

Rethink · Reduce · Reuse  
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## Cut Down Paper Waste – Not Trees

**Grade level** – Intermediate (3-6)

**Subjects** – Social studies, science, math

**Teaching time**

- Week 1: 2 hours
- Week 2: 1 hour

**Skills** – Collecting data, graphing, problem-solving, analyzing

**Materials** – “Things We Threw Away Today” chart (on back), a waste basket

### Objectives

Students will track the amount of paper the class throws away. They will decide how to reduce their paper waste, and then follow through with their plan. Students will discover that reducing waste is the first and most important step in solving the problem of too much waste .

### Procedure

1. Remake the “Things We Threw Away Today” chart (on back) and place it on a bulletin board or wall near the waste basket at a height easily accessible to students.
2. Have students write what they discarded in the appropriate space every time they throw something away. Do not discourage students from using the waste basket.
3. At the end of the week, have students work in groups to draw large bar graphs on butcher paper, plotting days on the horizontal axis and number of things thrown away on the vertical axis. Have groups decorate their graphs to show what types of items were thrown away. Hang these around the room.
4. Discuss the following in groups or as a class:
  - What types of things were thrown away?
  - Approximately what percentage of those items thrown out was reusable paper?
  - What additional uses could have been found for this paper?
5. Have groups discuss ways that the class can better reduce, reuse, and recycle when it comes to paper.
6. As a class, put the best ideas into practice to reduce, reuse, and recycle paper.
7. One week after making these changes, put up a new chart and repeat the activity.
8. Discuss and compare the results as reflected on the bar graphs. Emphasize the effect awareness and informed decision-making can have on decreasing our need for paper.





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## Pre- and post-activity discussion

- Which materials do you use every day in the classroom that are made from trees?
- What happens to paper when it's thrown away?
- Discuss the environmental consequences of cutting down trees. What are the effects on streams, fish, air, and water?
- When we use less paper, we save trees. What else do we save? (water, energy, habitat)
- How can we reduce the amount of paper we throw away?
- What things are made from recycled paper?
- How can you tell if something has been made from recycled paper?

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Things we threw away today					



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[www.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste](http://www.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste)

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