



ACTIVITY

How Healthy Is Your Lunch?

This activity will help you and your classmates discover how healthy your lunches are—for the environment, that is!

Materials

- Two plastic garbage bags
- Rubber gloves
- Two large trash bins
- A scale
- A list of the materials that can be recycled in your area



1. **Predict.** Do you think the lunches that you and your classmates eat contain more disposable items (trash) or more recyclable items?

2. **Gather Evidence.** Your teacher will set up two trash bins in the lunch room for this activity. As a class, make a sign that lists the types of lunchbox items that are recyclable in your area (such as plastic forks, plastic bottles, glass, cans, paper napkins, etc.) and tape it to the outside of one of the bins—this one will be for recyclables. After lunch, put all the recyclable items left from your lunches into the recyclables bin. Then put all the other non-food trash items into the trash bin. Have a student monitor at each bin to make sure that only recyclable items go into the first bin and only trash goes into the second one. Be sure to take home any uneaten food, silverware, and thermoses or other reusable containers.

3. **Observe.** Weigh the two bags:

- How much does the bag of trash weigh? _____
- How much does the bag of recyclables weigh? _____

**ACTIVITY****How Healthy Is Your Lunch? (continued)**

4. **Calculate.** Every pound of trash sent to the landfill generates about .94 pounds of CO₂ due to the energy used to get it there and the gases that are emitted as it decomposes or is incinerated.
- How many pounds of CO₂ come from your class's lunchbox trash? (Multiply the weight of your trash bag by .94.) _____
 - How many pounds of CO₂ is your class preventing by using recyclable items instead of disposable ones? (Multiply the weight of your recyclables bag by .94.) _____
5. **Conclude.** Why do you think your class has more trash, or more recyclables? What can be done to reduce the amount of trash?

6. **Make a Change.** Do this activity again one week later. This time, talk with your family about packing a lunch with as much recyclable and reusable packaging as possible. Compare your results with those from the first round. How much did you improve?

How to Pack a Zero-Waste Lunch

- Avoid prepackaged foods that come in plastic wrap. Pack a homemade sandwich, veggies, and fresh fruits that are naturally packaged, such as citrus fruits and bananas.
- Avoid single-serving packets. If your family buys in bulk instead, you can save money and packaging by transferring the portion you want into a reusable container or thermos.
- Use a refillable drinking bottle or container instead of a disposable juice box, juice pouch, or plastic bottle.
- If you need to put food in baggies, use waxed paper bags. They are nontoxic and compostable.
- Instead of paper napkins and plastic forks, use a cloth napkin and silverware that you bring home each day.