Ages 5–7

Waste Explorers

Sort it, save it, and make a promise to the planet.

FOR THE ADULT

A gentle first look at what we throw away and where it can go. Children sort picture cards, answer a short picture quiz and finish with a promise they can take home. No real waste is handled at any point.

Time: About 45 minutes (can be split over two sessions)

YOU WILL NEED

- Printed card sheet (one per pair or small group)
- Scissors (adult or child-safe)
- Five sorting mats, or five labelled trays or paper plates
- Coloured pencils
- Printed promise sheet (one per child)

LEARNING GOALS

- Know that many things we use can be used again, recycled or composted instead of thrown away
- Sort everyday items into simple groups and say why
- Understand that some things, like batteries, are only handled by adults
- Choose one thing they will do to make less rubbish

SAFETY FIRST

- Use the picture cards only — no real rubbish is needed for this pack
- Batteries, old phones and broken things are for grown-ups to deal with
- Wash hands after any tidy-up time

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Where does it go?

- Cut out the cards along the dotted lines.
- Look at each picture and say what it is.
- Put each card on the mat where you think it belongs.
- Talk about it: why did you choose that mat?

SORTING MATS



Use it again

Still good — keep it, share it or use it again.



Recycle

Clean and empty — it can be made into something new.



Compost

Food scraps and peel that can turn back into soil.



Rubbish bin

Things that cannot be used again or recycled yet.



Ask an adult

Special things a grown-up takes to a special place.

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Where does it go? — cut-out cards

✂ Cut along the dashed lines.

 **Empty plastic bottle**	 **Drinks can**	 **Cardboard box**
 **Newspaper**	 **Banana peel**	 **Apple core**
 **Vegetable peelings**	 **T-shirt that is too small**	 **Reading book**
 **Toy car**	 **Lunch box**	 **Used tissue**

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Where does it go? — cut-out cards

✂ Cut along the dashed lines.



Crisp packet



Battery



Old mobile phone

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Picture quiz

- Listen to each question.
- Circle the best answer.

1. Your juice bottle is empty. What is the best thing to do?

A. 🗑️ Throw it on the ground B. ♻️ Rinse it and recycle it C. 🛏️ Hide it under the bed

2. Which of these can turn into soil?

A. 🍌 Banana peel B. 🧸 Teddy bear C. 🥫 Metal can

3. Your jumper is too small. What could you do?

A. 👕 Give it to someone smaller B. 🗑️ Put it in the bin C. ✂️ Cut it into tiny bits

4. You find an old battery. What should you do?

A. 🔋 Play with it B. 🙋 Tell a grown-up C. 🗑️ Put it in the rubbish bin

5. Which lunch makes the least rubbish?

A. 🍱 Food in a lunch box B. 🍖 Lots of wrapped snacks

C. 🥤 A drink with a straw and lid

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My Waste Explorer promise

I am a Waste Explorer! This week I promise to…

- [ ] Use my lunch box and water bottle every day
- [ ] Put my rubbish in the right bin
- [ ] Give my old toys and books to someone else
- [ ] Eat up my food or save it for later
- [ ] Tell a grown-up about batteries and broken things
- [ ] Use both sides of my paper
- [ ] Turn off the tap while I brush my teeth
- [ ] My own idea: _____

Explorer's name and drawing

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Notes for teachers and parents

- Science: links to everyday materials and their properties (paper, metal, plastic, fabric) and to how living things decompose.
- Speaking and listening: ask children to justify each choice — 'I put it there because…'. There is often more than one good answer.
- The 'Ask an adult' mat is the key safety message. Reinforce that children never pick up batteries, sharp or broken items.
- Recycling rules differ between buildings, schools and areas. Use your own school's bins as the model and check what your collection service accepts.
- Citizenship / moral education: talk about sharing and looking after shared spaces — reuse is a kind act as well as a green one.
- Answer key: the cards show the most common answer, but accept sensible reasons (for example, a sturdy box could be reused before it is recycled).

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Set up a class swap box for books and toys.
- Start a small class compost caddy for fruit peel (adult-managed).
- Make a 'Waste Explorer' badge for every child who keeps their promise for a week.

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Answer key

WHERE DOES IT GO?

Card	Mat	Why
🧴 Empty plastic bottle	Recycle	Clean, empty bottles can be made into new things.
🥫 Drinks can	Recycle	Metal cans can be melted and made into new cans.
📦 Cardboard box	Recycle	Flattened clean boxes become new card.
📰 Newspaper	Recycle	Clean dry paper can be made into new paper.
🍌 Banana peel	Compost	Peel rots down and helps plants grow.
🍎 Apple core	Compost	Food scraps can become compost for soil.
🥕 Vegetable peelings	Compost	Peelings turn into rich compost.
👕 T-shirt that is too small	Use it again	Someone smaller can wear it next.
📚 Reading book	Use it again	Books can be shared or swapped with friends.
🚙 Toy car	Use it again	Toys that work can go to another child.
🍱 Lunch box	Use it again	Use it again every day instead of wrappers.
🤧 Used tissue	Rubbish bin	Used tissues are dirty and cannot be recycled.
🍟 Crisp packet	Rubbish bin	Shiny mixed wrappers are very hard to recycle.
🔋 Battery	Ask an adult	Batteries can be dangerous — an adult takes them to a special place.
📱 Old mobile phone	Ask an adult	Phones go to special collection points, not the bin.

PICTURE QUIZ

#	Answer	Why
1	B. ♻️ Rinse it and recycle it	Clean, empty bottles can be recycled into new things.
2	A. 🍌 Banana peel	Food scraps like peel can be composted.
3	A. 👕 Give it to someone smaller	Giving it away means it gets used again.
4	B. 🙋 Tell a grown-up	Batteries are for grown-ups to take to a special collection point.
5	A. 🍱 Food in a lunch box	A lunch box can be used again and again.

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