

Earth-Friendly Picnic



Grade Level: Preschool- Adult

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Supplies: composting bucket, recycling container & small garbage bag

Location: School grounds, local park, or fieldtrip location

Objective: Students (and their parents) will pack a picnic lunch using a minimum of disposable items. After the picnic we will sort the waste into recyclables, items that can be composted (or fed to composting worms!) and garbage.

This can be the sole activity or part of a school fieldtrip. The picnic works especially well after the students have participated in the *Redworms Eat My Garbage* program.

There are many ways to implement the ecological picnic, but the two most popular picnics are listed here:

1. Go on two picnics. Do a typical sack lunch and then an ecological picnic and compare the waste.
 - After the first lunch, we can send a letter home with the students with tips for packing an earth-friendly lunch.
 - Depending on the age of the students and equipment, the class could weigh the garbage, recyclables, and organic material at each picnic and prepare charts to share their results.
2. Have a competition between two classes to see which class produces the smallest pile of garbage at a fieldtrip or sack lunch day.
 - Both teachers will work with their students, going over the ecological picnic tips. Prior to the picnic, students will take a note home with low-waste ideas.

In the original curriculum, they included a *Friendship Salad*, where the children brought fresh fruit or canned fruit (nothing on foam trays or wrapped in plastic). Adult volunteers would wash and chop the fruit to make a big fruit salad. Each student would need to bring a small dish and a spoon. After the picnic, all the watermelon rinds, apple cores and banana peels could be fed to the composting worms or placed in the compost bucket.

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Tips for an Earth-friendly Picnic

The lure of disposable products in our fast paced world seems to strengthen each year. Who wants to wash dirty dishes and utensils after a long day at the beach, while camping, or after that potluck? Just toss the stuff away, shove it in a trash barrel and it just disappears!

Wise students know that there is no such thing as "away", and all garbage must go somewhere. But most children today need to observe low-waste behavior in order to model their behavior after it. The earth-friendly picnic is a simple exercise in wise decision-making that children as young as four can understand.

Here are some tips for packing an "earth-friendly lunch":

- Pack sandwiches in reusable containers or foil instead of baggies
- Send beverages that come in recyclable or reusable containers
- Match the size of the student to the size of the drink and food
- Avoid disposable forks and spoons, use the real thing
- Send the lunch in a lunch bag or box
- Avoid juice boxes, Lunchables, and other excessively packaged products
- Try using cloth napkins, instead of paper napkins
- Don't over-pack the lunch with perishable items, they'll just end up in the trash at the end of the picnic
- Choose fruits that come with their own natural wrapper
- Pack fruits and vegetables from your own garden or a farmer's market
- Avoid wrappers when you can. Less than 1% are recyclable.

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