



Food Waste Warriors



Recycling Relay Race!

To get started, a class or group of students needs to be split up into groups of 3 or 4. For each line, there should be four buckets set up—one labeled with “food recovery”, one labeled with “compost”, one labeled with “recycling”, and one labeled with “landfill trash.” Each line will have a deck of cards that can be found below. **Please note these need to be printed out and cut ahead of the game.** Once the game begins, each team will be responsible for going through their deck of cards. One at a time, a person will take a card, sort the item on the card into the right deck, and then will tag the next person in line to continue the cycle until all cards have been sorted.

MATERIALS

- Recycling Relay Race Guide (this document)
- One deck of cards per team, printed (found below)
- Answer Key (found below)
- 4 labeled buckets—share table, compost, recycle, landfill
- Optional: compostable bags to put into the compost bucket
- Optional: real items or plastic fruits/vegetables items, if on hand



RELAY RACE BACKGROUND

Food loss and waste occurs all throughout the food system—from farms to warehouses to grocery stores to restaurants and home kitchens. During prime harvesting time, farmers aren't able to harvest every last apple in the field, so the fruit spoils before it can be picked and transported to a grocery store. Manufacturing facilities may face equipment malfunctions that can cause frozen items like ice cream to spoil before reaching a grocery store. Sometimes we buy too much food at the store, and we have to throw out the food before we can think of something to do with it. Sometimes catering companies make too much food, which leads to waste at the end of the night. Even at the cafeteria, taking more than we can eat during school lunch contributes to food waste.



Food waste has been a significant problem for ages, but it does not have to remain that way. Research estimates that about 50% of the total amount of food that is wasted in the world comes from our own kitchens. This means that we have the ability to reduce food waste in our homes, schools, and communities. Instead of throwing food out, we can share it or compost it. Share tables can be established in school cafeterias to provide a place for students to take extra portions of fruit or uneaten but packaged food if they want. Instead of throwing out whole oranges, we can share them with classmates. Composting food that is not in sharable condition recycles organic matter and turns food scraps into valuable fertilizer that can help plants grow. Instead of throwing out glass bottles, we can recycle the glass material to create new glass items.



INSTRUCTIONS READ ALOUD

The following relay race will challenge you to think about how best to reduce waste in your school cafeteria and beyond. When reducing our waste, the best case scenario is to prevent waste from occurring in the first place, followed by sharing our food with others, and keeping it out of the landfill.



First, consider if your object can be added to the **food recovery** bucket. This is the bucket for a group of unopened food items. If your item is still edible, and the food that you eat could not have been touched by other classmates, you can add this item to the shared table. Oranges with peels are great for the share table, while uneaten apples should not be added as the skin of the apple is edible and has likely been touched by others.

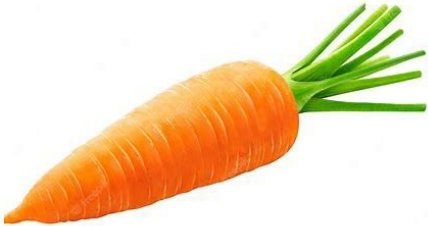


Next, consider if your item can be **composted**. If your item is a food scrap—like potato peels, the peel of a banana, the core of an apple, egg shells, chicken wing bones, your item can likely be composted. (There are exceptions based on how you are composting—backyard composters have more limitations, but industrial sized composters can take pretty much all food scraps). Other things that can be composted include soiled paper products like napkins.



If your item cannot be shared or composted, you should consider if the item can be **recycled** or sent to the **landfill**. Plastic, glass, metal, and paper or cardboard items can usually be recycled at local facilities. Often empty food cans, jugs, and jars can all be recycled. Items that are too small to be recycled—like the stickers on fruit, chip bags, or plastic straws often go to the landfill.

CARD DECK



CARROT



WHOLE APPLE



BANANA PEEL



EGG SHELL



CHICKEN WING



COFFEE GROUNDS



SPINACH



APPLE CORE



CUT AVOCADO



LEFTOVER MILK



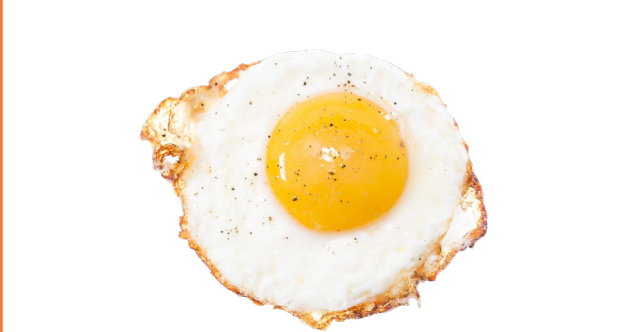
BUTTER



ALMONDS



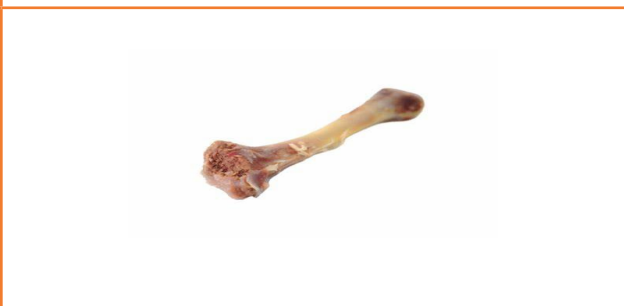
STRAWBERRIES



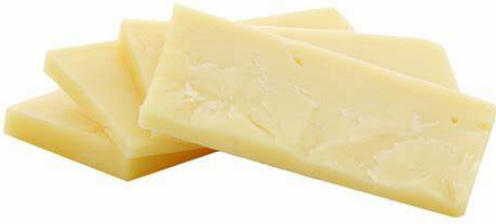
COOKED EGG



BREAD



CHICKEN BONE



CHEESE



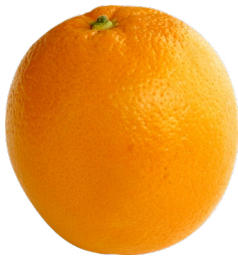
USED PAPER NAPKINS



CELERY STALK



BANANA WITH PEEL



ORANGE WITH PEEL



UNOPENED MILK CARTON



UNOPENED BAG OF APPLES



UNOPENED GRAHAM CRACKERS



FRUIT STICKERS



PLASTIC STRAWS



EMPTY CHIP BAGS



PLASTIC BAGS



EMPTY CAN



EMPTY PLASTIC BOTTLE



EMPTY GLASS BOTTLE



EMPTY PICKLE JAR



EMPTY TUNA CAN



EMPTY WATER BOTTLE



CAT FOOD CAN



CEREAL BOX



OLIVE JAR



SOUP CAN



EMPTY MILK JUG



JELLY JAR



SODA CAN



PEANUT BUTTER



LEFTOVER OATMEAL



PRETZELS



INDIVIDUALLY WRAPPED GRANOLA BAR



UNEATEN CHEESE STICK



UNEATEN PLUM



UNOPENED CRACKERS

ANSWER KEY

SHARE TABLE:

Because all of these items are (1) uneaten and (2) have layers of protection between the edible food inside natural peels or plastic bags/ cartons, they belong on the share table for other students to consume. If the students do not eat the food on the sharetable, they can then be either donated to other organizations or individuals (if in good quality) or composted if not in good edible condition.

Orange with Peel

Unopened Milk Carton

Unopened Bag of Apples

Unopened Packet of Graham Crackers

Banana with Peel

COMPOST:

All of these items can be placed into a commercial composting system to create nutrient-rich soil. Sometimes backyard composters that schools have cannot take items like meat, bones, or dairy products. Check with your school to see if you transport your compost to a commercial composting facility or if you have a backyard composting bin near the school campus to determine what would be best to compost.

Carrots

Milk

Whole apple

Peanuts

Banana Peels

Strawberries

Egg Shells

Eggs

Chicken Wing

Bread

Coffee Grounds

Meat

Spinach

Cheese

Apple core

Used Paper napkins

Avocadoes

Celery Stalk

Butter

RECYCLE:

All of these items are generally able to be recycled at local recycling centers. Unfortunately, every recycling facility is different, so be sure to check with your local recycling center on rules and regulations regarding what can be recycled and what cannot be recycled.

Empty can	Cereal Box
Empty plastic bottle	Olive Jar
Empty Glass Bottle	Soup Can
Empty pickle jar	Empty Milk Jug
Empty Tuna Can	Jelly Jar
Empty Water Bottle	Soda Can
Cat Food Can	

LANDFILL:

It is extremely rare for these items to be compostable or recyclable. Oftentimes these plastics will enter the landfill after being used once.

Fruit Stickers	Empty chip bags
Plastic Straws	Plastic bags