

# Trash Talk!



## Be an Everyday Earth Hero



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Have you ever wondered what happens to the stuff you throw away? Well, now is the perfect time to find out! Recycling takes things that might have been garbage and turns them into new things. Instead of tossing your empty bottles and cans into the trash, you can recycle them and help take care of the Earth.

Wondering what items you can help save from the landfill? You can recycle everyday items like paper, plastic bottles, glass jars, metal cans, and cardboard boxes. When you recycle these things, you're helping to save energy, protect nature, and reduce waste. But here's the fun part: You and your family can get involved, too. You can create a recycling challenge at home, seeing who can collect the most recyclables in a week. Maybe set up different bins in your kitchen or garage for paper, plastic, and metal. Then, when you finish a snack or a drink, decide which bin it goes in. You can also have a special recycling day where you and your family clean out your rooms and gather all the recyclables you find.

Recycling isn't just about tossing stuff into a bin. It's about turning old things into new things. The recycling symbol — those three arrows in a triangle — shows how it works. First, we collect recyclables like empty bottles and paper. Next, those items get cleaned and turned into new materials at a factory. Finally, those materials are used to make new products, like park

benches from plastic bottles or notebooks from old paper.

Here in Bergen County, we recycled 51% of our waste in 2021! That means over half of our materials avoided the landfill and were transformed into something new. Let's see if we can do even better! By recycling, you can be an Earth hero every single day. Let's all work together to keep our planet clean and green!

## A Scrambled Mess

**Instructions:** Thomas and Maria are helping their grandparents with the spring cleaning. They have both learned in school that it is important to put each type of waste in the right place. Unscramble the words in bold and place them into the blanks to complete the sentence.



Credit: Six\_Characters | E+ | Getty Images

- When cleaning out the shed, Maria found some old paint and spray cans. To best care for the environment, her grandparents should take them to a household \_\_\_\_\_ waste drop-off.  
**zadrohaus**
- In the closet, Thomas found a jacket that was too small. He can \_\_\_\_\_ it so that someone else can reuse it.  
**nadote**
- In the backyard, Maria found an old tire. Maria had learned that leaving tires on the ground can spread disease and that burning tires is bad for the air. She asked her grandfather to find out where to take the tire for \_\_\_\_\_.  
**licercyng**
- The shed contained a bunch of old newspapers and glass jars. They placed them into the recycling \_\_\_\_\_.  
**ibn**
- They also found some moldy cardboard. Thomas decided to throw that into the \_\_\_\_\_ because it was too wet and damaged to be recycled.  
**shrat**

# Celebrating Earth Day

On April 22, we will celebrate Earth Day. Americans have been celebrating our special planet and Earth Day since 1970. Each year, Earth Day reminds us to work together to help repair and restore our environment.



Credit: Wavebreakmedia | iStock | Getty Images Plus

While Earth Day is a great time to do something extra for our planet, we need to remember that we should take care of our amazing planet every day. It's like your sibling — you celebrate their birthday, but it's good to be nice to them all year! The Earth is our home, and it's the only one we've got, so we should treat it well. Here are some things you can do year-round to take care of our home planet:

- **Save energy:** Turn off computer monitors or laptops when you aren't using them. Unplug power adapters for cell phones, tablets, and laptops when you aren't charging or using the devices. Turn off lights when you leave the room. Encourage your parents to buy energy-efficient light bulbs, like LEDs, to replace burned-out incandescent bulbs. Oh, and don't stand with the refrigerator door open! Peek inside and think about what you want with the door shut.
- **Conserve water:** Turn off the water while you brush your teeth. Run the washing machine and dishwasher only with full loads. In the shower, save water by getting clean and getting out.
- **Reduce your waste:** There are lots of small ways to do this. Use both the front and back of your papers. If you take lunch to school, use washable and reusable containers and a reusable lunch bag or box. Before you buy something new, think about whether you really need it or look for something used. (A used hoodie will keep you just as warm!)
- **Recycle:** Recycling is for more than just bottles, jugs, cans, jars, papers, and cardboard. Make sure you're also recycling rechargeable batteries, computers, appliances, tires, and more.
- **Spread the word:** Just because you know about all this stuff doesn't mean that your siblings, cousins, parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, or neighbors do! Be the teacher and explain to them why it's important to help our planet. Share your ideas about how they can help. When we keep our planet clean, we keep everyone's home clean.

## Bergen County Schools Receive Environmental Grants

For 20 years, the Bergen County Utilities Authority (BCUA) has supported schools through the Environmental Awareness Challenge Grant program. Open to both public and private schools in Bergen County, this program encourages environmental stewardship and equips students with the skills to take responsible actions for a greener future.

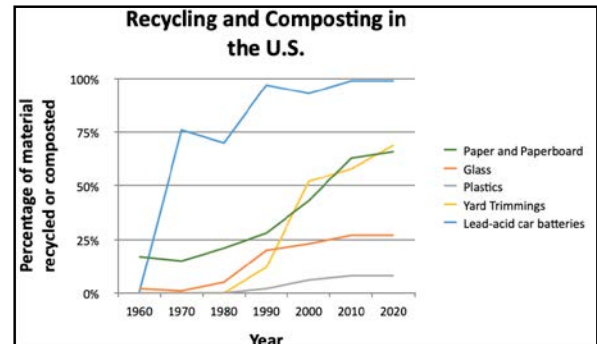
Funded entirely by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, these grants specifically support recycling and environmental education initiatives. Through this program, students and educators work together to create innovative projects that make a positive impact on the environment. For more information about the Environmental Awareness Challenge Grant program, visit the BCUA website or contact our offices.

# Grasping Graphs

**Instructions:** Graphs are a really easy way to look at data (information). **Line graphs** are often used to show change over time. This graph was created with data found on the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website.



Credit: courtneyk | E+ | Getty Images



Use the information from the bar graph to answer these questions:

1. Since 1970, which items have been recycled at the highest rate? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What year saw the same percentage of recycling for yard trimmings and glass? \_\_\_\_\_
3. From 1990 to 2000, which material experienced the largest increase? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which material has consistently had the lowest recycling rates? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How much did paper and paperboard recycling increase from 1960 to 2020? \_\_\_\_\_

### Bonus:

Car and other vehicle batteries contain lead, which is harmful to humans and the environment. This is why these batteries should be recycled instead of being put into landfills. Search online for "car battery recycling" and write the name of a business or location near you that accepts car batteries for recycling.

## Inspect to Detect



Credit: Image Source | E+ | Getty Images

**Instructions:** Reading and writing can be a mystery. Some words are read out loud exactly the same but are spelled differently. Depending on the spelling, the word means something different. You need to think like a detective looking for clues and read the entire sentence to figure out the correct way to use each word. The word sets below include special types of homonyms, called heterographs, which include words that are pronounced the same but have different meanings, depending on how words are spelled. Fill in the blanks with the correct heterograph set for each sentence. The first sentence has been done for you as an example.

|                  |                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| no, know         | too, to, two                     |
| wear, where      | by, buy                          |
| whether, weather | week, weak                       |
| see, sea         | <del>their, there, they're</del> |

1. There were 46 plastic bottles in their recycling bin, so they're emptying it now.
2. I can plainly \_\_\_\_\_ that if plastic bags blow into the \_\_\_\_\_, they could harm the fish and turtles.
3. Which clothes will you \_\_\_\_\_ to the Earth Day celebration, and \_\_\_\_\_ is it located this year?
4. You can often \_\_\_\_\_ used books at the bookstore \_\_\_\_\_ the park.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ of my friends went \_\_\_\_\_ pick up trash at the playground. I went along, \_\_\_\_\_.
6. We will pick up litter at the park \_\_\_\_\_ we have nice, sunny \_\_\_\_\_ or not.
7. If I don't get enough sleep during the \_\_\_\_\_, I am too \_\_\_\_\_ to play soccer on the weekends.
8. "\_\_\_\_\_." The teacher answered, "I don't \_\_\_\_\_ where to recycle Styrofoam nearby."

**Bonus:** Write a sentence using the homonyms "ate" and "eight."

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## Taking Out the Trash

Have you ever been asked by your parents to take out the trash but you didn't want to? In Shel Silverstein's poem, "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out," Sarah Cynthia Sylvia refuses to take out her family's trash. The problem gets so bad that the garbage ends up reaching "across the state, / From New York to the Golden Gate"! Eventually, Sarah's "garbage reached so high / That it finally touched the sky."



Credit: Dimensions | E+ | Getty Images

While the poem is fun to read, you probably know that one family's trash couldn't cover the entire country or reach the sky. But think about the garbage truck that goes through your neighborhood every week. Together, we and our neighbors do create a lot of trash.

Before you take the garbage out, look in your family's trash. Do you see bottles, cans, jars, cardboard, or paper that could have been recycled? Are there grass clippings or leaves that might have gone into a backyard compost bin? Don't be like Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout! Help your family put trash and recycling in the right place.

To learn more about recycling, visit [bcua.org/recycling](http://bcua.org/recycling). And, please, take the garbage out!

## Grasscycle Those Clippings

Do you make new plans during the spring? Maybe you start walking the dog, going to the park, kicking around the soccer ball, or planting flowers. Spring also means it's time to start mowing the lawn.

It's the time of year when the mower is pulled from its place in the garage and put back to work on the growing grass. That means it's also a good time of year to talk to your family about grasscycling your lawn clippings.

Grasscycling is less work. Instead of stopping to empty the bag of the mower, leave the clippings on your lawn and let nature do the rest. The clippings are small and will break down quickly. This gives your lawn food that it needs (called nitrogen), as well as moisture. So not only is grasscycling easier for your family, but it is also better for your lawn. That's what your parents would call a win-win situation!

It's easy to grasscycle. All you need is the mower you have at home. Simply have an adult remove the bagging attachment and, if needed, insert a safety device over the grass chute. If there isn't a bag attached to your mower, you're already set to grasscycle. Mow as usual, letting the grass fall back onto your lawn.

Talk to your family now about grasscycling!

## What Would You Do?



Credit: PeopleImages | iStock | Getty Images Plus

**Instructions:** Read each problem and then select the two best suggestions. Label one “good” and the other “better.” (Hint: One idea on each list is not a very good idea, so leave that one blank.)

1. After seeing how much packaging is thrown away at lunch, Aiden wants to reduce his lunch waste. What should he do?
  - A. \_\_\_ Bring his lunch in a reusable bag every day with reusable containers and avoid buying food in single-serving packaging.
  - B. \_\_\_ Refuse to take the Styrofoam tray offered to him in the lunch line and hold up other students until a washable tray is provided.
  - C. \_\_\_ Bring food and drinks in recyclable containers, and recycle them.
2. For her friend’s birthday party, Sophia wants to bring a thoughtful gift. What should she do?
  - A. \_\_\_ Spend a month’s allowance on a new video game from the store and then another week’s allowance to buy wrapping paper and a card.
  - B. \_\_\_ Make a picture frame out of old popsicle sticks and buttons and put a picture of the two of them inside.
  - C. \_\_\_ Create a gift certificate promising to take her friend out for ice cream and wrap it in colorful magazine pages.
3. Jayden would like to earn a scout badge by teaching his classmates about recycling. How should he do it?
  - A. \_\_\_ Yell at them every time they throw away a recyclable item.
  - B. \_\_\_ Make a handout explaining every item that can be recycled, where the recycling bins are located, and pass it around.
  - C. \_\_\_ Set up a recycling bin in his classroom, create a poster that shows everything that can be recycled, and hang the poster by the bin.

## Litter in the Can, Not on the Ground

Walking down the street or school hallways, you may notice small pieces of litter lying around. While one piece of litter may not seem like a big deal, it can lead to big problems.



Credit: Antonio\_Diaz | iStock | Getty Images Plus

According to Keep America Beautiful, people are more likely to drop litter where they see other litter on the ground. Once an area becomes littered, more and more litter is likely to pile up until it becomes a nasty mess. Litter doesn’t just make an area look messy — it can be harmful to people and animals. Litter can clog storm drains and pollute streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans. Animals can mistake litter for food and eat something harmful to them. So, that one candy wrapper that you drop on the playground may cause serious problems!

Here are some tips to prevent and reduce litter:

- Don’t litter!
- Make sure the lids are closed on curbside trash and recycling containers.
- Pick up litter. Ask a parent or teacher how to do this safely.
- Organize a litter cleanup at school, at a park, or in your neighborhood. Consider using tongs, gloves, or garbage grabbers to pick up litter safely.

## Adventures in Recycling

Hey, students! Have you ever wondered how you can make a difference for the environment? Reading can be a fun way to learn about taking care of our Earth. Check out this cool book that will show you how your actions can help our planet:

**One Kid’s Trash by Jamie Sumner** In *One Kid’s Trash*, Hugo is a kid just like you, trying to fit in at his new school. But guess what? He has a superpower — he can sort and recycle trash! Through this talent, he makes new friends and finds out that being different is awesome. This funny and heartwarming story teaches you that recycling is cool and important.

Funded by Bergen County Utilities Authority

**Bergen County Utilities Authority**

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