



Necessary Wrappers?*

Activity P.n

GRADE LEVELS: K - 3

CONCEPT:

Some packaging is needed to protect the product, but how much is enough?

OBJECTIVE:

Students will realize that large amounts of packaging may be used to wrap products they buy.

MATERIALS:

Packaged items or empty packaging, such as drink boxes, styrofoam containers, packaging for convenience foods.

VOCABULARY: product, packaging, durable

BACKGROUND:

One out of every \$11 is spent on product packaging in the United States. In our disposable lifestyles, we have gotten into the habit of buying items for convenience. We don't think about how much or what we throw away. In this exercise, find out how much waste is from packaging.

PROCEDURE:

1. Divide students into small groups.
2. Ask each child to carefully unwrap the product, saving all packaging.
3. Weigh the pile of packaging and pile of product. Which weighs more, the product or the packaging?
4. Ask the children why there are so many wrappers. Identify the possible purpose of each. Ask: If you were going to package an item, now would you do it?
5. Ask the children to identify the source of raw materials for packaging, i.e., the plastic, the aluminum, the paper.
6. Ask the children to think of other things that their families buy that come in packages.
7. Ask: If we reduce the amount of packaging, will we reduce the amount of garbage?
8. How can we help?
 - Buy items in bulk and divide into durable containers for lunches.
 - Buy easily recyclable packaging – glass and metal.
 - Let stores know when there are over-packaged items such as vegetables, lunch meats, or convenience foods.
 - Write letters to companies that are over packaging.
 - Think before you buy.

FOLLOW-UP:

- Where does packaging go if you throw it away?
- How can you reduce the amount of packaging in your garbage can?
- Name two types of packaging that are difficult to recycle and two that are easy to recycle.
- How are products packaged in other countries (e.g., Mexico, China, Europe)?

*Source: Cornell Waste Management Institute Trash Goes to School