

Session Leader Notes

Part 4: Littering and its impact on the environment

This lesson plan introduces littering and its impact on the environment to Key Stage 3-4 students teaching them about the environmental and social impact of littering. They will explore common littered materials, and examine real-world case studies, laws and fines on littering and fly tipping. Through creative activities, students will be encouraged to promote sustainability and apply their knowledge to make a positive impact in their community.

Recommended for:

Key stage 3-4 (Ages 11-16)

Session duration:

60 Minutes

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will:

1. Understand the environmental and social impact of littering.
2. Identify the key materials that are most commonly littered, and why these pose environmental risks.
3. Develop strategies to reduce littering and encourage positive behaviour within our school and community.
4. Discuss the role of individuals, communities, and governments in addressing littering.

Recommended group rules

- Listen to each other.
- Treat each other with respect.
- Engage with and enjoy the learning.

Materials (what you need)

- **Provide at the start of the lesson:** Whiteboard and markers for answering questions.
- **For Slide 7:** Wasting Away Decomposition Times Activity Sheet,
A pair of scissors for each student.
- **For Slide 14:** Litter Hunt Sheet and Litter picking equipment such as: Litter Picker, Bin Bags and Gloves.
- **For Slide 22:** Access to computers for research.

Technical requirements

- A good standard of audio and visual for the group size for the short video on slide 4.

Lesson Outlines

Part 4: Littering and its impact on the environment

1. Introduction to littering (10 minutes)

Start with a question: "What happens when we litter? Where does it go, and how does it impact our environment?"

- Ask students to discuss examples of places they've seen litter (e.g. streets, beaches, parks, forests, etc.).

Video:

- Explaining that littering means leaving rubbish in places where it doesn't belong; like parks and on the streets, and how you can be fined if caught doing so. It shows how certain items, like plastic, do not break down easily in nature and remain for years or even decades, and the impact that has on the environment. It demonstrates how far our litter can really travel if not disposed of correctly highlighting the global issue of plastic pollution in oceans.

Discussion:

- Briefly explain that littering is the improper disposal of waste products in public spaces, and that it leads to pollution, harms wildlife, and creates visual and ecological damage.
- Introduce the concept of persistent waste – how certain items, like plastic, do not break down easily in nature and remain for years or even decades.

2. Guess the decomposition time

- As a class or individually using the handout, go through the following items and have the students guess how long they think each one takes to decompose.
- Items include a cigarette butt, garden waste (i.e. leaves and twigs), glass, chewing gum, crisp packets and batteries.

3. Understanding the impact of littering (40 minutes)

Litter Hunt activity – Part 1 (15 minutes)

- In pairs, have the class go outside into the playground and see how much litter they can collect and identify. Make sure they make a note of what has been found.
- Additional activity: Bring the items back into the classroom and separate them into general, recyclable and compostable waste and discard appropriately.

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Litter Report activity – Part 2 (25 minutes)

Have each student choose an item of litter they found during the litter hunt activity, and write up a report covering each impact the littering could cause:

- **Environmental impacts:** How does it harm ecosystems, animals, and plants? (e.g. ingestion of plastic by marine life, disruption of habitats) Fires caused by vapes / batteries.
- **Social impacts:** What effect does littering have on local communities? (e.g. health risks, lowered aesthetics, increased costs for local authorities.)
- **Economic impacts:** How much money do governments and local authorities spend on cleaning up litter? How much are fines if you are caught littering / fly tipping? Can it even lead to imprisonment?

The following slides showcase the impacts such as harming wildlife, traffic and safety hazards, damage to tourism and local economies with a quick hands up activity that asks the students how much they think each item costs to clean up off our streets. – Encourage students to use this information within their reports.

Discussion:

- After the report work, reconvene the class and ask for any volunteers to share their findings.
- Write key points on the board.

4. Preventing and reducing littering (10 minutes)

Discussion on prevention strategies:

Ask students: "What can we do to reduce littering in our community, school, or at home?"

Lead a discussion on strategies to prevent littering, such as:

- Using reusable materials.
- Encouraging the use of general waste bins and recycling bins.
- Organising school clean-up events.
- Promoting awareness campaigns (e.g. through social media or school assemblies).
- Improving waste management systems.
- Increasing fines or penalties for littering in public spaces.

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Homework Task: Ask the students to create a 'Litter-Free School Campaign' using all of the information they have learnt in this session.

The aim of the campaign must be to reduce littering and could be:

- A social media campaign to raise awareness about the effects of littering.
- A campaign poster that raises awareness about the effects of littering and the impact on the environment.
- An app that rewards you when you recycle.

The campaign could be presented as a poster that can be displayed around the school or community to help promote the importance of proper waste disposal.

5. Conclusion and reflection (5 minutes)

Class reflection:

- Ask students to reflect on the main points discussed in the lesson: What are the consequences of littering, and what steps can individuals and communities take to reduce it?

Exit Ticket:

- As an exit ticket, ask students to write down one specific action they will take to reduce littering in their own lives and keep their environment clean (e.g. bringing reusable containers, using public waste bins properly, organising a school clean-up).

Reflection for Teacher

Observe students' participation in the group activities and discussions. Are they grasping the connection between littering and its environmental, social, and economic impacts?

Be mindful of students' ability to develop realistic and impactful solutions to the problem of littering. Encourage them to think critically about barriers to reducing litter in their community and ways to overcome these obstacles. Consider how you can incorporate sustainable practices in your school, such as increasing recycling options or encouraging waste reduction programs.