

# It's Not Easy Being Green or Reconsidering the Three Rs

## AIM

To raise students' awareness of the "reduce, reuse, recycle" campaign and to encourage them to take an active role in environmental stewardship while teaching vocabulary and grammatical forms.

## OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, students will be able to:

- Understand how to reduce waste, reuse items and recycle.
- Identify items that can and cannot be recycled.
- Comprehend and produce correct word forms for "reduce, reuse, recycle."
- Demonstrate correct usage of regular past tense verb endings.

## TARGET GROUP

High beginning– to low intermediate–level students (levels 3–5)

(For the purpose of this lesson, the target levels range from 1 through 8, with the following guidelines:

1 = beginning, 5 = intermediate, 8 = advanced.)

## LENGTH

Three 60-minute lessons

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will learn about recycling and how to talk about it, take an inventory of their own recycling practices, and start a class recycling project. They will also engage the community by speaking to people regarding ways to reduce waste.

## DAY ONE

### 1. Schema Building

Begin by playing the audio clip of "What does 'green' mean to you?" at <http://jparent.weebly.com>. Click on "It's Not Easy Being Green".

Invite students to respond by asking them the same question.

Then show them a newspaper, a brown paper bag, a plastic bottle and a glass bottle (use the real objects or photos or a combination) and ask, "What do these items have in common?"

Write on the board:            We can **recycle** them.  
   They're **recyclable**.

### 2. Vocabulary Building

To assist students in their understanding of the vocabulary of the lesson, write *reduce*, *reuse* and *recycle* on the board.

Tell students that they're going to talk about the meaning of the prefix "re-." Give as examples the words "reuse," "remodel" and "retake."

Explain the definition of the prefix, then ask students about the meaning of the word "cycle." Draw a picture showing the recycle icon:



Encourage students to deduce the definition of the word "recycle," then offer the definition from the dictionary or suggest that a student look up the definition for the class.

**Recycle** (verb) – *to put used objects or materials through a special process so that they can be used again.*

**MATERIALS**

- **“The Veggie Van,”** a segment from NOW (PBS); video clip available at <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/522/veggie-van.html>.
- **“It’s no garbage strike—Man keeps a year’s worth of trash,”** an article from the San Francisco Chronicle, 12/30/ 2007; available at <http://links.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/12/30/BAFFU493E.DTL>.
- Audio clip **“What does ‘green’ mean to you?”** is available at <http://jparent.weebly.com>. Click on **“It’s Not Easy Being Green.”**
- For more about living an eco-friendly life, visit the links listed at <http://www.kqed.org/tv/programs/faq/going-green.jsp>.
- Calculate your carbon footprint and identify ways to save energy in your home at <http://coolcalifornia.org/>.
- Find a recycling center near you and learn more about local environmental programs and topics at <http://earth911.org/california>.
- **Zero Waste California** <http://www.zerowaste.ca.gov/> – the California Integrated Waste Management Board information and resource site.
- **Eco-Cycle** <http://www.ecocycle.org/hazwaste/recipes.cfm> – has a section on tips and recipes for nontoxic household cleaners.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/compost/> – visit this page to learn more about composting.
- Get free, daily, easy-to-follow tips for living a greener life at <http://www.idealbite.com/>.
- Do you know how to safely dispose of fluorescent lamps and tubes? Learn more at <http://www.ciwm.ca.gov/WPIE/FluoresLamps/>.
- [www.ecycle.org](http://www.ecycle.org) has information about where to recycle electronic waste in California.
- Search for used-oil recycling centers in California at <http://www.ciwm.ca.gov/UsedOil/Centers/>.

Give students examples of how the word, in various forms, is used in sentences:

- “She **recycles** her newspapers every week.”
- “There is a lot of **recycling** to take out today.”
- “Is your container **recyclable**?”

Display a word form chart with the overhead projector. Using vocabulary words, fill in parts of speech, with students offering the correct usage.

**WORD FORM CHART**

Noun	Verb	Adjective
reuse	reuse	reusable
reduction	reduce	reduced
recycling	recycle	recyclable

**3. Applying Vocabulary**

Apply the vocabulary to real life. Initiate a discussion using these general questions, encouraging students to use the vocabulary words they have learned:

- Do you recycle? How? Where?
- Does the garbage/waste management division in your city have a recycling program? How does it work? How much does it cost?
- Show pictures of curbside recycling bins. Ask students if they know about the application process.
- What else can we recycle? (*clothes, oil, cell phones, car parts, furniture, etc.*)

**4. Pre-Listening Exercise**

If necessary, go over the following vocabulary words and phrases in preparation for viewing the video clip **“The Veggie Van,”** from NOW (<http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/522/veggie-van.html>).

- climbing the professional ladder
- entrepreneurial attitude
- biodiesel
- curly bulbs
- environmentalist
- plastic bag initiative
- cutting down on carbon emissions

Explain the concept of a collocation, and ask students to listen for collocations with the word “green” while they’re viewing the clip and to jot them down. They should find the following:

- going green
- green organization
- greener American infrastructure
- green lingo
- green collar job

**5. Listening Exercise**

Stream the clip “**The Veggie Van**” and invite students to discuss the following questions in groups and then as a class:

- What are they recycling? Why?
- In what ways is the recycling helping?
- What else can we recycle? *(Add to the list started earlier.)*

**Homework**

Ask students to complete an inventory of recyclable items at home: plastic bottles, paper and plastic bags, newspapers, cans, glass, and so on. Did they reuse, recycle or discard the item? Make copies of this chart and distribute one to each student. Ask students to fill in the chart with the quantity of each item.

Recyclable Items:	Plastic Bottles	Paper Bags	Plastic Bags	Glass	Cardboard	Newspapers
Reused						
Discarded						
Recycled						

In addition, set up three or four boxes in the classroom and ask students to bring in items to recycle. This can be an ongoing project.

**DAY TWO**

**1. Discussion**

Have students break into groups and share their inventory of recycled, reused and discarded items with group members. Suggest they answer these questions about their inventories.

- What did you reuse the most?
- What did you discard the most?
- What did you recycle the most?
- Is there anything that you discarded that you could have recycled instead?

Then encourage each group to share its findings with the class.

## 2. Grammar Exercise

Use this as an opportunity to review the past tense of the words “recycle” (recycled), “reuse” (reused) and “discard” (discarded). As examples, write answers from the group discussions on the board:

Trinh **reused** his paper bags from Trader Joe’s.

Maria **recycled** her soda bottles.

Yolanda **discarded** her plastic bags.

Reinforce the use of “did” in questions that are in past tense (remind students that when “did” is used, “ed” is *not* added to the main verb):

What did Jose **recycle**?

What did Manny **reuse**?

Encourage students to direct similar questions to other classmates.

## 3. Survey: Which Recyclables Concern You the Most?

Each group should take an informal survey of their classmates on issues of most concern. Students can write the questions themselves or use the following as a starting point:

If the issue is **bags**, the questions might be:

When did you last go grocery shopping?

What kind of bag did you use?

How many bags did you use?

What did you do with the bags after you got home?

Can you use the bags again?

In your native country, what do people use to carry groceries?

If the issue is **bottles**, the questions might be:

Do you drink bottled water? If so, how often?

How much bottled water do you buy every week?

Do you throw the bottles away? If so, what else might you do with the bottles?

How do people get their drinking water in your native country?

How do most people in this city get their drinking water?

Summarize the survey results. Keep the information for use when the class is deciding on a classroom project.

## 4. Comparison Activity

To clarify what we can and cannot recycle have students come up with items and make two lists on the board. (Refer to “The Veggie Van” clip to remind students that we can recycle oil.)

### We can recycle ...

newspapers  
cardboard  
bottles  
magazines  
cans

### We can't recycle ...

pizza containers  
Styrofoam  
plastic wrap  
hazardous materials

## 5. Community Action

Ask students how they might get involved. If we can recycle so many items, what can we do to encourage people to recycle?

Have groups brainstorm ideas. (*for example: letter writing, volunteering with a waste management company to do recycling, setting up recycling centers on campus, talking to other students, writing an advice list for ESL students*)

What can we do as a class project?

## Homework

Have students do one of the following, depending on what the class decides:

- Find out how to sign up for recycling with the waste management company and encourage others to sign up.
- Make “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” signs to display around the campus.
- Write a letter to the school principal, the local college president, editor of the local newspaper and/or the city council.
- Make a list of recycling tips for parents.
- Create a recycling program for the ESL program. Begin with the items that students brought in for homework.

## DAY THREE

### 1. Review

Ask students:

- What can/can't you recycle?
- What can/can't you reuse?
- How can/can't you reduce waste?

### 2. Background Information

Introduce the concept of “waste free” or “zero waste” lunches by having groups brainstorm what they bring for lunch to work and / or school. What do they put it in? What do they buy? Put the list from each group on the board.

Have each group come up with dos and don'ts for reducing waste just from lunch. Give each group an overhead transparency and pen so they can share their list on the overhead projector. Put a master list together from the different groups. It might look like the following:

**Reducing Waste: Dos and Don'ts**

**DO:**

- Pack your own lunch.
- Use reusable containers.
- Use reusable utensils when you need utensils.
- Use cloth napkins instead of paper napkins or paper towels.
- Use lunch boxes instead of paper or plastic bags.
- Use thermoses or stainless steel bottles.

**DON'T:**

- Buy Lunchables or similar products.
- Use paper towels or napkins.
- Buy juice boxes, Capri Sun or other drinks in disposable containers.
- Use plastic bags.
- Use plastic utensils.
- Use plastic water bottles.
- Buy prepackaged salads or lunches in plastic containers.

**3. Community Engagement**

Ask students to take their knowledge about reducing waste outside the classroom. Ask them, "Who could you advise about this 'waste-free lunch' idea?"

Make copies of the chart below and distribute one to each student. Have students write down the name of the person, their relationship to the person and how they will advise him / her about waste-free lunches.

Name of person			
Relationship			
Advice you will give			

#### 4. Grammar exercise

Suggest ways of giving advice. Explain that people are more likely to respond to requests that include “might,” “could” and “would” than they are to demands like “you need to ...,” “do this ...” and “don’t do that ...” For example, “Aunt Jane, I noticed that you don’t recycle plastic bottles. You could start recycling; it’s really easy. I’ll show you how.” “You might think about recycling your newspapers, Uncle Joe. It’ll help the environment, and it’s so easy. I’ll help you.” Have students practice giving this advice with a partner.

#### Homework

Make copies of the chart below and distribute one to each student. Have students take an inventory of their lunch for the week.

#### WASTE-FREE LUNCH INVENTORY

	Example	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Packaging	plastic bag, lunch box, water bottle					
Food	sandwich, water, cherries, bag of chips					

#### 6. Writing Development

Have students evaluate their waste-free lunch inventory. Have them write down their answers to these questions: “How did you do at having a waste-free lunch? Could you **reuse** some of the containers? Could you **recycle** some of them?” Ask them to include ways they could improve their packaging habits.

Encourage students to share their ideas.

#### 7. Reading/Writing Expansion

Have students read the article “**It’s no garbage strike—Man keeps a year’s worth of trash**” (<http://links.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/12/30/BAFFU493E.DTL>), about Ari Derfel, an individual who saved all his garbage for a year. (You may need to prepare a shortened version rewritten to a level appropriate for your students.)

As a class, read Ari Derfel’s blog at <http://saveyourtrash.typepad.com/>. Then ask students to follow his procedure themselves for three days to see how much garbage they accumulate. They should then write a reflection piece titled “Three Days’ Worth of Trash.”

### 8. Other Writing Topics

Select from these topics/activities, depending on the level of your students:

- Write about what you can do in your life to reduce waste.
- Write a letter to the city council persuading them to mandate recycling in this city.
- Compare recycling habits in this country with the recycling habits in your native country.
- Compare a waste-free lunch with a disposable lunch.