

Addressing Waste Management and Littering

STEPS



Introduction to Waste Management and Littering

Waste Management and Littering - Disposable protective materials like masks and gloves have created a new stream of hazardous/infectious waste. As more time is spent at home, there is an opportunity to extend this activity to sustainable consumption and involve the family in making choices to reduce waste in the bin.

Integrating the Eco-Schools Seven Steps to meet the Challenge of COVID 19

The steps are designed to be adapted to the circumstances different countries/regions are facing. The activities could be done either at home, online or at school. The activities are merely suggestions, so please adapt them to the recommendations and guidelines in your area.

We estimate that going through all the steps will take about 50-55 hours over the course of 10-12 weeks.

Linking the curriculum

Teachers would find links between these steps and the existing curriculum. What subjects are covered: geography, biology, civics/social/cultural studies, mathematics, etc.? Topics like measurement, weighing, active citizenship, decomposition, types of materials, pollution etc. can be easily linked to this theme.

Skills

It is important to focus on skills that students acquire in the process – framing questions, inquiry, reflection, research, communication skills, goal setting and framing success indicators, facilitation, negotiation, team-work, active citizenship, systemic thinking, critical thinking, scientific investigation, measurement – weighing and counting to find creative solutions, taking responsibility, agency, persuasion etc.



1 - Form an Eco Committee

The committee will be the driving force of the project and can help to keep track of who is doing what and present the ideas resulting from the project. The committee must meet regularly in compliance with the local guidelines (in person, online or outside, depending on the situation in your area).

- At school: in the class or groups, form an Eco Committee with both teachers and students.
- At home: form an Eco Committee with family, neighbours, friends that are nearby.

2 - Litter and waste audit

Carry out an audit for litter and waste to identify current challenges. The results of your Sustainability Audit will inform your Action Plan. Research and write questions for the audit. Some questions that could guide you as you plan the audit are listed below:

- a. Has single-use medical waste (masks and gloves) created more problems in terms of litter on streets and more people exposed to infection?
- b. What materials are used to produce personal protective equipment and how can those materials be properly discarded or re-used?
- c. Are reusable masks effective?
- d. What is the most common type of waste in your bin?
- e. Are there ways you can reduce the waste in your bin?

Suggestions for specific audit activities:

- a. If there is a garden available, try performing a little experiment by burying something you think is decomposable in one pit and something you don't think is decomposable in a pit next to that. See what happens after one week and two weeks, and try to research what characteristics made one item decompose while the other did not.
- b. Observe people around you (if you live in an urban area where you cannot go out, try looking out of the window) and watch how they handle their waste. Do they throw it on the street? If so, look to see if there are any trash cans around or if they are hard to see. Do people take their waste with them if they cannot find a trash can? Do they sort their waste?
- c. Survey to see what the main obstacles are when it comes to handling waste in responsible ways and reducing the use of single-use items. Send out questionnaires to other students from your grade/school (depending on the size) or relatives.
- d. Reflect on the relationship between the crisis we are facing regarding the pandemic and the climate crisis. Ask experts or find and read different research papers and articles on the topic. Share the best ones with your family, friends and neighbours.

3 - Action plan

Use the Litter and Waste Audit to identify the problems that you need to address. Prepare an action plan to address the problems you have identified. Think of solutions by asking and researching questions like:

- a. What can be done? Are reusable and washable masks a good alternative?
- b. Is there anyone to contact that could help with the ideas resulting from the project?
- c. Is there a way to repurpose masks and gloves safely? Who needs to be contacted?

You can use the following format to develop your action plan, and we have illustrated one for guidance.

Problem Statement	Actions that can address the problem	How will you implement the identified actions?	What will success look like?
Litter in your school and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising Awareness of dangers • Enforcing it as a social norm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness campaign on key messages • Public appreciation of people who follow the norms • Providing cognitive reminders at key locations 	People taking responsibility for not littering and asking others to not litter
Not enough bins in your neighbourhood or school, and/or bins are poorly located and not visible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the visibility of bins • Making more bins available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage to locate bins • Petition for more provision of bins to collect waste • Posters appealing to people to not litter in places where the problem is more common 	Reduced littering

Disseminate: figure out what would be the best course of action to disseminate the project. Social media campaigns (use the hashtags [#ecoschoolsstayactive](#) and [#litterandwaste](#))? Posters? Making art projects out of collected litter?

4 - Monitor and evaluate

To find out whether or not you are successfully achieving the targets set out in your Action Plan, you must monitor and measure your progress. If you used a survey in the audit, try to send a new one out to the same people to see if anything has changed.

Find relevant citizen science projects and share your work. For example:

Litterati: an app that invites you to take pictures of the litter you come across and identifies what it is and where it is - it also has competitions to see who does better in cleaning up their street/school/neighbourhood. <https://www.litterati.org/#home>

Coastwatch: an app and website that provides a survey to fill out about the plastic litter you have found at the beach. Where it was, what type of plastic it was, etc. <http://coastwatch.org/europe/microlitter/>

The evaluation follows from monitoring. Evaluating the success of your activities will allow you to make changes to your Action Plan if required.

5 - Produce an Eco Code

The Eco Committee must decide on an Eco code that provides participants with a strategy on what actions can be taken to reduce/reuse single-use products and avoid littering based on the observations and research done during the project. The Eco Code should list the main objectives of the Action Plan and should be prominently displayed in the school, home or neighbourhood. Social media like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc. could be a good idea to create a wider acceptance.

For more inspiration for specific activities related to the theme “Waste Management and Litter”, look at <https://www.ecoschools.global/lesson-plans-for-teachers> to find Lesson plans from the last year of the Litter Less Campaign.

Inspire other around the world - please write to us to share how you are meeting the challenge!

Eco-School Global

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