

Which Litter is Best?



Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. State why litter is undesirable;
2. State that littering is a behavior that can be changed.

Method

Students will rank a variety of litter items from “most undesirable” to “least undesirable” and discuss their reasoning.

Procedure

1. Each group of students will be handed a paper bag containing the following items: disposable cup, small glass bottle, string, snack bags, plastic six-pack yoke, cigarette butt, balloon, orange peel, beverage can and straw.
2. We will discuss that the bag and the items in the bag are commonly littered items. Assure students that the items they will be using are “clean trash” and not items actually littered, so it is all right to touch the them.
3. Students will then be instructed to empty their bag and arrange the items so that everyone in the group can see and touch them.
4. Students will then arrange the litter items from “most undesirable” to “least undesirable”. Students will be reminded that the ranking should be a group decision. No more instructions will be made at this point allowing students to discover their own criteria for labeling items.
5. When the group has arranged all the items, students will be asked to discuss reasons why they chose one item to be “most” and one item to be “least”.
(Stressing the fact that there is no one right answer.)

6. After discussions on the placement of items, students will be given the definition of litter. Explaining to them that littering is an inappropriate behavior and no item can be acceptable as litter. No matter where it ends up on our scales, “waste must be in place”. Litter attracts litter; therefore, because a material is biodegradable does not make it acceptable as litter.
7. Discuss why litter is undesirable, if it has not already been discussed. Points that may be discussed include:
 - Litter is pollution; left on the ground, it will pollute the watershed.
 - Litter is ugly - it attracts more litter and creates a poor impression.
 - Litter can be dangerous. Littered broken glass or metal pop tabs can cause injuries.
 - Litter can be a threat to public health; illegally dumped tires are breeding grounds for mosquitoes and disease-carrying rats.
8. Students will return all the items before leaving the exhibit.

Assessment

Students will be asked to name three examples of litter, encouraging them to name items other than the ones in the activity. Students will also be asked to explain why it is undesirable to find such items littered.

