



Activity: Recycling Right in My Area

Topic: Recycling Right

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

Background: <watch the Citizen’s Environmental Coalition’s Recycle Right 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 despite that attention a lot of what is recycled is often not accepted in local programs. If trash or items that are not accepted are included in your recycling bin there is a chance it could contaminate the load and lead to the load not being recycled and instead discarded as trash. In order to really have your recycling efforts work toward reducing waste and litter, it is important to know what can and cannot be recycled in your area.

Materials:

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

Instructions:

Part 1 – What Can Be Recycled In My Area?

1. Go through the trash you collect during the Backyard to Bay Trash Bash cleanup and determine what items you think could have been recycled instead of becoming litter.
 - a. If also completing the “What’s Your Top 5?” activity, you can add this to the tally you are creating for the trash you pick up, and if not you can start a tally as you go to avoid going through the trash afterwards.
 - b. Alternatively, you can go through items in your personal recycling or trash bin.
2. Look up your local recycling program or center and see what items and plastic numbers they accept.
3. Compare what can actually be recycled in your area against what you thought.
 - a. If going through your recycle bin, remove any items that cannot be recycled locally.
4. If comparing the items from your cleanup



- a. Determine what percentage of items you picked up could have been recycled rather than littered.
- b. You can determine the percentage as the total that could have been recycled, or you can break it down further into specific categories such as Aluminum Cans, Plastic Bottles, etc.

Part 2 – Discuss/Report

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

1. Report or share the percentage of your cleanup items that could have been recycled to both reduce waste and avoid becoming litter.
2. Create a graph showing 1) what items from your cleanup could not be recycled, 2) what items from your cleanup could be recycled in your area, and 3) what items from your cleanup were recyclable but not in your area.
 - a. Alternatively, create a graph just showing recyclable vs nonrecyclable results from your cleanup
3. Discuss what items can be recycled in your area and if you were surprised by the results and thought other items could be recycled.
4. Explore Earth911.com to see if there is anywhere else in the Houston-Galveston area where hard-to-recycle items will be accepted.