



Keep Streams Clean—Put Litter in its Place!

A Clean Water Education Activity

Grade Level:

Elementary

Duration:

Prep time: 10 minutes

Activity time: 10 minutes +

Subject Area:

Solutions to Water Pollution

Setting:

Open Space/Indoors or Outdoors

Objective:

In this simple and fun relay activity, participants will learn about one easy solution to water pollution. Participants will practice picking up trash and putting it in its place. Litter contributes to the pollution of rivers, lakes and streams.

Materials:

- 4 trash cans (recommended with lids and labels for team names)
- Various litter (recommended minimum 50 pieces of crushed newspaper or paper, cans, plastic bottles, etc.)
- Whistle (optional)

Background:

Have you ever walked next to a stream and seen trash floating in the water? Do you know how it gets there? Every time it rains, rainwater runs off the land and picks up pollutants such as dirt, oil, pet waste, fertilizers, and—yes—litter. The polluted rainwater flows into streets, down storm drains and ditches and eventually into waterways. Never throw anything in the street or down a storm drain that you would not want to drink or swim in! Not only are trashed waterways problematic for people, but they can injure or kill fish and wildlife.

Why should I pick it up? Litter left on sidewalks, streets, yards or other open areas can be washed away and carried by rainwater directly into storm drains and then to nearby rivers, lakes and streams.

It's your responsibility to put litter in its place but it's a small price to pay to protect our water quality. The good news is...You can easily do the right thing! Place litter in a trash can or recycle bin. Everyone will be happier for it!



Keep Streams Clean—Put Litter in its Place!

A Clean Water Education Activity

The Activity:

1. **Facilitators set the field.** Mark 4 relay lines using trash cans. Suggested team names include “Trash Teamsters,” “Litter Lubbers,” “Stream Savers” and “Spic N’ Spans.” Scatter the litter pieces throughout the playing field.
2. **Facilitators lead an orientation for the activity.** Ask participants if they have walked next to a stream and seen trash floating in the water. Talk about the importance of putting litter in its place (see Background).
3. **Teams form and learn the relay rules.** Players divide into 4 teams of equal numbers. Players line up behind the team trash cans. A facilitator demonstrates how to collect a piece of litter and put it in the trash can.
4. **The relay begins.** On the whistle, the first players in line for each team enter the field. Players must collect 1 piece of litter then return to their team trash can, deposit it in the can, and go to the back of their team line (instruct players who have taken their turn to kneel or sit). The next player enters the field and so on. The 1st team to finish the relay wins!
5. **Challenge players** with additional or alternative relay rules:
 - ◆ Watch your step! If any player kicks or steps on a piece of litter that player’s team is automatically disqualified from winning.
 - ◆ Trash matters. From a field of various litter players must collect only the type of the facilitators’ choice.
 - ◆ Recycling matters. Provide each team with a recycling bin in addition to its team trash can. Challenge players to put litter in the proper receptacle.
 - ◆ Time matters. Run the relay for a set number of minutes. The team that collects the most pieces of litter in its team trash can wins.
 - ◆ Speed matters. Run the relay until all litter is collected. The team that collects the most pieces of litter in its team trash can wins.
 - ◆ Size matters. If the group of participants is small (less than 20), consider using 2 instead of 4 teams.
 - ◆ ...Can you think of other variations?

Wrap Up:

Facilitator congratulates the winning team and reminds participants about the importance of putting litter in its place. Encourage participants to “trash it” at home and to tell other family members to do the same.