

Types of Plastics



Eco 360 Jr
Activity
Grade Level: 3-8

Objectives

Learners will explore the different kinds of plastics found in our economy. Learners will learn how to distinguish what kind of plastic they are dealing with by looking at the labels on plastic products.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this activity, learners will:

- Describe the different kinds of plastics found in our economy
- Be able to differentiate the different kinds of plastics by reading the labels on the plastic products.
- Identify which kind of plastic is easily recyclable and those that are harder to recycle.

Time Required: 1 hour

Materials

- computer or internet-enabled device
- Types of Plastics handout
- worksheet

Introduction (15 min)

We see plastic everywhere. It has many qualities such as durability, flexibility, being light-weight and not reacting with other chemicals, which has made it a popular material choice for many products. Many people assume all plastics are made of the same stuff, but there are many different kinds of plastics and their use is chosen based on the unique strength, flexibility and weight of each kind. Below are the common and popular types of plastics that we interact with on a daily basis (Plastics Industry Association, 2021).

Look at the Types of Plastics handout (it can be projected or printed). Complete the worksheet "Different Types of Plastic". Give one example of each type of plastic, if it can be recycled and where you have seen it before (e.g. type 1 is used for plastic beverage bottles, yes it can be recycled and I've seen it at the grocery store). (20 min)

Discussion/Video (20 min)

As a class discuss which types of plastic are the easiest to recycle? Which types are the most difficult? Why do you think these plastics are more difficult to recycle? Is it because of what they are made of? Do they have any labels or stickers on them? What do you think happens if they are they dirty? What do you think happens to them when they are put in the recycling bin and taken to a recycling centre? What do you think happens to the items at the recycling centre?

Watch the video to find the answers to these questions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xybFcYmPTcg>

Were you right about what happens to the different types of plastics? What surprised you the most? What can you do to cut down on the types of plastics that cannot be recycled?