



# MAKE A DIFFERENCE: LITTER CLEANUP

## Description:

Help take care of the environment around you!  
This activity can be repeated several times during this unit.

## Objective:

- Participants will understand how pollution and litter negatively affect the environment and their own health.
- Participants will recognize that they can influence the nature in their neighborhood by taking care of the environment.

## Standards:

### Kindergarten

- SC.K.7.2.D - Communicate solutions that will increase the positive impact of humans on the land, water, air, and/or other living things in the local environment.

### 2nd Grade

- SS 2.1.2.D - Investigate ways to be actively engaged to improve family, school, and community.
- SS 2.3.3.D - Describe how people adapt to their physical environment.
- LA 2.3.2 - Listening: Students will develop and demonstrate active listening skills across a variety of situations

### 3rd Grade

- SS 3.1.2.D - Identify and engage in opportunities to serve the local community.

### 5th Grade

- SS 5.3.3.A - Identify examples of ecosystems and analyze issues related to the natural setting in the United States.

## Materials:

- Trash bags
- Recycling bags
- Gloves
- Discussion questions





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## Background Info:

Picking up litter around your school grounds or around students' homes can make a huge difference in the urban ecosystem. This is something you will discuss in more detail with a Keep Omaha Beautiful educator during virtual or in-person sessions. Here are some reasons to pick up litter:

- Litter is unhealthy for humans. It provides breeding areas for germs and pests, and can cause injury if people step or fall on it. It can also cause auto accidents.
- Litter can be very harmful to wildlife, causing injury and even death. Animals get caught in litter, use litter as nesting materials, and even think that it is food and eat it. We frequently hear about ocean trash and how it affects animals, but litter affects animals in Nebraska, too! To learn about one midwest turtle (from Missouri) and her story, [check out this link](#).
- Litter is ugly. Littered areas influence the economy of an area – people don't want to visit or live in areas that are littered.
- Litter frequently makes its way to storm drains and contributes to water pollution.
- Research has shown that one of the strongest contributors to littering is the prevalence of existing litter. When an area is clean, people are much more likely to keep it clean. The opposite is also true, when people see litter on the ground, they may refrain from appropriately placing waste items in a trash can or recycling container.

## Activity:

1. Explain to the students that you will be cleaning up litter to improve the ecosystem around you. This will help both the animals and the people in your community.
2. Explain that you will be sorting the litter into 2 bags - trash and recycling.
  - **Items for Recycling:**
    - Plastic bottles
    - Aluminum cans (such as soda cans)
    - If you will be taking your recycling to a drop off location that accepts glass, you can also separate your glass. If you do this, glass needs to be placed in a completely separate bag from your other recyclables.
  - **Items for Landfill/Trash:** Everything else - although we can usually recycle paper, when it has been dropped as litter it is usually too damaged or dirty to be recycled so it must go in the trash bin.





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## Activity Continued:

3. After your cleanup, have the students look at the litter they collected. They can work in small groups or as a whole class to discuss the following questions:

- Did you find a lot of litter? What kind of litter did you see most often?
- Did you notice different types of litter in different locations (for example, more writing utensils by the school building or more water bottles by the soccer field?) Why do you think that is?
- How much of the litter you found could have been recycled?
- Could any of the items you found be reused instead of being thrown away?
- Why is it important to pick up litter?
- What would our neighborhood look like if everyone littered? How would you feel about living here?
- What can we do to decrease the amount of litter here?
- What else can we do to take care of our urban ecosystem?

4. If you do this activity multiple times, have students compare what they collected the first time to what they collected during subsequent cleanup events.

## Assessment:

- Student Discussion

