



Activity: Know Before You Throw

Welcome to the Region's **Know Before You Throw** activity where you will be challenged to sort a variety of common waste materials. Your goal is to keep items that can be reused, recycled, or composted out of the garbage bag.

Participants will practice how to:

1. Sort waste at home with an emphasis on diverting waste away from the garbage bag.
2. Identify which waste items are acceptable in the Blue Box recycling and Green Bin organics programs.
3. Use the Region's **Know Before You Throw** online tool to assist with sorting waste at home.

Activity:

- Review the "questions to consider" on page 2 of this document.
- Sort a variety of waste items in a relay race format.
- Explore the Region's **Know Before You Throw** online tool available at durham.ca/waste.

Materials:

- Two pictures of each of the following waste boxes/bins (one set for each group):
 - Cardboard box (for re-use items)
 - Blue box (for recyclable containers)
 - Blue box (for recyclable paper fibres)
 - Green bin (for food waste and other acceptable organics)
 - Black bag (for garbage)
- Two sets of cut-outs containing various waste items (one set for each group):
 - **Re-use:** Children's toy, hard cover book, clothing, furniture, sports equipment, dishes
 - **Recyclable containers:** Milk and juice cartons, pop cans, soup can, juice box, plastic water bottle, single serve yogurt cup, takeout food container, tub and lids, fruit/vegetable clamshell container, aluminum trays
 - **Recyclable paper fibres:** Cardboard, newspaper, cereal boxboard, paper towel roll, envelopes, magazines, shredded paper
 - **Garbage:** Chip Bag, drink pouch, take-out coffee cup, plastic bags, diaper/pull-ups, plastic wrap, gum wrapper, plastic disposable cutlery, toothpaste tube
 - **Organics:** Feather, fruit, vegetables, cheese, meat, paper egg carton, muffin wrapper, paper plates, paper napkins, tea bags



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Set-up:

- Print and cut out one set of the provided activity cards for each team.
- Arrange two sets of the provided waste boxes/bins photographs on one end of the relay race. There should be two lines, one for each team.
- Place two sets of the waste material cut-outs on the other end of the relay race (approximately eight meters away).
- Ensure there are no obstructions or obstacles in the way.

Questions to consider:

What are the 5Rs in the Region's Waste Hierarchy?

1. Rethink the products you buy.
2. Reduce the amount of waste you produce.
3. Reuse a product more than once.
4. Recycle waste into new products (this include compost).
5. Recover energy from waste.

What does Rethink mean?

Rethink focuses on how we view natural resources and how we use them. Rethink has the most positive impact in reducing waste. If we understand the impacts of our purchases and rethink our choices on how and what we purchase, we can reduce the amount of waste we produce. This helps to conserve natural resources and reduce environmental pollution.

What are some ways that we can put Rethink into practice?

- Buy only what you need and choose environmentally friendly alternatives.
- Consider how your purchases were produced, where the materials came from, and if they are sustainable.
- Rethink before throwing away an item. Is there a way to prolong the life of this item?

What does Reduce mean?

Waste reduction is about minimizing waste at the source - decreasing or eliminating waste by reducing the number of items we produce and purchase. Reducing waste requires planning and making purchasing decisions with product reuse in mind. This helps to decrease waste before it's created.

What are some ways that we can put Reduce into practice?

- Refuse to buy over-packaged products.
- Repair items instead of replacing them.
- Pack waste free lunches.

5Rs in the waste hierarchy



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What does Reuse mean?

Reuse means using an item as many times as possible, either for its original purpose or for a different use. Reuse is preferable to recycling because items do not need to be reprocessed before they can be used again.

What are some ways that we can put Reuse into practice?

- Donate clothes, toys and other gently used items to local charities or give them to friends/other family members.
- Reuse jars and containers for storage.
- Purchase durable products that can be repaired and reused.

What does Recycle mean?

Recycling is the collecting and reprocessing of materials into either the same product or something different. Examples include reprocessing aluminum cans into new cans, and plastic (PET) bottles into polar fleece. Recycling also includes composting. Composting is the process of turning organic material into a nutrient rich, soil-like material called humus. Compost is rich in nutrients and can be used on home lawns and in gardens.

What are some ways that we can put Recycling into practice?

- Use your blue boxes for recycling.
- When shopping, consider the material that the item is made from and packaged in. Try to purchase materials which can be recycled in the Blue Box program.
- Use your green bin or backyard composter for unwanted food scraps and plant material.

Activity instructions:

- Divide into two teams and stand single file behind the starting point. You will be participating in a relay race to sort your waste items into the appropriate box/bin. If there are only two participants, you will race against each other. If there is only one participant, you will race against the clock to see how quickly you can sort the waste yourself.
- Start the race! The first person in each team line-up will take one waste item and run to the other end, placing it in front of the photo of the appropriate box/bin and then return to the end of the line.
- The next person in the line can start once the first person has returned to the line. This continues until all the waste has been sorted.
- After the relay race, review any items that were misplaced and identify where the items should go in the Region's waste management programs.
- Thank everyone for playing.

Wrap up:

- Put aside any printed activity material for reuse, either for a later date or for another activity, or recycle them!

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- We can significantly decrease the environmental impact that waste can have on our communities by implementing waste reduction strategies, including the 5Rs - rethink, reduce, reuse, recycle/compost, and recover.

What can you do if you're unsure about what to do with a waste item?

- Visit the Region's website and app ([Know Before You Throw](#)).
- The [Know Before You Throw](#) online tool helps residents determine whether waste items belong in the blue box, green bin, garbage bag – or somewhere else entirely. To use the tool, just enter the name of the item in question and select the “search” button. The page will then display all available options for the item, along with a link to more information on managing it safely with minimal impact on the environment.
- Check your waste collection calendar.