

materials

Looking after materials and our planet

Lesson at a glance

Hold up one clean classroom scrap and ask where it should go. Teach the three paths with a reuse-first decision order, then groups sort clean tray waste into recycle, compost and reuse hoops. Pupils record three item-plus-reason rows on the Investigation Journal page. A short IWB card check locks the same order, then the class agrees one practical use-less or reuse action for the week.

Learning objectives

- Sort clean waste into recycle, compost and reuse
- Agree one practical use less or reuse action for the class

Before the bell – prep

Collect a day's clean classroom scraps only (paper, clean pots/bottles, fabric, card). Use a dry leaf and/or picture cards for compost — no sticky food. Set three labelled hoops/trays per group plus a Not sure zone, gloves, and the Journal page. Check what your school recycling accepts.



**Materials**

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
clean classroom waste samples (paper offcuts, clean card, clean pots or bottles, fabric scraps, dry leaves)	1	class	classroom	picture cards of common clean waste items if real samples are short
picture cards of food scraps for compost sorting (apple core, banana peel)	1	group	classroom	dry leaf only as the compost sample; teacher holds up a single class set of food-scrap pictures
labelled sorting trays or hoops (recycle, compost, reuse) plus a small Not sure zone	1	group	classroom	four sheets of paper on the floor as sort zones
category picture cue cards (recycle, compost, reuse)	1	group	classroom	simple word labels only on the trays
disposable or washable gloves	1	pupil	supermarket	shared class set of washable gloves, sanitised between groups
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	plain paper with three headed columns drawn by the pupil
handwashing soap and access to a sink or sanitiser	1	class	classroom	hand sanitiser if sink access is limited

Safety watch-point

Clean items only — no sticky food, sharp tins or bathroom waste. Gloves on during the sort; wipe spills; wash hands at pack-away.



Teaching moves

- **Recycle, compost or reuse?:** Project only the three short board labels. Model one item aloud end-to-end with the load-bearing order: food/garden scrap → compost; still useful in class → reuse; clean and accepted at school → recycle; otherwise rubbish. Keep definitions tiny — the tray will teach the rest.
- **Sort our clean waste:** Gloves on. Circulate and press the same three questions on every sticky moment. Celebrate reuse-first choices before recycle. If a group dumps items without reasons, pause them and ask 'why that hoop?' Use the Not sure pile rather than forcing a wrong bin.
- **Record our sorts:** Straight after the tray, before the board check. Three item-plus-reason rows only; keep recycle, compost, reuse visible on the board for writers. Spot-check that reasons match the taught order, not just a category name.
- **Check on the board:** Drive the interactive as a quick whole-class vote, devices away. Read each card, take a chorus answer, then drag. Keep the on-screen path identical to the tray: compost question first, reuse before recycle. If pupils argue clean paper could be reused first, celebrate it.
- **Our class action:** Display-only talk. Capture ideas on the IWB or noticeboard — keep them small and real (both sides of paper, scrap tray for craft, reusable bottles). Agree one action only; have two pupils restate it so the class owns it.



What it should show

Expect food/garden cards and dry leaves in compost; jars, fabric and still-useful card/pots in reuse; clean bottles and surplus clean paper/card in recycle when the school bin takes them. A group that recycles a yoghurt pot they could use as a pencil holder skipped the reuse step — re-ask 'could we still use it in class?'



Misconceptions & interventions

- **Dirty food packaging can go straight in the recycling bin.** — Point back to the clean-only trays: sticky peels stay off and only clean items are sorted today. Revoice 'clean and accepted at school' before recycle.
- **Recycling is the first and best choice for every scrap.** — Hold up a clean jar or cardboard tube and walk the order again: still useful in class? Reuse comes before recycle. Rubbish is last.
- **An apple core or leaf belongs with paper in recycle.** — Ask the first decision question only: is it food or garden scrap? If yes, it goes to compost so it can become soil for plants.



**Differentiation**

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Place category picture cue cards on the hoops and sort beside an adult using the three questions one at a time. • Allow draw-and-label on the Journal rows with the three words copied from the board.	• Ask for a spoken reason with every hoop choice, not only the category name. • Fast finishers add one extra clean classroom item that was not on the tray and say where it would go.	• Challenge the group to name one item they could reuse in a new way before any recycle choice. • Invite a fair critique: which tray item was hardest to place, and why the decision order helped.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to SPHE caring-for-our-world talk and oral language — pupils justify sorts with because-reasons.