

DO RECYCLING PROGRAMS HELP REDUCE WASTE?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

RECYCLING IS BROKEN. HERE'S HOW WE CAN FIX IT

It's Okay to be Smart | December 17, 2019 | Video
11:11 minutes

Dr. Hanson explores the good things and the bad things about recycling – and why we shouldn't throw it away altogether.

- When waste items are thrown into a single-stream recycle bin, they're not always able to be recycled and often make it harder for things that can be reprocessed to be recycled.
- Humans are recycling more, with Americans recycling 35% of waste and the EU recycling 46% in 2017. Both regions send less waste to landfills than they did in the 1960s, but Americans are still throwing away more tons of waste than before.
- Aluminum and glass are highly recyclable, but paper, plastics, and textiles can often only be downcycled.
- Countries like China and Malaysia have stopped taking recycled plastics, which means most plastics end up in landfills.
- Understanding what you can and can't recycle in single-stream bins in your area can help recycling be more effective, and cleaning food residue from containers can keep contaminated plastics and paper from ruining a batch of usable material.

YOUR RECYCLING ISN'T ALWAYS BEING RECYCLED – HERE'S WHY

PBS NewsHour | April 25, 2021 | Video
4:53 minutes

Jennie Romer, author of "Can I Recycle This?" joins NewsHour Weekend's Christopher Booker as he delves into the nebulous, confusing world of American recycling.

- Rules for recycling vary from place to place, and plastics are often the most difficult to determine whether or not they can be recycled. Romer says that people often throw recycling into a bin and hope for the best.
- Recycling depends on someone to buy it to turn it into something else, and the type of plastic a container is can make it worth recycling or hard to sell.
- Shipping low-value recycling products overseas can mean polluting those areas while still not reducing waste.
- Romer says that she tries to reduce what she uses, including her own bags and utensils, but she says that packaging for food in places like a supermarket can make it hard for people to avoid plastic containers.

THE PLASTIC INDUSTRY IS GROWING DURING COVID. RECYCLING? NOT SO MUCH.

FRONTLINE | February 17, 2021 | Article
words

While plastics manufacturers have boomed during the COVID-19 pandemic, it also means more plastics are ending up in landfills.

- Plastics production has increased almost 1% in 2020, down from 2019, but a report projects that plastics will be the fastest-growing part of the chemical industry through 2030. Plastics were also in high demand as the COVID-19 pandemic made more single-use items essential.
- At the start of the pandemic, when it was thought that the virus spread on surfaces, plastic bags made a comeback in many parts of the United States, despite previous or planned bans.
- Plastic industry executives in the 1990s responded to concerns about the environmental impact of plastics by promoting and funding recycling programs, but many consumers still misunderstand recycling guidelines.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Single-stream
- Consumer
- Manufacturing

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.