right and up and down to see if you can find these words:

ALUMINUM  
REUSE

PAPER  
GLASS

RECYCLE  
REDUCE

EARTH  
TRASH

PLASTIC

G	R	E	C	Y	C	L	E
L	P	A	P	E	R	A	J
A	L	U	M	I	N	U	M
S	A	R	E	D	U	C	E
S	S	E	B	I	L	K	D
E	T	U	T	R	A	S	H
C	I	S	H	N	O	P	M
F	C	E	A	R	T	H	G

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Recycled Greeting Cards" (9 - 10 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** old greeting cards, scissors, rubber cement or glue, construction paper, and markers.

Spread the cards and other supplies on the table. Explain that each child will get to make and decorate their own greeting card. Have them select a card, cut the front off and glue it to the front of a folded piece of construction paper. The markers can be used to add decorative borders or to include a sentiment inside the card. When they are finished they will have a one-of-a-kind card to send to a family member or special friend.

Note to the Volunteer: Have the children make extra cards to use in the Art Exhibit and Cloverbud Display lessons in the subject area of Community Expressive Arts.

**Application:** Be creative! What other kinds of things can you think of that can be used for something new or different the second time around?

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "The Recycling Song" (4 to 5 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** none.

Teach the following song, encouraging children to do the corresponding actions.



### The Recycling Song

(sung to the tune of "Way Down Yonder in the Paw Paw Patch")

What oh what can we recycle?                    (hold both hands out, palms up)  
 What oh what can we recycle?                    (repeat and look right)  
 What oh what can we recycle?                    (repeat and look left)  
 To protect our planet and reduce the waste?                    (hands above head in large circle)

...Chorus...

Picking up (have child fill in an appropriate item) \_\_\_\_\_ so we can recycle.  
 Picking up \_\_\_\_\_ so we can recycle.  
 Picking up \_\_\_\_\_ so we can recycle.  
 To protect our planet and reduce the waste.

Repeat the chorus, letting each child think of an item to be recycled.



## IV. BRINGING CLOSURE

### ☀ ACTIVITY: "A Trashy Story with a Happy Ending"

Before reading the following interactive story, review the key to the actions with the children. When the children are familiar with the actions and sounds, read the story slowly. Each time you come to an underlined word, pause, and help the children do the corresponding action and sounds. Be sure to use lots of expression and exaggeration.

#### Key to Actions:

- cat:** meow sweetly one time
- dog:** bark loudly twice
- sunset:** sigh loudly, "ooh, aaah!"
- trash:** hold nose and whisper loudly "phew"
- foolish thing:** put pointer finger down and rub twice with opposite pointer finger saying "shame! shame!"
- Mr. Rooster:** give a cheerful "cock-a-doodle-do!"
- smart thing:** clap and yell in an exaggerated fashion, "all right!"

#### *"A Trashy Story with a Happy Ending"*

Once upon a time there was a **cat**. She lived next door to her best friend, the **dog**. Every evening they sat on the porch and watched the beautiful **sunset**. One day a very **foolish thing** happened. Neighbors began to dump their **trash** across the road from the **dog** and **cat**. They could no longer see the beautiful **sunset**. The **dog** said, "We must do something about this **foolish thing**!" So they went to see the mayor, **Mr. Rooster**. The **cat** and the **dog** told **Mr. Rooster** about the **trash** and that they no longer were able to see the **sunset**. **Mr. Rooster** was worried about the **foolish thing** that had happened too. So he told the **cat** and the **dog** about three very **smart things** they could do about the **trash**. **Mr. Rooster** told them about the first **smart thing**. It was to reduce. That meant not to buy or use disposable things like paper plates and styrofoam cups - those were **foolish things**. **Mr. Rooster** told them about the second **smart thing**. It was to reuse. That meant to stop throwing things away that were still useful like plastic containers and paper bags - those were **foolish things** to do. Then **Mr. Rooster** told them about the third **smart thing**. It was to recycle. That meant to stop throwing away things like plastic, paper and glass because that was a **foolish thing** to do. The **smart thing** would be to collect those things and take them to the town recycling center. The **cat** and the **dog** were very happy they had learned about the three **smart things**. Now they could take care of all the **trash**. They told all their neighbors what **Mr. Rooster** had said about reducing, reusing, and recycling. What a **smart thing** to share this with their neighbors! Because instead of doing **foolish things** like creating too much **trash**, all the neighbors started doing the **smart things**. They reduced, reused and recycled everything! Soon, all the **trash** that had been dumped was gone and the **cat** and the **dog** could once again enjoy the beautiful **sunset**. Now that was a **smart thing**!



## Reading Adventures

This listing of reading materials can be used by you as background, or for sharing before to set the stage for the lesson or for sharing afterwards to reinforce the lesson.

Recycle! A Handbook for Kids! by Gail Gibbons

Brother Eagle, Sister Sky, by Susan Jeffers

The Lorax, Dr. Seuss

Every Kids Guide to Saving the Earth, by Joy Berry

Fifty Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth, The Earthworks Group

Just a Dream, by Chris VanAllsburg

# ACTIVITY CARDS

Throw old magazines and comics away	Make a bird feeder from a milk carton
Crush plastic milk cartons so they will fit in the garbage better	Give used clothing to someone who can use it
Save grocery bags to use again	Buy foam cups to drink from because you don't have to wash them
Collect soda cans to recycle	Buy recycled paper
Make a home recycling center	Throw empty glass bottles in the trash can
Use a whole roll of paper towels to clean your bicycle	Buy things in packaging that can be recycled
Use washable dishes, not paper plates	Throw paper away because one side is written on
Buy products with lots of packaging because they are pretty	Buy paper products that are clean and shiny because recycled paper is ugly
Use old rags to clean with instead of paper towels	Wash cups to use again
Throw used aluminum pie plates away	Throw bags and sacks away as soon as you finish shopping
Throw soda cans into the garbage	Save aluminum pie plates to use again
Use paper plates because it's easier than washing dishes	Ask family and friends to look for the recycling symbol when they shop

# RECYCLING MOBILE

