

# Garbology Lesson: Reusing Winter Waste

Grades K-4; K-4 Standards

## Lesson Summary

Students will learn the benefits of reuse by making a winter decoration with reused items.

## Overview

In this lesson, students will:

- Discuss types of materials used during the holidays.
- Brainstorm ways to make less garbage during the holidays.
- Create a snowman tabletop decoration from reused items.

## Time

45 minutes

## Vocabulary

- Waste
- Reuse
- Reduce
- Reusable
- Disposable
- Natural resources

## Preparation

- Read background information and *What are Natural Resources?* Fact Sheet.
- Make sample snowman decoration.
- Ask students to bring listed materials from home. (see page 1)
- Pass out *What are Natural Resources?* Fact Sheet and have students take turns reading aloud. Or read Fact Sheet to class.

## Background

Winter holidays are a fun time of year! Friends and family get together to celebrate different traditions, share festive meals, and exchange gifts. Unfortunately, the packaging and wrapping paper that usually comes with gifts, decorations, and other disposable holiday items often end up in the garbage. In fact, it is estimated that between Thanksgiving and the New Year, Americans throw away 25% more trash than during the rest of the year. That means an extra million tons of waste are generated nationwide *every* week! It also means that natural resources-those things we take from nature like trees, metal, and petroleum-are wasted.

An easy way to help protect nature and reduce garbage during the holiday season is to reuse things! That means using something over again before recycling, composting, or throwing it away and fixing a

## Materials

- *What are Natural Resources?* Fact Sheet
- White office paper used on one side
- Snowman stencil (included at end of lesson)
- Black construction paper
- Glue stick or craft glue
- Bare toilet paper roll\*
- Empty egg carton\*
- Used ribbon, buttons\*
- Other decorative items such as old jewelry, beads, and fabric\*

\* Ask students to bring these from home or start collecting them over time.



For more classroom resources, visit:

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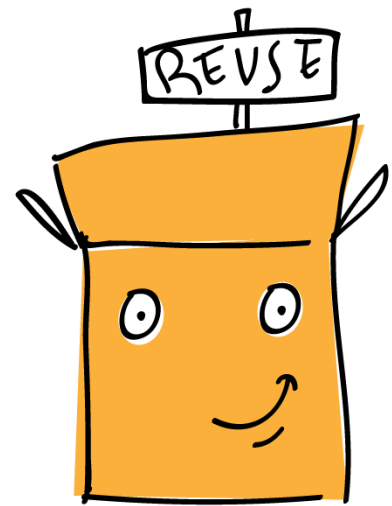
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broken item instead of buying it again new. Reusing is a great way to extend the life of things we buy and save natural resources!

There are many ways to reuse during winter holidays. For example, when throwing a holiday party, provide reusable glasses, dishes, and cloth napkins instead of disposable ones. Use a reusable cloth bag when shopping for presents and consider giving a non-material gift such as poems or a “coupon book” redeemable for things like free babysitting, car washing, or dog walking. Instead of buying wrapping paper, use cloth bags, vintage scarves, fabric scraps, comic pages from the newspaper or old maps to wrap gifts. If every American family wrapped just three presents in reused materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.

Another way to protect nature by using less stuff is by being creative and making decorations from reused materials. Using a glue stick, some glitter and some imagination, you can turn old jar lid, buttons, boxes, fabrics and plastic bottles into fun and festive items!



### Pre-Activity Questions

Ask students:

1. What are natural resources? (*Natural resources come from nature and are used or turned into things we want and need.*)
2. Can you name one thing in this room, in your home or at the store that doesn't come from something found in nature? (*Impossible to do. Everything we use originally came from something found in nature. Oil produces energy, plastics and chemicals; trees make paper, wood items and rayon clothing; rocks and minerals make cement and metals; plants make food and fabrics, etc.*)
3. What happens to nature when we remove natural resources? (*It gets damaged or destroyed and animals and other living things that live in those natural areas often lose their homes and their ability to survive.*)
4. Since everything we use comes from something found in nature, can we help protect nature and animals by using less stuff? (*Yes.*)
5. What does it mean if something is disposable? (*It means we throw it away after using it once.*)
6. What would be an example of a disposable item? (*a plastic fork, a paper napkin, a paper plate, a plastic cup*)
7. What does it mean if something is reusable? (*It means we can use it again and again.*)
8. What are some items we use during the holidays that can be reused and how? (*Reuse ribbons and bows; use leftover cards for gift tags, reuse wrapping paper; wrap gifts in newspaper.*)
9. What does reducing our use of something mean? (*use less of it*)
10. What are some items we can reduce or use less of during the holidays and how? (*Use less plastic bags by shopping with cloth bags, use less wrapping paper by wrapping gifts in scarves, fabrics or newspaper, only put ribbon and bows on big items, use reusable plates, forks, spoons and cups instead of disposable ones, make decorations from used items instead of buying them.*)
11. Is it better for nature if we reduce the amount of things we use or if we use as much as we want and reuse those things? (*It's always better to first reduce the amount of things we use, and then to reuse*)

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those things. Since everything comes from nature, using less stuff is always the best way to protect nature.)

12. If we want to reduce the amount of stuff we use, what could we use to decorate our classroom or homes for the holidays without buying things from the store? (*Make decorations from things we find or already have.*)

### Classroom Activity

1. Tell students they are going to be making snowman decorations with their reusable items.
2. Ask students to name what reused items they brought from home and write their answers on the board. Do this for a couple of minutes. You may also want to list the reusable items that you brought in.
3. Have each student cut a piece of white paper into a rectangle shape and paste it so that it completely rolls around and covers the toilet paper roll.
4. Have students glue three pieces of used white office paper together in order to create a thick piece of paper (or you can use white construction paper). White sides should be facing out.
5. Tell students to trace the snowman stencil onto their white paper and then cut out the snowman.
6. Have students choose from reused buttons, foil, fabrics, beads, and ribbons and glue them on as eyes, noses and buttons. Students can also draw them on.
7. Let the decorated snowman dry while lying flat.
8. Once fully dry, instruct the students to glue their snowman cutout onto the toilet paper roll so this it is standing upright.
9. Tell students that they will now make a top hat for their snowman. Have them cut a black circle of construction paper for the bottom of the hat. The diameter of the circle needs to be about 3 inches. They can also use the bottom circle of the snowman as a template if needed.
10. Give students one egg carton section for the top of the hat and ask them to glue it upside down onto the black circle. They can paint the egg carton section black with paint or a felt marker.
11. Have students use the reused ribbon, fabric, or jewelry to make a scarf for their snowman.



### Discussion Questions

1. How does reusing help protect nature? (*It means we don't have to make new things out of resources that come from nature.*)
2. What other ways can you reuse and make less garbage during the holiday season? (Use less plastic bags by shopping with cloth bags, use less wrapping paper by wrapping gifts in scarves, fabrics or newspaper, only put ribbon and bows on big items, use reusable plates, forks, spoons and cups instead of disposable ones, make decorations from used items instead of buying them.)

### National Science Standards Addressed

- Grades K-4: Abilities of technological design (4EST1)  
We get resources from the living and nonliving environment (4FSPSP3.1)  
People continue inventing new ways of doing things/solving problems (4FSPSP5.1)

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Print and cut out these templates for students to use when tracing their snowman onto paper.

