



Activity: Take A Sustainable Inventory

Topic: Sustainable Alternative to Reduce Litter

TEKS: 1.B for S.1-8, AQ, ESS, ES; S.(1-5).2

Background: <watch the Galveston Bay Foundation's Sustainable Sasha video>

Litter is unfortunately a frequent site along our waterways and coastlines, and all throughout the watershed. Litter cleanups as part of an event, or just as a habit in your neighborhood, can go a long way toward keeping trash out of our waterways. However, the best way to keep trash out of our waterways is to prevent it from becoming litter in the first place. "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle" is a phrase we have all heard, and those practices can greatly reduce the waste we create. "Recycle" tends to get the most attention but "Reusing" and "Reducing" the waste we generate in the first place can do far more good toward our goal eliminating litter. Sometimes all this requires is taking a good look at our purchasing practices, eliminating single-use items where we can, and refusing single-use items we don't need.

Materials:

- Notebook or electronic device
- Computer
- Internet Access
- Calculator

Instructions:

Part 1 – How Much Plastic Do You Really Use?

1. Go through your house and take an inventory of how many plastic items (non-reusable) you use on a daily or weekly basis.
 - a. In your notebook or electronic device, make categories to divide up the inventory. You can divide based on rooms (like kitchen or bathroom) or based on activities (like washing your hands, taking a shower, cooking and storing food, etc.).
 - b. List all of the items that are either single-use plastics or come in single-use plastic containers (ex. Shampoo). For plastic items, note if they have a recycling number on them, and what it is (1-7).
2. Look up your local recycling program or center and see what items and plastic numbers they accept.
3. Determine if any of the plastic items you use cannot be recycled in your local program or center.
4. Determine which of the plastic items you use have a more sustainable alternative.
5. Pick one or more items from your list and pledge to switch to a sustainable alternative.



Part 2 – Discuss/Report

Depending on grade level and current learning environment, choose from the following report/discussion options:

1. Report or share your inventory results and what sustainable alternatives you already use.
2. Create a graph showing the number of single-use items or single-use packaged items from your inventory based on the categories you divided the inventory into.
3. Discuss which items you and your classmates pledged to switch out for sustainable alternatives, and why you picked the items you did.
4. Share your pledge and the reason why you are switching to a sustainable alternative on social media (you can include a picture of you with the item [ex. A reusable water bottle or metal straw]) to help spread the word about how easy it is to reduce litter with a few small changes.