



TRASH SHOULDN'T SPLASH

PERSONAL PLASTICS USE & WASTE INVENTORY

A One-Day Activity for Older Students and Adults

This activity is intended to draw your attention to the plastic items you use and the waste that you generate on a typical day, and asks you to reflect upon your behaviors and habits.

I: Record a Personal Plastics & Waste Inventory

For one full day, starting from the moment you wake up to the moment you fall asleep, record every item that you interact with (touch, or use in some way) that is made, in whole or in part, of plastic. During the same time, record every item that you dispose of (in compost, recycling, or trash), including the item's material. Do this to the best of your ability using the included, two-sided form. You may need to print several pages of the form in order to log all items.

You may wish to complete the activity twice – once during the work/school week, and once on the weekend.

II: Personal Reflection

The following questions are intended to guide a personal reflection upon this exercise, including your daily behaviors and habits.

1. What were your reactions while filling out the plastics and waste inventories?
2. What are your reactions upon looking at the final list of inventoried plastic items and waste items?
3. How much of the plastic you interacted with was waste? How much of your waste was made of plastic?
4. If you were to reduce your personal usage of plastics, what actions might you take? Would you target particular items or products? Are there old habits you would break, or new habits you would set?
5. If you were to reduce your personal generation of waste, what actions might you take? Would you target particular items or products? Are there old habits you would break, or new habits you would set?
6. What are the available options for disposing of your waste in your community (e.g., compost, recycling, container deposit return, trash)? Are you fully utilizing these services?

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7. Do you think your behavior changed while doing this activity? If so, how?

Adaptation for Younger Students

This activity could be adapted for use by younger students by making the following changes:

- Shorten the activity by conducting during the school day, and/or assign for a shorter time to do at home.
- Conduct a discussion-based reflection in small groups.
- Focus on changes that can be made in the classroom, such as using only the materials that you need and learning what belongs in classroom recycling and waste bins.
- Focus on behaviors and changes that can be made in the school cafeteria, such as taking only what you need (e.g., food, napkins, utensils) and learning what belongs in compost, recycling and waste bins.
- Discuss changes that might help reduce single-use plastics and waste in school, such as replacing plastic straws with paper straws, or bringing a reusable water bottle to school and filling it at water fountains/water stations.

This activity is adapted from an original version developed and generously shared by Dr. Heather Heenahan.

