

TRASH TALK! HOW MUCH WASTE DOES YOUR FAMILY MAKE IN A DAY?



For this activity, your household will spend a day collecting all the trash you throw away into one place. Each person in your household can collect their trash individually and then put it all together at the end of the day, or you can have a central place for everyone to collect all of the trash. At the end of the day, you can see how much trash you've created.

Begin your day with the following discussion questions as a family:

- How much trash do you think we will make in one day?
- What things do you think will make up the most of our trash?



At the end of the day, collect all your trash in one place.
Use the following discussion questions to encourage a conversation
about waste and waste reduction with your family!

- Did we create more or less trash than you were expecting?
- What made up the most of our trash? Was it what you expected?
- Did having to collect all of your trash in one place throughout the day make you think more about throwing things away than you normally do?
- Where will our trash end up once it goes in the dumpster?
- What are some ways we are already reducing the amount of trash we create?
- What are some ways we could reduce our waste even more?
- Why is it important that we reduce our waste as much as



Check out the next page for some interesting facts about waste and some tips that your family can use to help you reduce waste!

10 FACTS ABOUT WASTE

1. Of the **267.8 million tons** of trash generated in the U.S. in 2017:
 - 139 million tons (52.1%) ended up in a landfill.
 - 94 million tons (35.2%) was recycled or composted.
 - 34 million tons (12.7%) was combusted and turned back into energy.
 2. This is about **4.51 pounds of waste per person**, per day, and 2.35 pounds of that goes straight into landfills!
 3. **Food is the largest component of landfills**, making up about 22% of the waste by weight.
 4. An estimated **30%-40% of our food supply is wasted** in the U.S.
 5. It is estimated that a **plastic bottle will take over 400 years** to break down.
 6. There are **5.25 trillion pieces of plastic debris in the ocean**. This includes everything from large pieces of plastic like bottles to tiny microplastics. This trash can be incredibly harmful to marine wildlife if they eat it or get tangled in it, and it can even kill them.
 7. Americans only **recycle about 33% of all the recyclable** items they throw away.
 8. **1 in 4 recycled items are contaminated** (unable to be recycled). This is a big problem for our recycling plants.
 9. It takes **95% less energy to recycle an aluminum** can than it does to make a new one.
 10. Landfills are the **third-largest source of human-related methane** emissions in the U.S.
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10 WAYS YOU CAN YOU REDUCE WASTE IN YOUR HOME!

1. Compost! You don't need a yard, or even a lot of space, to compost. Visit our website for a flyer with composting tips for any household.
2. Make an effort to eat or freeze food before it goes bad.
3. Learn what "sell by," "best by," and "use by" dates actually mean: <https://www.consumerreports.org/food-safety/how-to-tell-whether-expired-food-is-safe-to-eat/>
4. Consider the "R's" of Recycling: first, try to Reduce, THEN Reuse, THEN Recycle.
5. Review your local recycling guidelines to figure out what can and cannot be recycled.
6. Purchase reusable alternatives to single-use items such as:
 - Water bottles (or buy a water filter)
 - Shopping bags (make sure you don't forget them when you go to the store!)
 - Lunch containers
 - Utensils and other items for eating (keep a to-go set in your bag when you're out!)
 - Paper towels (repurpose some raggy clothing!)
7. Purchase clothing (and other items like furniture) second-hand.
8. Donate your old clothes if they are still wearable)
9. If your clothes are too worn to donate, recycle them through organizations such as ReThread DC or the North Face (do some research online to find other recycling opportunities near you).
10. Repurpose old objects into meaningful projects. Look online for loads of inspiration!