

Activity 1: Litter survey

Learning outcome

Pupils will learn how litter can damage our environment.

Activity summary

This activity asks pupils to **collect and assess litter** in/around the schools grounds.

Subject links

Mathematics
English
Citizenship
Computing*

*When extension activities are completed

Extra resources required

Litter pick sticks – usually available to borrow from your local district or borough council.

Activity

Before completing the activity hold a class discussion to explain the difference between litter and waste e.g. litter is waste left in the wrong place. Ask the pupils to name something that could potentially become litter e.g. crisp packets, sweet wrappers, lolly sticks. This will help the pupils understand what to look out for when litter picking.

Ask the class to suggest appropriate rules for their litter pick. For example, only picking litter using their litter pick sticks, not running whilst holding the sticks and making sure sticks are always pointed towards the ground. Following up on their suggestions, formally brief pupils with guidance on how to use the litter picking equipment and any other health and safety points required. Ideally pupils should wear gloves and high visibility clothing while completing this activity.

During the litter pick pupils should count every piece of litter they encounter and record it by type using the tally chart on the worksheet.

Using examples from the litter they have found discuss the effects litter can have on the environment and local wildlife e.g. a can with sharp edges may hurt an animal's foot or cut an animal's mouth if they try to lick the can. Also as the can is non-biodegradable it could potentially stay in the same location for years as it will not break down.

When pupils have completed the litter pick ask them to assess whether they feel the school (or selected litter pick area) has a lot of litter or is litter free. The questions on the second part of the activity sheet can then be completed.

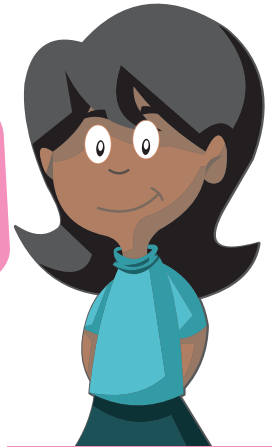
Extension ideas

- Ask the pupils to produce a bar chart using their tally chart results to answer the following questions: Which type of litter is most common in your school? What was the most unusual item of litter you found? How do you think it got there? What can they do to prevent litter in the future?
- Ask each member of the class to choose one piece of litter found during the pick and create a 'litter profile' for it. Is the item of litter dangerous or unsightly? What is it made from? If it was left on the ground as litter how long could it have been there for? (For more information on how long litter items take to biodegrade see the 'How long will it be here' activity in this pack) If required, pupils can research their chosen item of litter further using the internet to complete their profile.

Litter survey

Use litter picking equipment to find out how much litter there is in your school grounds.

Each time you pick up an item record it in the table below.



Type of litter	Litter tally	Total
Crisp packet		
Plastic bottle		
Can		
Sweet wrapper		
Paper		
Glass		
Food scraps		
Other		

Grand total =

Tick the box that best describes litter in your school. Present your ideas for keeping your school grounds litter free to your teacher, head teacher or school council.

- Our school is free of litter.
- Our school has very little litter.
- Our school has quite a lot of litter.
- Our school has litter everywhere.



Litter survey



Now you have investigated how much litter there is in your school grounds complete the table below about your litter pick.

Where did you carry out the litter pick?

How did you do it?

What did you find out?

Where do you think the litter came from?

Is litter such a bad thing?

How can you reduce litter?



Activity 2: How long will it be here?

Learning outcome

Pupils will discover how long it takes for commonly found litter items to biodegrade.

Activity summary

This **matching exercise** requires pupils to match commonly littered items to the length of time it takes for them to biodegrade.

Subject links

Science
English
Art and Design*

*When extension activities are completed

Extra resources required

Optional – Examples of each type of litter mentioned in the activity sheet so pupils can assess them in more detail.

Activity

Before the activity, make sure everyone understands the definition of the word “biodegrade”. This word will feature in the activity and an explanation will help the class understand why certain items of litter damage our environment more than others.

This activity can be completed either individually or in small groups. Ask pupils to consider the characteristics of commonly found litter items in the left hand column of the worksheet. Can they match each item to the correct length of time it takes to biodegrade in the right hand column? If possible, provide each table with examples for each item (taking care to make sure they are clean and have no rough/sharp edges) allowing pupils to investigate the characteristics in more detail.

Once the pupils have completed the worksheet, mark the answers as a class, taking each item in turn. Discuss the answers and reasons why some materials break down faster e.g. a paper bag is thin, goes soft and breaks easily when wet.

Extension ideas

- Using the answers below ask pupils to produce a litter timeline. Starting from the present day ask them to plot the time it will take for each item of litter to biodegrade . What year will a banana skin break down by? How old will they be by the time a plastic bag breaks down? This activity could be incorporated into a display to discourage other pupils in the school from dropping litter or an assembly talk.

Activity 2: How long will it be here?

Activity answers

Match the item to a length of time

Item

Paper bag

Banana skin

Rolled up newspaper

Plastic bag

Nappy

Glass bottle

Length of time

2 years

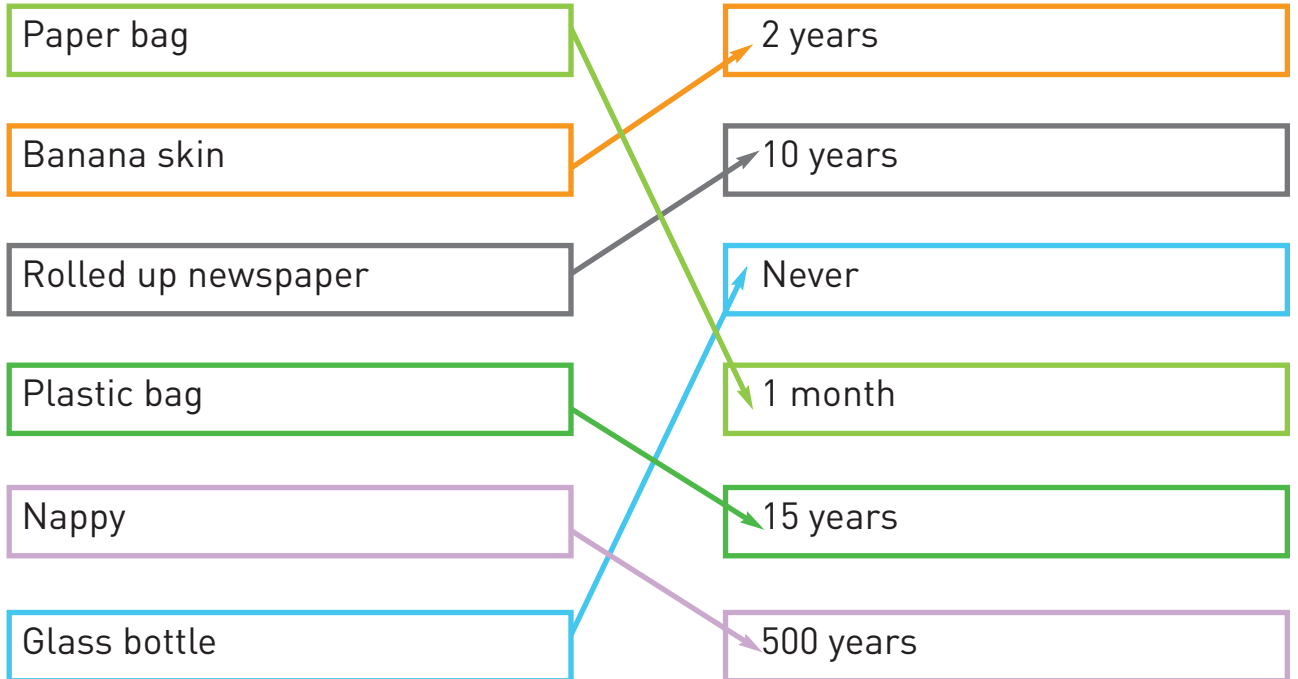
10 years

Never

1 month

15 years

500 years



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How long will it be here?

Once a piece of rubbish is dropped onto the ground, it can stay there for a long time. Each of the items below could be a piece of litter. Think carefully about what each item is made from and decide how long it will take to biodegrade.

Match each item to a length of time on the right of the page. You may be surprised at the answers!



Paper bag



2 years

Banana skin



10 years

Rolled up newspaper



Never

Plastic bag



1 month

Nappy



15 years

Glass bottle



500 years

