

RECYCLING OLYMPICS

AGES

Children 8+ years

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Run a weekly program in a local park or forest! Families meet to hear stories about animals and ecosystems, to engage in fun recycling games, or to clean up the trail or area. If you can partner with a park, have a park ranger or volunteer give talks about local wildlife and environmental concerns. The program can also be adapted to a cleanup walk near the library if a local park is not an option.

Recycling game ideas include a sorting race, a water bottle toss, and a litter relay, all well-suited for teams of five players or fewer. You might also make simple modifications to these games to suit your local environment. For example, if wetland turtles in your area can

choke on plastic bags or rings, set up the relay with those items instead of paper. Suggested runtime: 90–120 minutes



Image source: Shutterstock

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

For the recycling race, each team will need:

- Assorted recyclables
- Three recycling bins (paper, plastic, and cans)

The first team to sort correctly wins.

For the water bottle toss, you will need:

- Silicone or steel reusable water bottles
- Water
- A target (rope, spray paint, or poster board)

Fill the water bottles with water (fill only partway for young children). You can make the target out of interlocking circles of rope or spray paint, or draw the circles on poster board. Each player tries to hit the target on the ground; award points based on proximity.

TIP:

You can also create instructions for crafts made out of recycled materials for participants to take home. See Chapter 04: Backyard Habitats for some ideas.

For the trash relay, each team will need:

- A reusable shopping bag
- Five scraps of paper or other recyclables
- Two traffic cones to mark the start and end lines (optional)

To play, the first team member runs to the end line, picks up one piece of paper and puts it in the bag, then runs back to the start line. Repeat until all team members have gone. The first team to finish wins.

For the park or neighborhood cleanup, you will need:

- Plastic gloves
- Trash bags
- Buckets for sharp objects
- Water
- Insect repellent
- First aid supplies

For the program overall, you could add:

- A whistle
- Prizes such as reusable bags and water bottles
- Certificates of achievement

UNIQUE SPACE AND PERSONNEL NEEDS

If possible, partner with a local park for access to local habitat information and activities adapted to your specific ecosystem.

RESOURCES

Books

Picture Books

Bathing in the Forest (2020) by Marc Ayats and Nívola Uyá (NF)

Mother Earth's Lullaby: A Song for Endangered Animals (2018) by Terry Pierce and Carol Heyer (NF)

A Peek-Through Pages Book of Endangered Animals (2019) by Tim Flach (NF)

Room on Our Rock (2019) by Kate Temple et al. (F)

Early Readers

Join the No-Plastic Challenge!: A First Book of Reducing Waste (2019) by Scot Ritchie (NF)

APP SUGGESTION:

Try JouleBug, a free sustainability game by Cleanbit Systems (12+ years).

Middle Grade

All that Trash: The Story of the 1987 Garbage Barge and Our Problem with Stuff (2018) by Meghan McCarthy (NF)

Earth-Friendly Earth Day Crafts (2019) by Veronica Thompson (NF)

Me and Marvin Gardens (2017) by Amy Sarig King (F)

Trash Revolution: Breaking the Waste Cycle (2018) by Erica Fyvie (NF)

What a Waste (2017) by Claire Eamer and Bambi Edlund (NF)

YA

Cast Away: Poems for Our Time (2020) by Naomi Shihab Nye (F)

Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Motion (2010) by Loree Griffin Burns (NF)

The Wondrous Workings of Planet Earth: Understanding Our World and Its Ecosystems (2018) by Rachel Ignotofsky (NF)