

# Waste Reduction Guidelines for a Whole School Approach



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## Waste reduction guidelines for a whole school approach

The European Week for Waste Reduction is a 3-year project supported by the LIFE+ Programme of the European Commission until end 2011. The aim of this project is to organise multiple actions during a single week across Europe that will raise awareness about waste prevention while encouraging people to change their behavior in consumption and production patterns.



### Aim of these guidelines

The aim of these guidelines is to offer the teachers and students alike plenty of information compiled in one document which can be practical to start off a waste reduction campaign at their school. It can also provide more practical tips to those schools that already practice waste reduction and would like to add more on their efforts. Moreover, students can use this document to gain more knowledge about waste management, acquire organizational skills and discover how they can make a big difference by implementing simple waste reduction tips.

### What is waste reduction?

The European Union defines waste reduction or prevention as measurements and actions taken before a substance, material or product becomes waste. Such actions help in the reduction of waste which is thrown away and landfilled, its harmful effects on the environment and our health, as well as the content of harmful substances in materials and products. Thus, one can conclude that reducing waste:

- Reduces demands on natural resources
- Reduces the need for landfill
- Saves energy and reduces the risk of climate change
- Can save you money

**The following tips are suggestions that can be implemented in the administration offices and classrooms to reduce waste.**

First of all, waste reduction should be a whole school approach, thus it is important that everyone, heads, teachers, staff, students and cleaners, is on board. Waste reduction should take place before separating waste for recycling!

## **Paper**

- Always make double sided copies to reduce paper consumption and programme school printers to print on both sides of the paper. Paper costs are cut in half, energy consumption is reduced and less green house gases are emitted by using both sides of a paper.
- Convey messages to parents via email address system or school blog instead of sending out individual copies with children.
- Use a routing slip to circulate information to staff, or post notices on a bulletin board.
- Use reusable envelopes for interoffice mail.
- When necessary, print school circulars on A5 papers thus reducing excessive use of paper and printing devices.
- When printing, use smaller fonts, narrow margins and remove one and a half line spacing.
- Print drafts on paper already printed on one side.
- Where possible, assignments should be handed via e-mail instead of printing them. When printed they should be printed on both sides of the paper.
- Preview documents before printing - proofread documents on screen before printing and use the spell/grammar function to detect errors. Where necessary print only the pages you need and not the whole document.
- When possible save documents on CD's or pendrives instead of printing hard copies.
- Use interesting posters to discourage the excessive use of paper.
- Organise paper banks where students can deposit one-sided blank pages to be used as rough paper for various purposes. Such paper can also be used to make notebooks to be distributed to school staff and students.
- Use cereal boxes or pasta boxes to create flashcards rather than buying new cardboard paper.
- Use charts from year to year.
- Use the backside of charts when they are outdated for other purposes or to make new charts.
- Consider using ring files instead of copybooks. This ensures one to only use paper as much as required.
- Fill copier tray correctly to reduce paper jams.
- Where possible, promote the use of recycled paper.

## **Lunch**

- Instead of wrapping your sandwiches, buy a lunchbox and/or cookie box that are reusable every day.
- Opt for a reusable flask instead of using disposable soda and water bottles.
- Switch to reusable utensils and crockery instead of disposables.
- Encourage students to eliminate the use of disposable paper towels or wet towels and use instead cloth serviettes.
- Encourage students to get a healthy lunch from home rather than buying ready made packaged food.
- Encourage further more the daily intake of fruit rather than buying packaged sweets or snacks.
- Fruit peels/remnants should be throw in the compost bin.

## **Buying material for school by students and administration staff**

- Replace ball-point or felt tip pens with ones that take refills.
- An eraser made of natural rubber can be more environmental friendly.
- Use a solar powered calculator which is an environmental friendly product and easy to maintain.
- Buy sturdy and resistant stationery that will last longer and thus generate less waste.
- Use writing sheets, notebooks and ring binders made of recycled paper.
- Use glue without solvent, as solvents are hazardous waste and must to be handled with care.
- Use a metal ruler which is more durable and can be used over the years rather than using the fancy plastic breakable ones.
- Use a plastic free compass and scissors.
- Opt for refillable eco-friendly board markers, instead of disposable ones.
- Use refillable toners for printers. This will also help you save plenty of money!
- Do not purchase envelopes with cellophane windows. If the windows are necessary, purchase the ones which have no covering over the window.
- Encourage your 'tuck shop' to switch to reusable utensils and crockery instead of throwaways and disposables.
- Purchase reusable and washable cleaning cloths, aprons, tablecloths used during specific lessons rather than single-use disposable products.

- Buy institutional sizes of cleaning supplies, food products, beverages etc. and repackage into smaller, reusable dispensers. Buying products in bulk will minimise packaging waste.
- Invest in reusable crockery and other utensils for large scale events organized at your school.
- Use rechargeable batteries.
- Purchase the office and classroom supplies in bulk.
- Encourage employees and students to reuse paper clips, rubber bands and brass fasteners.

### **Dematerialization by students and staff**

- Encourage students to use their last year's copy books and school bag. Plastic bags should not be allowed and must be replaced by cloth bags.
- Eliminate the use of flipcharts in all instances.
- Carry maintenance on school equipment regularly. Carry repairs as soon as possible to avoid objects from being broken and becoming waste.
- Organise a second hand/swap reading and school books area in the school to increase a book's lifetime.
- Reduce plastic book wrapping by opting for creative ideas. One may choose to simply indicate a copybook by putting a reusable fabric ribbon. Otherwise, let children come with their own ideas!
- Before starting a new scholastic year, sort through your materials. Many supplies can be reused.
- Create a recycling system that is easy to work with.

### **Activities**

- Perform a Waste Analysis to determine where you can reduce, reuse and recycle waste.
- Dedicate a notice board to the environment in a prominent area in the school.
- Display and update litter graphs on environment notice boards.
- Create posters and information sheets to educate students, staff and parents by reusing material.
- Select an environment theme and organise competitions between students for that theme e.g. poetry competitions, art competitions. Always display students work.
- Award the eco students of the term during prize day.
- Organise a cleaning day campaign within the school premises or locality.
- Organise site visits related to waste management and participate in related events.
- Develop waste reduction in cooking projects. Educate children how they can buy food with less packaging, cook with less waste and make new recipes out of food leftovers.
- Establish a bird feeding/observation area with feeders made from containers that have already been used once for another purpose such as milk jugs, paper milk cartons, soda bottles, etc.
- Organize a car boot sale where children can get unwanted used objects to sell and money raised can be donated to a charity. One may also choose to hold a "Swap Day" where students can bring items from home to swap with other children. Of course one may want to limit the types of items that can be brought in to items such as books or small toys.
- Organise for parents the selling of second hand uniforms.
- Incorporate the use of reusables especially during craft lessons.
- Volunteer for, or start, an environmental club or recycling project in your school.
- Conduct a brainstorming session in classrooms or during staff meetings on the means of reducing waste in school. Involve students in the decision making process as well.
- Organise DIY activities reusing used material and make an exhibition. Use recycled papers, cereal boxes, cloth, fabric ect. to do crafts and activities according to age. Older students can even use recycle waste to do a fashion show during the schools soir e.
- Celebrate Zero Garbage Day: challenge classes to see which group can keep garbage generation to a minimum.
- Pass it on. Share the message with your friends and schoolmates.
- **Last but surely not least, celebrate your school's achievement!**

## **Composting**

- Composting at school may well serve as a fun way to teach students about nature as well as reducing waste. Moreover students can actually get to see the end result of their efforts and use the product on their school ground.
- Choose a site within the school premises where you can place your compost bin. You will need a compost bin and a sunny corner where it can be placed.
- Your bin is best placed directly on the soil or grass which will allow for excess water to drain out and makes it easier for worms to get in and get working on breaking down the contents.
- Waste that can be included in your compost is divided into Greens and Browns.
- Greens are quick to rot and they provide important nitrogen and moisture while browns are slower to rot.
- Greens include - coffee grounds, egg shell, tea bags, plant trimmings, raw fruit and vegetable scraps, fresh grass clippings.
- Browns include – dried grasses, leaves and some weeds, straw, woodchips, twigs and branches, sawdust, shredded newspaper, corncobs and stalks and egg shells.
- The greens provide nitrogen, and act as a source of protein for the microbes that are hard at work in the compost pile while the browns are a source of carbon, and provide energy for the microbes.
- If your compost is too wet, add more Browns. If it's too dry, add some Greens.
- Certain things should never be placed in your bin, the list include – cooked food, meat, fish, bones, dairy products, diseased plants, glossy or coloured paper/card. Putting these in your bin can encourage unwanted pests and can also create odour.
- The key to good compost lies in getting the mix right, a balance between browns and greens!
- Form a team or a gardening group to monitor and take care of compost.
- Schedule a day for each year group where they can get some organic food remains from home and dispose of it in the compost bin.
- To celebrate your project, hold a tree planting event within the school or school locality. Make it personal by planting trees equal to the amount of paper used by your school each year or the amount of printed final exam papers (one can use a rough calculation of 17 trees for each ton of paper).

## **Christmas Waste Reduction Tips**

- Consider giving nonmaterial gifts which can leave a bigger impression, example gift vouchers, tickets to movies etc. Otherwise opt to buy durable gifts made from recycled material.
- Avoid useless wrapping. You can decorate an unwrapped gift by reusing used ribbon while any gift wrap can be reused next year. Always remember that wrapping paper is produced with a lot of chemical dyes that contribute to water pollution.
- Choose decorations that can be reused from year to year. Moreover, decorations can be produced by reusing material which is considered as waste such as aluminium foils, old household ornaments and used ribbon.
- Encourage children to make their own gift tags from old greetings cards during their crafts lesson.
- Buy an artificial Christmas tree which can be used for many years and reuse past decorations.
- Reuse shoeboxes instead of buying new gift boxes.
- Discourage students to give out cards to each other. Instead, the backside of used charts can be used to cover a notice board where all students can write their greetings to each other.
- Ban the use of disposables during school parties and make sure not to order excessive food and drinks.

Waste which is not created does not incur waste management costs, does not consume the world's natural resources and energy and therefore does not impose a problem on the environment. Let's all contribute to make our environment a better place to live in!