



Pack a Waste-Free Lunch



REDUCE

Be Waste-Free

Reuse:

- Durable Forks, Spoons, and Knives
- Cloth Napkins
- Refillable Drink Containers
- Reusable Lunch Containers
- Plastic Baggies

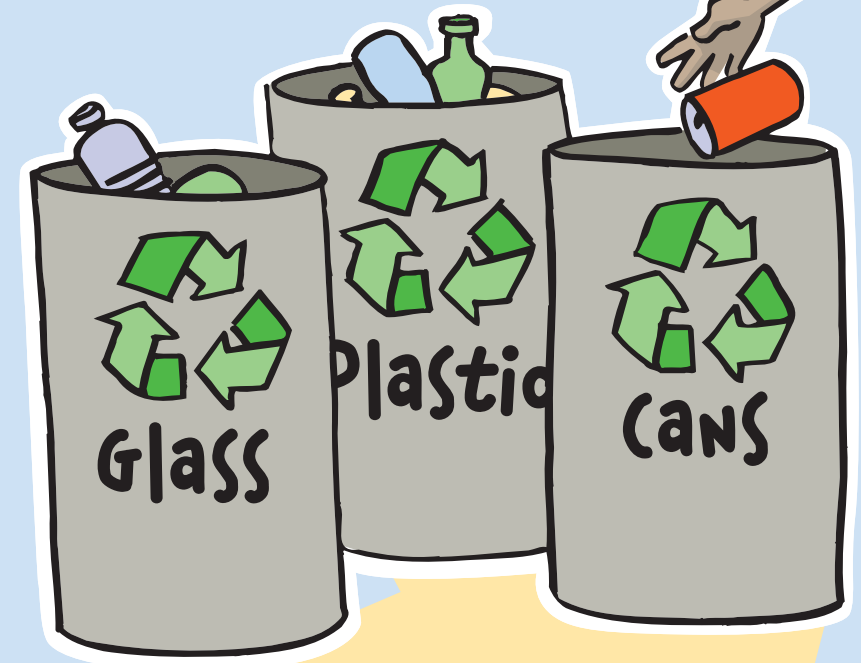
Recycle:

- Aluminum Cans
- Glass Bottles
- Paper Bags
- Food Scraps

REUSE

R E C Y C L E

Bottles/Cans/
Plastic



Paper



Food Scraps



Worm Compost

Why Pack Waste-Free?

Did you know that every school lunch creates an average of 67 pounds of trash per school year? That means, just one average-size middle school creates over 40,000 pounds of lunch waste a year! By reducing the number of items in your lunch that must be thrown out, or only using those that can be eaten, reused, recycled, or composted, you can:

- Prevent pollution
- Conserve natural resources such as coal, oil, natural gas, and trees
- Save energy
- Reduce the need for disposal
- Be an environmental steward and make a difference in your environment and the environment of the future



What You Can Do to Help:
Reduce • Reuse • Recycle

Packing Waste-Free

Reuse Utensils



Remember: Everything in a waste-free lunch can be eaten, reused, recycled, or composted. Also, remember to keep foods that need to be refrigerated cold using a reusable, insulated lunch box or bag or including a reusable ice pack in your lunch.

Pack Waste-Free and Healthy

Use the examples from Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to create your own waste-free and healthy lunch menus for Thursday and Friday. You can pack sandwiches, leftovers from dinner, fruits, veggies, juice, or anything that you think is healthy and waste-free. If you put items that need to be refrigerated in your lunch, such as mayonnaise, cold cuts, or cheese, be sure to include a reusable ice pack in your lunch box or bag. Make sure to pack only what you can eat, reuse, recycle, or compost.

Monday MENU

- Lunch bag..... Reuse paper bag
- Grape juice..... Recycle plastic bottle
- Tuna sandwich..... Reuse container
- Leftover pasta salad..... Reuse container
- Apple..... Compost core
- Ice pack..... Reuse pack

Tuesday MENU

- Lunch bag..... Reuse paper bag
- Water..... Reuse thermos
- Turkey wrap..... Reuse container
- Orange..... Compost peel and seeds
- Cookies..... Reuse plastic baggie
- Ice pack..... Reuse pack

Wednesday MENU

- Lunch bag..... Reuse paper bag
- Lemonade..... Recycle plastic bottle
- Peanut Butter and Jelly..... Reuse plastic baggie
- Fruit Cup..... Recycle aluminum cup
- Crackers..... Recycle plastic container

Thursday MENU

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Friday MENU

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Recycling 100 tons of paper reduces green house emissions (a.k.a. air pollution) at a level equal to removing 52 cars from the roads for one year.

Make Today and Every Day a Waste-Free Lunch Day

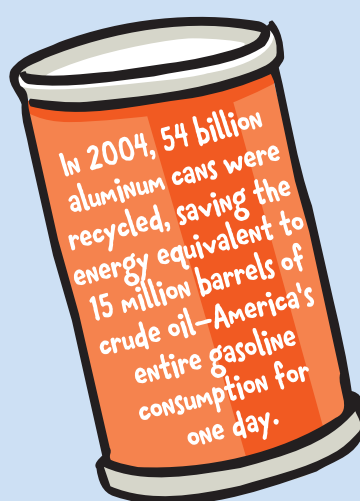
Get the Ball Rolling—Organize a Waste-Free Lunch Day!

- 1. Plan a Waste-Free Lunch Day.** Before holding a Waste-Free Lunch Day at school, check to see if cafeteria space will be available. Work with the school administrators, custodians, and cafeteria staff to arrange for the proper recycling and disposal services for the waste-free lunch. Make sure they schedule a pick-up time on the day of the event. A week before the event, send home flyers or checklists with tips on how to pack waste-free, along with sample menus.
- 2. Get the Message Out!** Before the Waste-Free Lunch Day, educate students and teachers about the event. Students can make their own waste-free lunch posters in art class, or an announcement can be made over the school intercom system. Use the school newsletter to educate parents about the event and how they can help.
- 3. Have a Waste-Free Lunch Day.** On the Waste-Free Lunch Day, have each student and teacher bring in a waste-free lunch (or as close to waste-free as possible). Work with the school cafeteria staff to plan a “waste-free lunch” for students who don’t bring in their own from home. During the school-wide waste-free lunch, have students and teachers share how they made their lunches waste-free.
- 4. Don’t Stop Here.** While planning the Waste-Free Lunch Day, work together with school administrators, teachers, support staff, and community public health services to put leftovers to good use:

- Reduce** food waste: Feed hungry people with unspoiled, wholesome food. Donate this food to local food banks, soup kitchens, and shelters.
 - Provide** food to animal farmers or zoos: Farmers and zookeepers can feed their animals with leftover food.
 - Compost** food to fertilize plants: Composting is a good way to convert food scraps that cannot be fed to people or animals into a valuable nutrient source for plants and soil organisms. For school environments, worm composting, also known as vermiculture or vermicomposting, may be the best method to use. Composting on a large scale is a complicated task. Please work together with local solid waste and health authorities if you would like to undertake such a task.
- 5. Measure Success.** Use the charts to the right to determine the success of the Waste-Free Lunch Day. Make note of the items included in each lunch before the Waste-Free Lunch Day to be able to compare the success of the day.
- 6. Share Your Story!** Help others join the waste-free lunch craze by sharing your success story! E-mail your story and pictures from your Waste-Free Lunch Day to EPA at rcc-challenge@epa.gov. In your email, include your name, your school’s name, an explanation of what you did to make your Waste-Free Lunch Day a success, and any photos you would like posted on the EPA Web site. Photos should be at least 5 inches by 7 inches and 72 dots per inch. Make sure you have your school’s permission before sending photos to be posted on the EPA Web site.

Where to Recycle

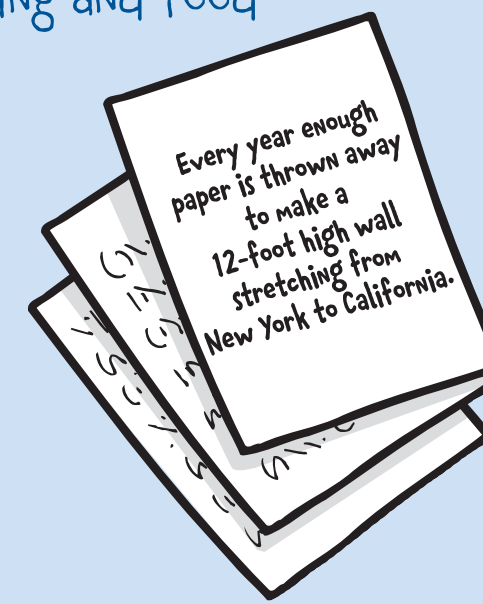
Does your school have a recycling program? If so, it will be easy for you to recycle materials such as soda cans, plastic bottles, and glass jars from your lunches—just put them in the proper receptacles. If your school does not have a recycling program, but one is set up in your community, bring home the recyclable materials from your lunch and put them with your recyclables at home. If a recycling program is not available at your home or school, contact your state, municipal, or county solid waste management agency to find out what you can do to get a recycling program started in your community or hold a one-time recycling event. When a community recycling program is set up, talk to your principal about starting a program at your school. Until the recycling programs are in place, try your best to include items in your waste-free lunch that do not need any packaging, or only use packaging that can be reused.



Buy Big, Pack Light!



Reduce unnecessary packaging and food waste. Buy juice, crackers, and cookies, for example, in bulk so you bring only what you can eat in reusable containers.



Resources

For more information on waste-free lunches, check out the following resources:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Pack a Waste-Free Lunch

www.epa.gov/epaoswer/education/lunch.htm

Provides additional information on packing waste-free lunches, including a sample letter to send home to parents and printable versions of the activities on the back of this poster.

Waste-Free Lunches

www.wastefreelunches.org

Provides information on how to participate in or start a waste-free lunch program.

Laptop Lunches

www.laptoplunches.com

Tools to get more nutrition and less waste from lunch.

Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance

www.moea.state.mn.us/campaign/school/index.html

Information and success stories on reducing waste that can be applied to other schools.

Tips for a Waste-Less School Year

www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/specials/funfacts/school.htm

Offers a number of ideas for creating less waste.

U.S. Composting Council

www.compostingcouncil.org/index.cfm

Provides a unified voice for the growing composting industry. This site features links to numerous publications and other Web sites that focus on composting.

Reuse + Recycling = Waste Reduction: A Guide for Schools and Groups

www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/students/school.pdf

A step-by-step how-to guide for setting up a waste reduction program in schools.

Feeding the Hungry and Reducing Solid Waste Through Food Recovery

www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/wast_not.pdf

This document by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency explains how to start a Waste Not Want Not program at school.

American Forest & Paper Association

www.afandpa.org

Shares information, including environmental policies and recycling initiatives, about forest products such as paper and wood.

Waste-Free Lunch Day

Did You Pack a Waste-Free Lunch?

Name: _____

Use this worksheet to compare which items in your lunch were reusable, recyclable, compostable, or waste before and after your Waste-Free Lunch Day. The goal is to have the majority of the leftover items from your lunch in the first three columns, and have as few items as possible in the waste column.

Before Waste-Free Lunch Day

Reusables	Recyclables	Compostables	Waste
Ex. 1 plastic container			packaging for cookies, 1 banana peel, 1 soda can
Totals:			

Waste-Free Lunch Day

Reusables	Recyclables	Compostables	Waste
Ex. 1 plastic container, 1 plastic baggie from cookies	1 soda can	1 banana peel	
Totals:			

Did You Pack Less Waste?

Compare your findings from your lunch before Waste-Free Lunch Day to those you collect on Waste-Free Lunch Day.

Add It Up!

See how much waste you would avoid if you packed waste-free every day!

After one week, how many waste items would you avoid if you packed waste-free every day? _____ (Hint, multiply the number of waste items avoided in one day by the number of days you attend school during the week.)

After one month, how many waste items would you avoid if you packed waste-free every day? _____ (Hint, multiply the number of waste items avoided during one week by the number of weeks you attend school during one month.)

After one year, how many waste items would you avoid if you packed waste-free every day? _____ (Hint, multiply the number of waste items avoided during one month by the number of months you attend school during one year.)

Wow! You could reduce _____ items of waste in one year if you packed waste-free every day! Just imagine how many resources you could be conserving!