

Recycling

Fact and Discussion Cards



Recycling Fact and Discussion Cards

1. Packaging makes up 40% of the plastic produced. It is estimated that around one million plastic bags are used every minute.

Discuss: Why is plastic so popular? What are the benefits of plastic packaging?

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2. Over 14% of litter comes from drinks bottles and cups. Even making one bottle of water uses six times as much water as there is in the bottle!

Discuss: Why are plastic drinks containers so popular? Why plastic? Why not use your own container?

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3. One of the main problems with plastic and other materials is that it takes so long to decompose if thrown into a landfill. Here are some amazing figures...

Item	Decomposition Time
Aluminium can	200 years
Plastic carrier bag	10 – 20 years
Disposable nappy	450 years
Newspaper	6 weeks
Glass bottle	Not really ever!

Discuss: Think about all the 'stuff' that is still here... such as every disposable nappy that has ever been worn – even yours!

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4. Switzerland is top of the tree when it comes to recycling although they have plenty of rules to make sure it happens. Just about everything is recycled and anything else (which isn't much) has to go in a waste bag that you have to buy. There are even community compost bins for food waste.

Discuss: Can you think of any rules, regulations or facilities that would help the UK get better at recycling?

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5. Only 45% of waste is recycled in the UK currently. The average household throws away a tonne of waste per year – that's about the same weight as a car!

Discuss: How do you feel once you have thrown something away? Do you really think about what happens next?

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6. Aluminium cans used for drinks or food are a significant part of household waste. If we recycled every single can, then we wouldn't need 14 million of the UK's dustbins! Aluminium and steel cans are 100% recyclable too!

Discuss the reasons why 100% of cans aren't being recycled?

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7. Every single minute, a lorryload of plastic goes into our oceans and seas. It gets there either down drains, via litter left on beaches or thrown in rivers, by plastics being blown away from towns, cities or even open rubbish dumps and ending up into the sea. Plastic islands miles wide are now in our oceans.

Discuss: What ways can you think of to try and limit or stop the amount of plastic ending up in the oceans and seas?

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8. The plastic bottle recycling process:

1. Bottles are collected and sorted into different types of plastic.
2. Cleaning to remove anything left in the bottle.
3. The clean bottles are shredded into plastic flakes.
4. The flakes are melted down into rice-sized plastic pellets.
5. The pellets are sold to companies who make plastic items.

Discuss: Who might buy these plastic pellets and what might the plastic become? If you owned a company, would you buy recycled pellets? Why yes, or why no?

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9. The aluminium can recycling process:

1. Cans are collected and sorted from other rubbish.
2. Magnets remove steel cans so that the aluminium ones are left and these are bailed up.
3. They are then shredded and heated so that air can blow away the colours, labels and decoration.
4. The metal shreds are heated in a furnace to 750°C to melt.
5. The molten aluminium is poured into moulds and cooled to make 'ingots'.
6. The ingots are sold to can makers to make into more cans. A new can could be back on the shelf within eight weeks!

Discuss whether people think about all this when buying or drinking from cans.

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10. The paper recycling process:

1. All sorts of paper is collected and sorted into different types.
2. The paper is washed with lots of soapy water and this gets rid of any ink, staples or plastic coating.
3. The clean paper is mixed with water to make a thick porridge-like mixture called 'slurry'.
4. Different things are added to the slurry depending on what sort of paper or card is to be made.
5. The slurry is pressed into sheets and dried... hey presto – paper!

Discuss: How good are you at paper recycling? Can you think of anything you could do better? Do you have any tips you could tell others?

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11. On average, recycling something uses 50% of the energy used to make something from new.
Amazingly, recycling just one aluminium can save enough energy to power a television for an hour!

Discuss: Should there be laws to make people and companies recycle?