

# Mystery Bag of Trash

An introductory lesson to recycling for younger children.

- OBJECTIVE:** Hands on experience choosing what is trash and what is recyclable.
- TARGET AGE:** K-3
- MATERIALS:** Use a dark trash bag full of cleaned garbage and recyclable items including cans, bottles, jars, plastic bags, containers, and other non-food items. Items must be sanitary, and have no sharp edges for the students to cut themselves on.
- 2 tables - one marked “TRASH” and the other marked “RECYCLABLE” - or 2 trash bins or similar, marked similarly.
- SUMMARY:** Students will pull out items and separate into trash and recyclable piles. Explanations will be given at the end.
- METHOD:** Each student will pull an item out of the dark bag. They will examine the item and tell the class what it is. Then they will put the item on the appropriate table, pile, etc., according to whether they believe it to be trash or recyclable. When all students have taken a turn and all materials are out of the bag, go to each table and pick up each item. Ask the group where it belongs. Reposition items as the class dictates.
- Go back through the items, recyclables first. Explain what the items are and if they are recyclable or not. If so, show an example of what they can be made into after recycled. Then move to the trash table and explain each item and why or why not it can be recycled.
- EXTENSION:** As an extension of the activity, or for more advanced grades, use actual bins for each recyclable. Have the students classify the items by placing them in the correct recycling bin. Explain each choice at the end of the activity.