

4-H +Me = Health: Recycling

What will we learn? 4-H members will learn why recycling is important and how easy recycling can be.

Why is this important? When youth learn the importance of recycling, it can reduce the amount of trash going into local landfills.

Prep time needed: At least 4 hours over several days

Activity length: 30 minutes

What will we need?

Preparation:

- Old newspapers or construction paper
- Large container
- Water
- Old blender
- Zip-top sandwich bag
- Tote or container with a screen for the top (round cooking splatter screens work well because they have a handle)
- Gloves
- Cookie cutters
- Paper plates
- Napkins
- Bag of trash
- Optional: food coloring
- Optional: seeds
- Optional: toothpicks and ribbon if making an ornament

At the meeting:

- Work space large enough for demonstration and for club members to work as well



What do I need to do?

Preparation:

1. For the first activity, tear old newspapers into strips. You can use construction paper or any other paper for this activity as well.
2. Soak the paper strips in water. Use a large enough container so that water is a few inches above the newspaper. The paper will absorb the water. Add more water as needed.
3. Allow the newspaper to soak 16–24 hours. The time needed is variable depending upon the amount of paper you are preparing; a small amount will require much less time.
4. Using an old blender, place the soaked paper into the blender and blend until the resulting mixture is lumpy but smooth.
5. If you wish to add color to your paper, place a small amount of blended paper into a zip-top bag with enough food coloring to produce the desired color. Blend in the color by massaging it into the paper.
6. For the second activity, you will need to collect a trash bag of sample trash items. Suggestions include jeans, coffee cans, towels, paper, magazines, newspapers, pizza boxes, wrappers, grocer sacks, boxes, glass jars, plastic water bottles, whipped cream containers, milk jugs, tin cans, pop cans, phone books, styrofoam cups, lotion bottles, detergent bottles, paper cups, etc.

At the meeting:

1. There are two activities as part of this lesson. You may choose to do either activity or you may choose to divide the club members into two groups and have them rotate through the two activities, spending 10–15 minutes per activity.
2. Ask club members what pollution is (stuff that hurts the earth or makes it dirty). Ask club members what types of things can be polluted. Examples include air (smog and smoke), water (chemicals and litter), and the ground (chemicals and litter).
3. Ask what would happen if we kept polluting our earth. Then, brainstorm ideas on how we can keep the earth clean. Discuss the the 3 Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle. Talk about how we can use the 3 Rs to keep the earth clean. Examples: Don't buy items that are over packaged, turn off the water while brushing your teeth, turn off the lights when leaving a room, know what is recyclable and what the symbols mean (the lower the number, the easier it is to recycle), use recycling bins, and reuse items (like using newspaper as gift wrap or packing, donating old clothes to Goodwill or use them to make something new, or repurposing a milk jug into a scoop or birdfeeder).
4. **Activity 1:** Have the club members determine if each item in the trash bag is really trash or if it could be recycled. Have them brainstorm different uses for the items they think could be recycled.

5. **Activity 2:** Place a screen over a tote/container that will be used to collect water. Place a cookie cutter on top. Have each member place a small amount of the wet, shredded paper in the cookie cutter. Press out the water and form the paper into the shape of the cookie cutter. Once finished, transfer that paper to a paper plate. If you are making the paper into ornaments, use a toothpick to make a hole large enough for a ribbon to be fed through after the ornament has dried. If you are making a seed card, sprinkle some seeds on the paper at this time and gently press on the seeds to ensure that they will stick to the paper. Allow the ornament or card to dry for at least 24 hours. Once dry, a ribbon can be fed through the hole in the ornament.

Summary: It's easy and fun to recycle, and it can be a fun way to brighten someone's day with a gift.

What 4-H projects does this activity connect with: Recycling, Personality, and Child Development