

Earth Day Project Ideas: Grades 6-8

Code Green: Recycling Symbol Sleuths

Materials:

- recycled paper
- markers
- junk mail, supermarket flyers
- computer and printer

Instructions: Do Internet research to find as many different recycling logos as you can. Just as important, find out what they all mean. Work in small groups to draw, trace or print out universal and U.S. recycling logos. Display them on a bulletin board with informative captions to explain the distinctions between them. Also include pictures to show different types of materials (e.g., soda bottles for Plastic 1 [PET], milk jugs and shampoo bottles for Plastic 2 [HDPE]).

Include symbols for the following and see if you can find others:

- symbols for the 7 kinds of recyclable plastics—along with names and descriptions of the different kinds of plastic (which kind is used for milk jugs? water bottles?)
- variations of the “chasing arrows” symbol—what’s the difference between them and what do they mean? (which ones mean “recycled” and which ones mean “recyclable”?)
- aluminum, steel and other metals
- paper, cardboard, etc.

Resources:

Plastic Recycling Code Guide – ThinkGreen.com

http://www.thinkgreen.com/recycle-what-detail?sec=plastics&prod=plastic-recycling-code&tab=where_can_i_recycle

Recycling Symbols Made Easy

http://greenliving.about.com/od/recyclingwaste/tp/recycling_symbols.htm

“Recycled” vs “Recyclable” Symbols

<http://www.earthodyssey.com/symbols.html>

What Do Recycling Symbols on Plastics Mean?

<http://www.thedailygreen.com/green-homes/latest/recycling-symbols-plastics-460321>

Recycling Symbols – including steel, aluminum and “compostable”

<http://www.squidoo.com/recyclingsymbols>

Downloadable recycling symbols and logos

<http://grn.com/library/symbols.htm>

E-cycle for the Earth! **Digital-age Ad Campaigns to Protect the Planet**

Project: Design compelling posters or complete mock ad campaigns to promote recycling, e-cycling and green disposal of a range of hazardous and non-hazardous materials.

Mission: Stop illegal dumping! Encourage e-cycling! Your job is to teach people how to recycle electronics, fluorescent light bulbs and other categories of waste—and then encourage them to do it. Many people are unaware of the dangers of dumping toxic materials in a landfill or down a drain. Some understand the dangers but don't know where to go to recycle different kinds of waste. Use your research skills, put on your creative thinking cap and devise some clever ideas for slogans and logos. Use these to make posters to 1) raise awareness about the dangers of dumping toxic materials and 2) teach the right ways to recycle or dispose of hazardous and non-hazardous waste.

Categories could include:

- fluorescent light bulbs
- electronics—computers, printers, televisions, fax machines, cell phones, etc.
- batteries
- paint
- motor oil
- yard waste and trimmings
- building materials waste

Instructions:

Divide into groups to focus on different materials. The electronics category can be broken down into computers, cell phones, and “other.”

First do your research. Why is it so important to dispose of these materials properly? Some—like yard waste—take up huge amounts of space in landfills and emit far greater amounts of greenhouse gases when buried than when recycled into nutrient-rich compost. Other items, like batteries and electronics, contain toxic materials that can leak into groundwater and even the food supply if illegally dumped or thrown in landfills. What kind of toxic materials do different components contain?

Next, look at some of the “Posters & Slogans” links below for ideas and inspiration. Work with others to make posters with high-impact graphics and messages to educate the public about how and why to recycle or dispose of waste properly.

Talk to your teacher about possibly displaying posters at a local landfill, recycling center or town hall.

Posters & Slogans:

Waste Reduction and Recycling Posters and Stickers

<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/ReduceWaste/Business/posters/all.htm>

Hazardous Waste – Water Education Poster

http://water.usgs.gov/outreach/Posters/hazardous_waste/middle.html

SafetyPoster.com – Browse for ideas

<http://www.safetyposter.com/products/Hazardous-Waste-Safety-Poster-%252d-Simpsons.html>

Browse hundreds of Earth Day posters for inspiration

<http://www.cafepress.com/+earth-day+posters>

Order a Hazardous Waste Cleanup and Prevention Poster for your classroom

<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/students/poster.htm>

Research & Reference:

ThinkGreen.com's guide to recycling Electronics, Batteries & Bulbs, and Polystyrene

http://www.thinkgreen.com/recycle-what-detail?tab=get_started

Recycle Your Computer

http://www.squidoo.com/recycle_computer?utm_campaign=search-discovery&utm_medium=greet4&utm_source=google

Cell Phone Recycling

http://www.squidoo.com/cell_phone_recycling?utm_campaign=search-discovery&utm_medium=greet4&utm_source=google

EPA Guide to Composting

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/rrr/composting/>

Earth Day Arts

Give students a choice of how to express a meaningful Earth Day message and share with others. Green arts project ideas:

- paint a picture
- write a poem or skit
- take photographs and make a photo essay
- make a digital story
- create a sculpture out of trash and recycled objects
- make jewelry from recycled materials or found objects
- write a song
- make a play list of eco songs and make cover art for the CD
- write a report or create a multimedia presentation on a green musician you admire (examples: Jack Johnson, Cloud Cult, Sheryl Crow, Willie Nelson, Pearl Jam, Barenaked Ladies, KT Tunstall)
- make a poster explaining ways in which the music industry is attempting to "go green" (cutting down on plastic packaging on CDs, reducing carbon footprint on concert tours, etc.)
- make a poster showing cool sculptures and 3-D art made from trash and recycled objects; there are many artists with online examples of their creative work
- come up with an idea of your own!

Resources:

Jack Johnson's Eco-Tour

<http://www.treehugger.com/files/2010/03/jack-johnson-eco-tour.php>

Planet Green: Top 5 Green Musicians

<http://planetgreen.discovery.com/fashion-beauty/green-musicians.html>

15 Green Musicians for Your Playlist

<http://www.supereco.com/news/2009/04/29/15-green-musicians-for-your-playlist/>

Teaching Art and Sustainability: Local Artist Leads Fashion Workshop, Salvaged Materials Only

<http://planetgreen.discovery.com/fashion-beauty/art-sustainability-fashion-workshop.html>

Green Art Guide

<http://www.greenart.info/guide/>

National Green Arts Corps

<http://communityarts.blogspot.com/2008/12/natinal-green-arts-corps.html>

Earth Day Electronics Audit

Make a list of the different electronic items you use on a daily or weekly basis (e.g., computer, cell phone, iPod, television, DVD player, video game console). Use the Internet to find out how much energy they use.

Now make signs to hang up around your home to remind yourself and family members to turn off devices when not using them; to turn off computers completely rather than leaving them on stand-by; to unplug devices at night (they still use a small amount of energy if plugged in); and to unplug phone chargers once phones are fully charged.

Do your parents or relatives work in an office or workplace that uses electronics? Most workplaces do! Ask if they'd like a sign or two to hang up as a reminder.

Discussion points:

Q: What's an energy "vampire"?

A: Most electronic devices suck up energy even when they're turned off. The biggest energy vampires are computers, printers, DVD players, VCRs, flat-screen TVs, and CD players. The best solution? Plug electronics into a power strip and turn it off when you're not using it. Pay attention to cell phone chargers, too. As soon as your phone is charged, unplug the charger.

Resources:

Energy Tips from U.S. Dept. of Energy

<http://www.energy.gov/applianceselectronics.htm>

Green Life Interactive: See how much carbon is emitted by your household appliances.

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/04/climate/green-life-interactive>

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ThinkGreen.com/classroom



Zerofootprint Youth Calculator

<http://calc.zerofootprint.net/youth/neew>

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Emissions Calculator

http://epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html