

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 fixed decision order—compost, then reuse, then recycle—before groups sort clean waste on labelled trays. Pupils record three item-plus-reason rows on the Investigation Journal page, then settle the “not sure” pile through the sorting-tree interactive. Close by agreeing one practical class 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 offcuts, rinsed pots/bottles, fabric, dry leaves). No sticky food or sharp tins—use picture cards of peels for compost. Set three labelled hoops/trays per group plus a Not sure pile, gloves, and the Investigation Journal page. Open the sorting-tree interactive ready.

**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	teacher-made	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	provided printable	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	provided printable	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 and pack gloves away at the end.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Hold up one clean scrap—a paper offcut or empty yoghurt pot—and ask only where it should go and why. Keep trays and bins out of sight so every 2nd class pupil can guess before the full sort begins.
- **Recycle, compost or reuse?:** Project short board labels only and model the decision order aloud on a cardboard tube: food/garden scrap? still useful in class? clean and accepted in school recycling? rubbish last. Stress reuse before recycle; keep definitions to one sentence each.
- **Sort our clean waste:** Gloves on. Circulate pressing the same order: Is it food or garden scrap? Could we use it again? Does our school recycling take it clean? Celebrate reuse-first choices and park doubts in the Not sure pile for the board check.
- **Record our sorts:** Straight after the tray sort, send pupils to the Investigation Journal page for three item-plus-reason rows. Keep the three words—recycle, compost, reuse—on the board. Check that reasons match the taught order, not just category names.
- **Check the tricky ones:** Drive the sorting-tree interactive yourself in explore mode and run only the Not sure items you heard on the floor—rinsed yoghurt pot, fabric scrap, used paper towel, bottle top, tea bag. Accept a reasoned wrong answer and ask what would change it.
- **Our class action:** Capture small real ideas on the IWB (both sides of paper, scrap tray for craft, reusable bottle). Agree one action only, have two pupils restate it, and stop—no project plan.

What it should show

Most groups put dry leaves or peel cards in compost, clean paper/card and rinsed bottles in recycle, and jars, tubes or fabric in reuse. Strong sorts name reuse before recycle. A common slip is recycling used paper towels or dirty pots—redirect to clean-only and rubbish as last resort.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils put any paper-like or plastic item straight into recycle, even if dirty or still useful.** — Hold up the sticky or reusable item and replay the order: still useful in class? clean and accepted here? Only then recycle—dirty packaging is not for today's trays.
- **Pupils think recycle is the best choice and skip reuse.** — Point at a clean jar or blank-sided paper and ask what job it could still do in class. Name reuse first, then recycle only if there is no class use.
- **Pupils send food-scrap picture cards or peels to recycle because they came in packaging.** — Ask: is it food or garden scrap? If yes, compost. Keep real sticky peels off trays; use the dry leaf or picture card as the model.



Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Add picture cue cards on the Recycle, Compost and Reuse hoops and let pupils sort with a partner while saying the three board words. • Accept a drawing plus one dictated reason on the Investigation Journal row.	• Prompt each choice with the full decision order and ask for a one-line why on every journal row.	• Challenge the group to name one new classroom reuse for an item before it goes to recycle, and add one extra clean item from the room to the journal.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to SPHE caring-for-our-world talk and oral English—pupils justify each sort with a full because sentence.