



Hennepin County

Public Works

Environment and Energy Department
701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 700
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Learning Trunk Engagement Guide – Packaging Waste Activity, Youth

Objective:

This kit is provided as a waste education tool for the area of food and beverage packaging. It is designed to demonstrate the differences in cost and packaging waste when purchasing single-serve items versus those packaged in bulk or concentrate. It also addresses packaging recyclability. Use this engagement guide for facilitating a hands-on activity with youth. The event engagement guide discusses how to use this as an event display.

Background, What is Packaging?:

- Utilize the included flash drive “Youth.Activity.Presentation” to use a PowerPoint that goes along with the activity
- (10-15 minutes)

Today we are going to talk about packaging.

- Questions
 - What is packaging? (a product’s wrapping, sealing, or container)
 - What items do we purchase that usually come with packaging?
 - Can you think of any items that you or your family buy that don’t come packaged?
- Human use of packaging evolved over time. Some of the earliest forms of packaging are woven baskets or animal skins. The packaging we have today is relatively new, thanks to the advent of packaging machinery in the late 19th century.
- Questions:
 - There are lots of benefits associated with packaging. What are some benefits that you can think of? (prevents breakage, keeps clean, maintains freshness, anti-theft, sanitation and safety, identification of product, providing instructions for use, compliance with regulations)
 - There are also drawbacks associated with packaging. Let’s make a list of drawbacks (contributes a significant portion of household waste, about 30% of product weight, energy and natural resources that go into packaging are lost, especially if recycling does not occur, contributes significantly to litter which degrades health and beauty of nature, may create false impressions about amount or quality, increases cost to consumer.)

Activity, A closer look at Packaging:

- (20-30 minutes)
1. Distribute both the less waste and more waste example of one product, to each person or small group in your audience. It works best if at least two people are together, so they can discuss the attributes or issues with the packaging (recyclability, amount of material, recycled content). Ask them to refer to the poster to learn the percentage saved by purchasing the low waste option.
 2. Ask each person or small group to share their observations about the different packaging, i.e., which is recyclable/which is not, which utilizes less material, which is made from recycled content, and which is a better value. Ask them to state the percentage saved by purchasing the low waste option.
 3. Collect all of the less waste items in one pile and the more waste items in the pile. Visually compare the total amount of waste in each pile and continue discussion. Discuss why items are individually wrapped and the price we pay for convenience. Discuss alternatives to buying individually wrapped items. Re-emphasize the importance of buying recyclable packages. Refer to the **Tips on Reducing Packaging Waste** (see reverse).
 4. Look at the display board which shows all products and the percentage that can be saved by choosing the low-waste option.



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5. The sum of the prices for the less waste items is about 60% less than the summed prices for the same food and drink in the more waste category, and produce less than ½ the amount of total waste. (This is a visual, but reliable estimate.)
6. Finally, discuss the reusable alternatives that are included in the demonstration kit: reusable squeeze pouch and reusable cloth bag (to be used instead of a zipper bag).

Discussion questions:

- What did you learn about packaging waste? What did you learn that you want to share with someone else?
- Why should we care about the products we use?
- What do you want to do about this issue?
- What do you want to learn more about?

Tips on Reducing Packaging Waste

- Purchase reusable and refillable containers.
- Purchase beverages and other items in concentrate or powder form and add your own water.
- Fill a reusable bottle when you need it. Not only will you save money and reduce waste, you will have less weight to carry home from the grocery store.
- Avoid purchasing single-serve and 'snack size' portions in favor of larger servings or buying in bulk. Make your own single-serve portion with a reusable container.
- Look for recycled content in packaging and packaging that can be recycled.
- Purchase products with the least amount of packaging, avoiding individually-wrapped or 'double-wrapped' items.

Contact information

- Contact Angie Ziobro at 612-348-9850 or Angela.Ziobro@hennepin.us
- Call 612-348-3777 if you have questions on the day you return the learning trunk.

Additional resources

- Environmental education toolkits - www.hennepin.us/environmentaleducation
- Additional Learning Trunks – www.hennepin.us/environmentaleducation
- Hennepin County Drop-off Facilities brochure – www.hennepin.us/~media/hennepinus/residents/recycling/documents/DropOffFacilities.pdf
- Hennepin County Green Disposal Guide– <http://www.hennepin.us/green-disposal-guide>
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – www.pca.state.mn.us search: reduce trash when you shop
- **Hold the Mail -**
- Reducing waste and recycling during your move— http://www.hennepin.us/~media/hennepinus/Business/work-with-hennepin-county/Environmental%20literature/MovingGuide_WasteRecycling.pdf



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Product Poster Information:

Product	High Waste Option	Medium Waste Option	Low Waste Option	Percentage of money saved with low waste option
Gold Fish Crackers	Gold Fish Travel to-go bags		Gold Fish Box	41%
Keebler Fudge Cookies	100 Calorie Pack of Keebler Fudge Cookies		Package of Keebler Fudge Cookies	65%
Applesauce	Individual applesauce pouches	Individual applesauce cups	Applesauce jar	53%
Yogurt	Individual yogurt cups		Large yogurt tub	89%
Cheez-It crackers	Cheez-It snack packs		Cheez-It box	53%
Coffee	Box of K-Cups		Coffee bag	70%
Gatorade	Gatorade bottles		Gatorade powder canister	60%
Oatmeal	Individual oatmeal cups		Oatmeal canister	83%
Peanut butter	Jiff to-go packs		Jiff jar	25%
Average percentage of money saved with low waste option				60%