

Earth Day Project Ideas: Grades K-2

Recycling Bin Signs

In this simple activity, students make signs for sorting recycling at home. Time permitting, they can make and decorate up to five signs for categories of recyclables:

- plastic
- glass
- cans
- newspapers and magazines
- cardboard

Write the categories on the board as a guide for spelling. Pass out paper (preferably recycled) and markers and crayons. Instruct kids to write labels in large print and then illustrate signs by hand or cut out relevant pictures of items from old magazines and junk mail.

Ask how many families sort and recycle their trash at home. Encourage kids to help sort trash each week and teach younger siblings to help too. Suggest they use old cardboard boxes to collect recyclables if they do not already have bins. Engage students in discussion while they draw and decorate their signs.

Discussion points:

Q: Which of those five kinds of trash rot over time?

A: Paper and cardboard

Q: Which kind of trash takes 1,000 years to break down in a landfill?

A: Plastic

Q: What kinds of things can trash be recycled into?

- **Glass bottles and jars** – can be crushed and turned into new bottles, or else bathroom tiles, bricks and fiberglass, a material used to make boats
- **Newspapers and magazines** – can be made into recycled cardboard, toilet paper or books
- **Plastic** – can be recycled into lawn furniture, fences, rain boots, even jackets

Make a Recycled Notebook

Preparation: For a week before Earth Day, ask kids to bring in used cereal boxes or other thin cardboard, recycled paper, twisty ties, and junk mail or catalogs. From school, collect sheets of 8 ½ x 11 paper that have been printed or written on one side.

Begin by making a sample cover that can be traced. Trace the outline on recycled cardboard to make two for each student (cover and back).

During class: Pass out cardboard pieces and have students cut out outlined covers and backs with scissors. Then have them illustrate the covers with drawings depicting Earth Day themes. Next, pass out a handful of recycled paper to each student and ask them to assemble their books. You can either staple the books along the spine, or use a 3-hole punch to make holes and then tie with yarn or recycled "twisty ties."

Discussion points:

Recycling paper means saving trees. Why are trees so important?

- Trees are home to birds and animals. When we destroy trees, we destroy habitats.
- Trees “breathe in” carbon dioxide and “breathe out” oxygen. Therefore, they help keep the air clean and reduce global warming.

Recycled rain collectors and watering jugs

Preparation: Collect plastic milk and juice jugs and ask students to do the same at home. Ask them to bring in at least one washed container. Items such as plastic laundry detergent jugs or old plastic buckets are suitable as well. You may also wish to ask students to bring in Sharpies or other permanent markers from home, if they have them.

During class: Have students remove any old labels and decorate their plastic containers with permanent markers. In addition to writing the word “WATER” in bold letters, they could draw flowers, rain drops, rain clouds, rainbows, butterflies—or anything related.

Ask students to take their watering jugs home and explain to family members how it will be used. Suggest they collect other plastic jugs at home in order to collect even more rain and shower water to use for their flower beds, lawns, and indoor and outdoor plants.

Discussion points:

How can we conserve water?

- Take showers, not baths – they use less water.
- Turn the faucet off when you brush your teeth or do dishes.
- Keep a jug of tap water in your refrigerator. This way you don't need to waste water from the faucet until it turns cold.
- Bring a water jug or two into the shower with you to collect excess water. Then use it to water the plants in your yard.
- Collect rain water with recycled plastic jugs and larger rain barrels around your yard.