Not in My Shopping Cart!*

Activity E.o

GRADE LEVEL: 4-6

OBJECTIVE: Students will:
• Understand the purpose of packaging.
• Identify wasteful packaging.
• Identify alternatives in packaging.
• Identify steps that can be taken to affect the packaging options available in the marketplace.
• Learn to recognize products packaged in recycled materials.

MATERIALS: Examples of packaging:
• Aluminum
• Glass
• Paper
• Plastic
• Wood
• Other metals

RATIONALE:
Packaging often ends up as waste and uses energy and raw materials.

TEACHER BACKGROUND:
• Nearly $1 out of every $10 spent for food and beverages in the United States pays for packaging.1
• In industrial countries, packaging contributes about 30 percent of the weight and 50 percent of the volume of household waste.2

PRE- AND POST-TEST QUESTIONS:
1. Why do we sometimes need packaging on the things we buy?

2. Can you list four examples of packaging materials that are recyclable? (Glass, aluminum, card-board, plastic)

3. How might you influence manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers of packaging to take into account the waste disposal and resource use issues and problems related to packaging?

4. How does recycling help grocery stores cut disposal costs?

5. How can you reduce the amount of packaging you throw away?

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask students to bring to class examples of packaging.

2. Discuss packaging:
   - Which products need the protection of packaging?
   - Which products need packaging to protect public health, prevent theft, provide advertising or convenience, etc.?
   - Which packaging is recyclable?
   - How can you tell which paper packaging has been made from recycled materials? (Look for the recycling emblem, and if the paperboard is gray, it was probably made from recycled paper.)
   - Is any of the packaging unnecessary or excessive?
   - Which products can be sold in bulk?
   - What are the advantages to larger quantity products? (A 3-oz. Tube of toothpaste requires 50 percent more packaging per ounce than the 7-oz. Size.)
   - Which natural resources were used to make the packaging?
   - Could the package have been made to be more conservative of resources or energy?
   - Could this product be purchased in less wasteful packaging?

3. In order to preserve natural resources and protect the environment, consider doing the following:
   - Avoid products packaged in nonrecyclable plastic containers. To do this, learn the National Voluntary Plastics Code found in the Solid Waste Fact Sheet, p. 10. Then call the Washington State Department of Ecology Hotline 1-800-RECYCLE to find out which plastics are recycled in your area. Then buy products which are packaged in containers made of nonrenewable resources that are recycled in your area.
   - Limit prepackaged and precooked foods. Cooking from scratch saves energy, costs less, and is more nutritious.
   - Durable shopping bags, string bags, and knapsacks can serve as alternatives to plastic sacks.

4. Discuss steps that can change marketing practices. Possibilities:
   - Not buying overpackaged products.
   - Letters encouraging retailers to carry returnables and recyclables (e.g., glass milk containers).
   - Letters to legislators urging legislation on container standardization which would make possible an expanded system of returnable, reusable containers.
   - Letters to manufacturers suggesting changes in amount or design of packaging.
   - Letters to packaging companies urging increased use of recycled/recyclable materials in packaging.

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*Source :Washington State Dept. of Ecology A-Way With Waste