

# What is Waste?

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# What is Waste?

## Teacher Lesson Plan

Grades K - 5  
Time: 20 minutes



A Public Agency

### Overview

On average, Americans throw away 4.5 pounds of waste daily. Over 50% of this waste is sent to be buried forever at the landfill. Not only is this a poor use of our natural resources, but landfills also release methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, that contributes to climate change.

By taking actions like practicing the 4R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot), we can make a positive difference by decreasing and diverting the waste we generate.

### ★ Purpose & Learning Objectives

This activity allows students to reflect on the What is Waste video. Students will be able to share how they feel, better understand waste processes, and communicate what they wish to learn more about. By learning more about waste issues, students can discuss with others and encourage others to participate.

### Materials

Students will need internet access to watch the video before completing this reflection sheet. Adult facilitation is helpful for this activity.

### Driving Question

What happens to our items after we are done using them? How does the way that we discard them affect the environment?

# What is Waste?

## Student Worksheet, K - 5



20 Minutes



### Introduction

Meet Ryan! Ryan is a fourth grader from San Mateo, California. She lives in an apartment with her mom, dad, and their big dog, Jax. While Ryan plays many sports, her favorite is soccer. When she isn't practicing soccer with her friends, she likes to sing, paint, and take dance lessons at the community center with her mom.

At school, Ryan enjoys learning fun facts and new things that she can talk about with her classmates, friends, and family. She enjoys it so much, she wants to be an author so she can turn what she learns into stories to share with even more people!

On a sunny day in April, Ryan plays soccer with her friends at recess. She gives a final kick and the ball soars into the goal just as she hears the teacher's whistle blow. Ryan's class lines up and heads back inside. As they approach the classroom, Ryan notices that the class lights are off and the TV screen is on. The students all take their seats, and Mr. Wilson explains that for Earth Day they'll be watching a documentary on where waste goes.

Ryan watches the movie and is amazed by what she's learning. She sees a truck pick up waste in a neighborhood that looks just like hers! The truck drops the garbage off at a Transfer Station, where hundreds of garbage bags are loaded into a huge semi-truck. She watches as the semi-truck dumps its waste into the landfill to be buried, and... oh no! Birds swoop down, trying to eat the trash. As she listens to the movie closely, Ryan hears someone say, "Each of us makes about 4.5 pounds of waste a day." Ryan looks at her friend in disbelief. "No way!", she thinks to herself. The documentary ends, but the idea of waste sticks with her.

Ryan makes it her mission to find out more about waste. Using the computer in the library, Ryan asks her teacher if she can look up more information about waste. With her teacher's approval, Ryan begins her search to find out more. Are there different types of waste? Does all waste go to the landfill? What else could we do with waste instead? So many questions!



### Key Terms

**WASTE:** Anything no longer needed or wanted

**RECYCLING:** To make new products from used material. This is what happens to items in our blue recycling bin

**GARBAGE:** Items that are no longer useful, can't be recycled, composted, or fixed which are sent to a landfill

# What is Waste?

## Student Worksheet, Grades K - 2

### Instructions & Reflection Questions



Watch the "What is Waste?" video and then answer the questions below.  
Note: If you do not have access to a printer, please complete the lesson using the Google Form.

1. Did you think of another item that belongs in the garbage? Write it below:

2. Are you excited to learn more about waste this week? What are you most excited to learn more about?

3. How did it make you feel when you saw the different kinds of waste (garbage, compost, and recycling)?



4. Why is it bad when garbage items go into nature?

5. What is one thing that your family can do to make less garbage?

6. Imagine a plastic water bottle. Can you think of a new way to use it?

# What is Waste?

## Student Worksheet, Grades 3-5

### Instructions & Reflection Questions



Watch the "What is Waste?" video and then answer the questions below.  
Note: If you do not have access to a printer, please complete the lesson using the Google Form.

1. Did you think of another item that belongs in the garbage? Write it below:

2. Are you excited to learn more about waste this week? What are you most excited to learn more about?

3. How did it make you feel when you saw the different kinds of waste (garbage, compost, and recycling)?



4. Review the 4R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot. Can you think of a 5th R?

5. How do you and your family practice the 4R's? Try to think of 1 example for Reduce, 1 example for Reuse, 1 example for Recycle, and 1 example for Rot.

Next, complete the "Build A Model Landfill" activity!