



Reducing Packaging*

Activity H.h

GRADE LEVELS: 9 - 12

OBJECTIVE: To explore options for reducing packaging.

PROCEDURE:

Send students on a survey of their local supermarket looking for examples of the following three types of packaging:

1. Natural packages (oranges, nuts)

2. Older and reusable packages (paper bags, paper wrapping, glass jars that become drinking glasses, returnable bottles)

3. Modern packages (plastic, polystyrene, tin foil, individual wrappings)

Ask students to list five examples from category 1, five from 2, and ten from 3. Compile their findings and make a combined list for the entire class.

Ask the following questions:

What purpose does the packaging serve for each of the items on the list?

How dependent is the product on the package?

How could each package be reused or recycled?

What alternate packaging could be used that is more environmentally sound?

For each item on the list, decide which packages create excessive waste and which minimize waste.

Discuss some other packaged products students might find in a grocery store. Have students distinguish between products that must be packaged the way they are, and ones that could use less packaging. Initiate a discussion of what students could do to promote the use of less packaging when they shop. Elicit from them that they could buy only products that have no unnecessary packaging and contain no materials that could be harmful to the environment. They could also bring some of their own containers (for bulk cereals, nuts, etc) from home or reuse shopping bags. Emphasize to students that buying products in bulk quantities produces less waste.

*Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Let's reduce and Recycle: Curriculum for Solid Waste Awareness