

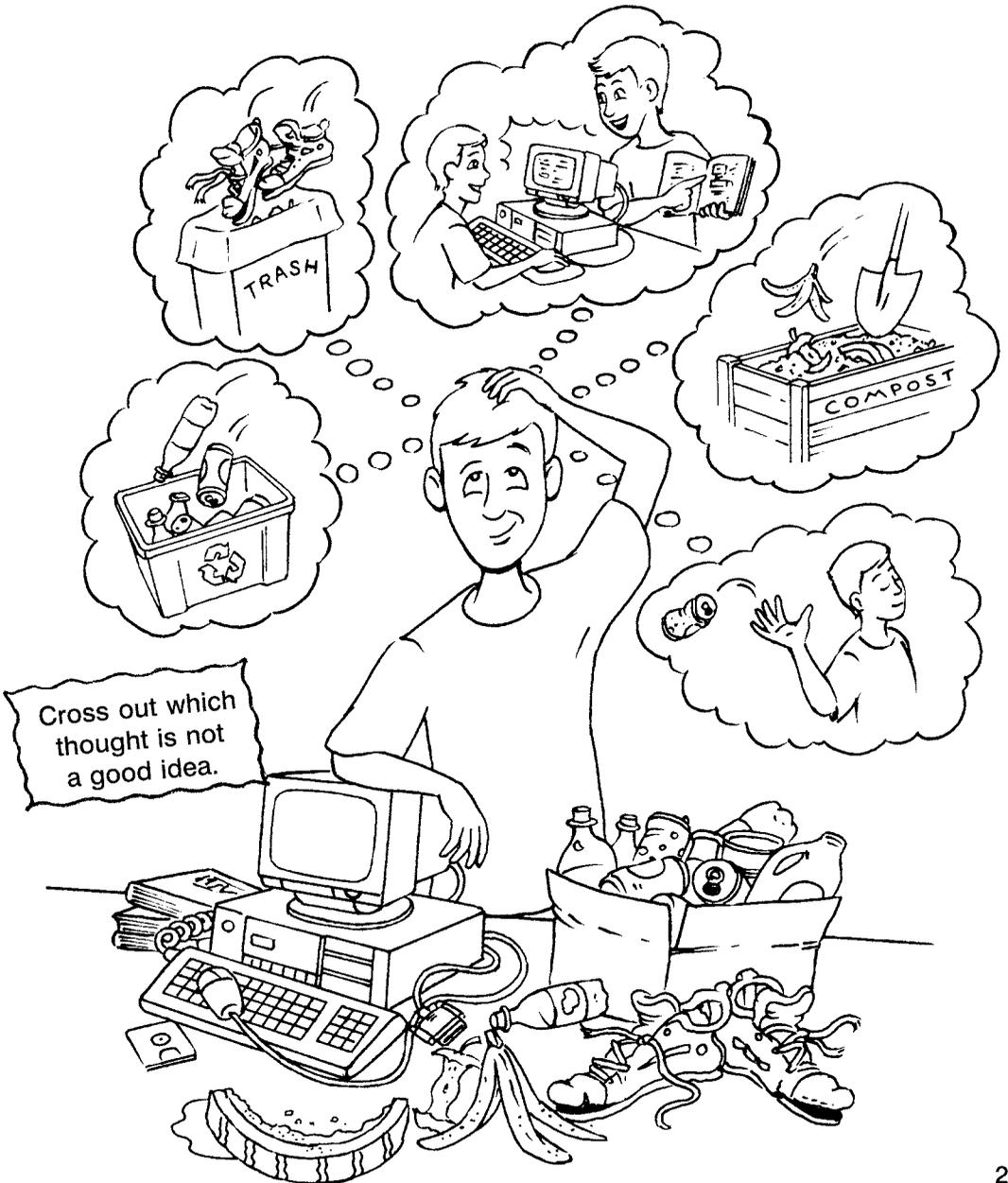
# What Happens To Our Trash?

## Think Before You Toss

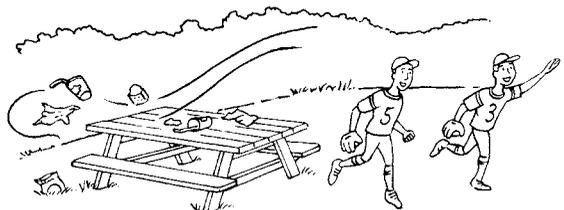




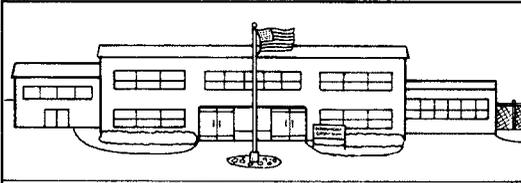
Where does all this trash go? Imagine how much trash we would accumulate if we didn't have places to put all the products and packaging that become trash. That is why it is important to **think before you toss.**



**Some trash ends up where it doesn't belong because it is littered or dumped. This can happen when people don't know the right way to get rid of their trash. It can also happen when someone drops litter by accident, doesn't think or doesn't care.**



Unscramble the words to find out where litter and trash **do not** belong.



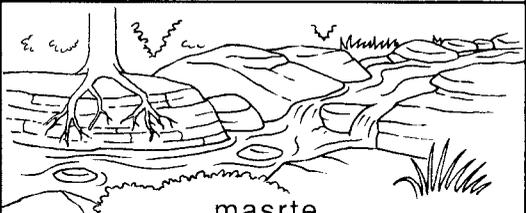
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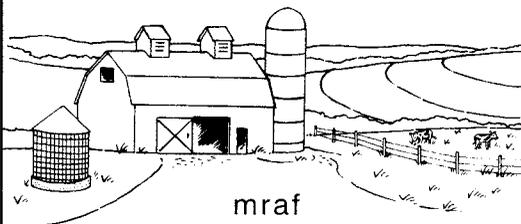
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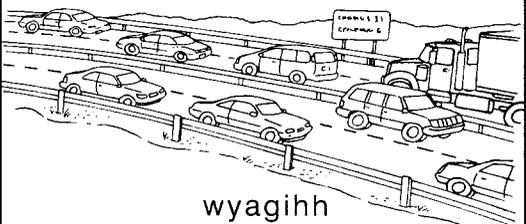
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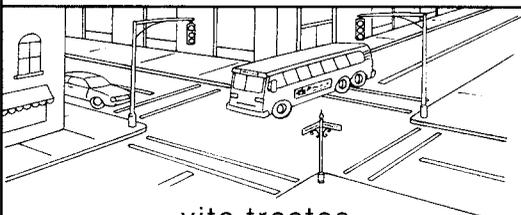
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wyagihh



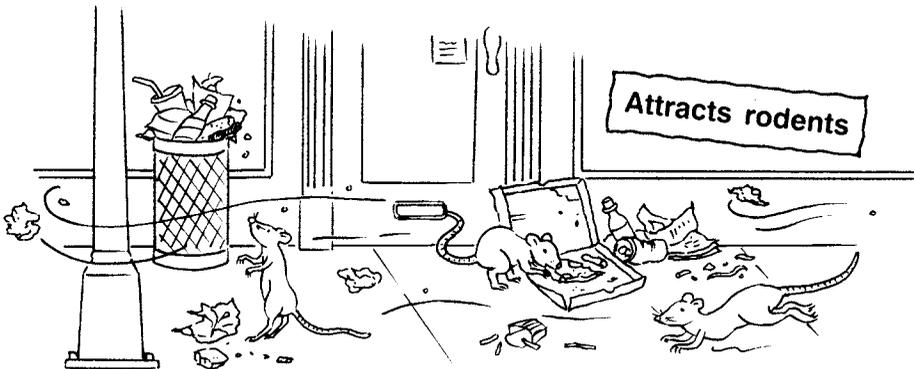
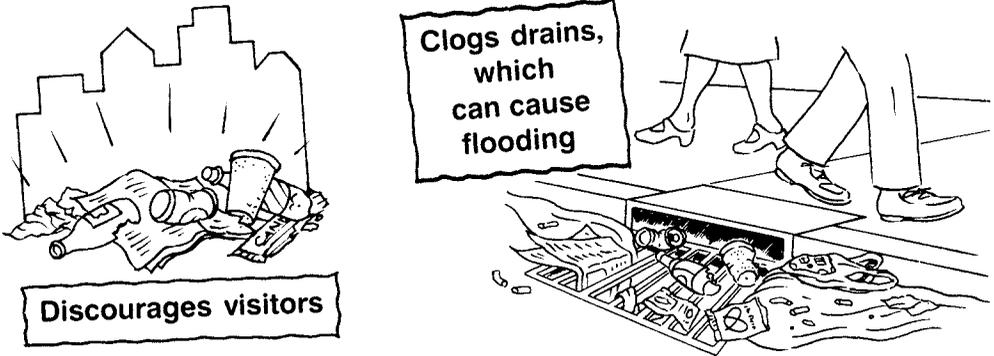
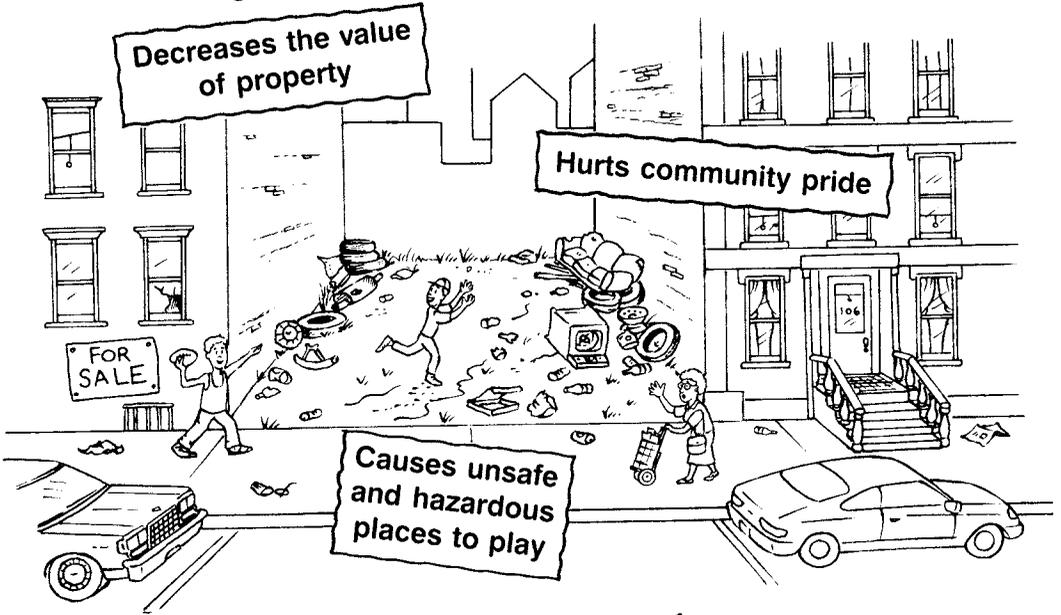
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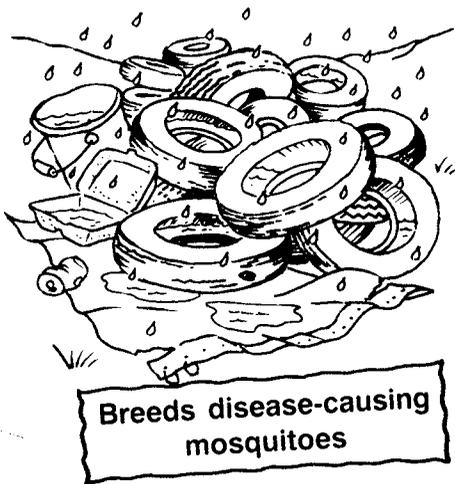
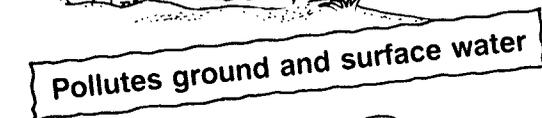
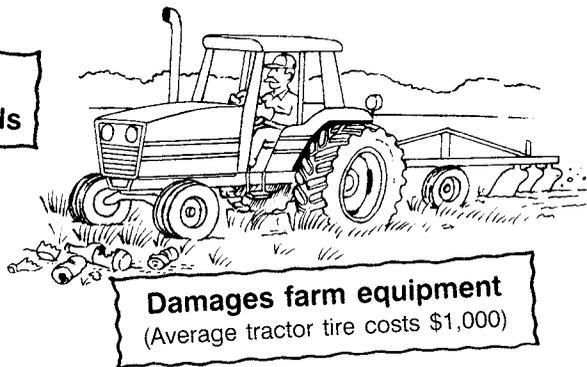
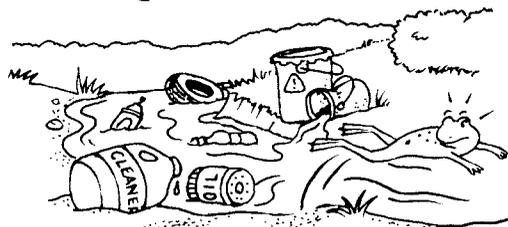
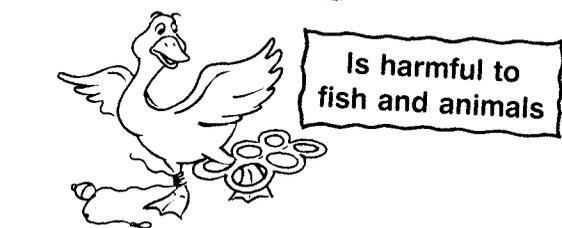
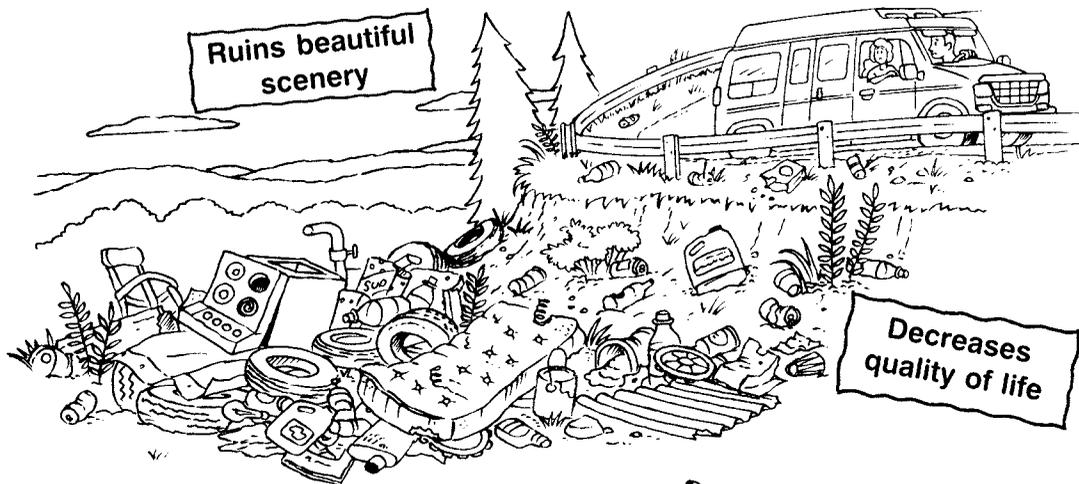
An accumulation of trash and litter  
Do you see problems with

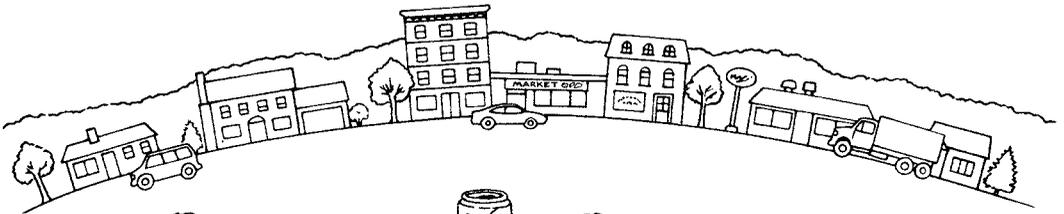
## In the city, it...



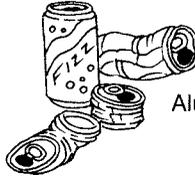
can cause many different problems.  
trash and litter where you live?

## In the country, it...





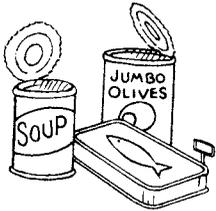
Orange & banana peels  
Up to 2 years



Aluminum cans  
500 years

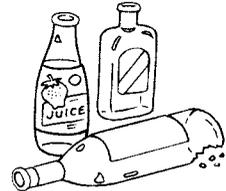
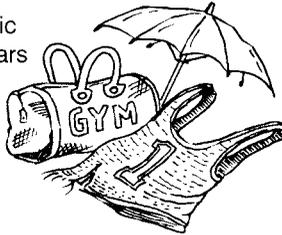


Cigarette butts  
1 to 5 years



Steel cans  
50 years

Nylon fabric  
30 to 40 years



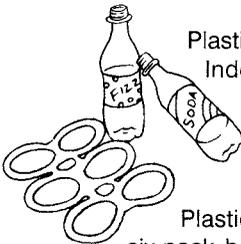
Glass bottles  
1,000 years

Polystyrene  
Indefinitely

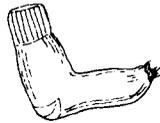


Plastic bags  
10 to 20 years

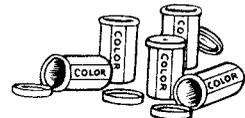
Plastic bottles  
Indefinitely



Plastic  
six-pack holders  
100 years



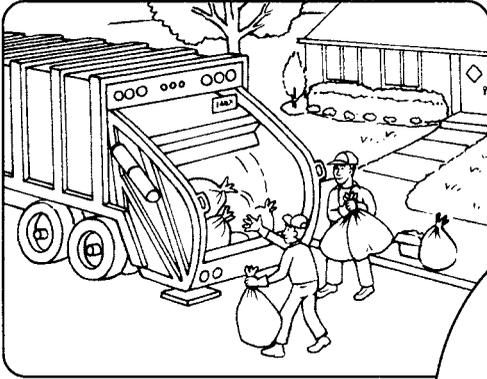
Wool sock  
1 to 5 years



Plastic film containers  
20 to 30 years

**When trash is littered or dumped, it can be there for a long time. Some things last forever. The only way trash really gets cleaned up is when people clean it up.**

Some people have **jobs** cleaning up litter and trash.



Others **volunteer** to clean up litter on their own.

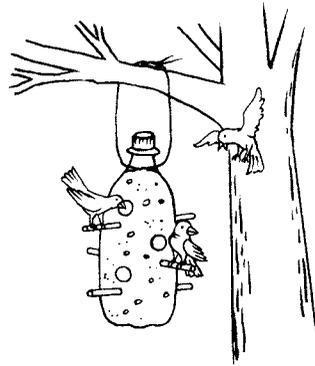
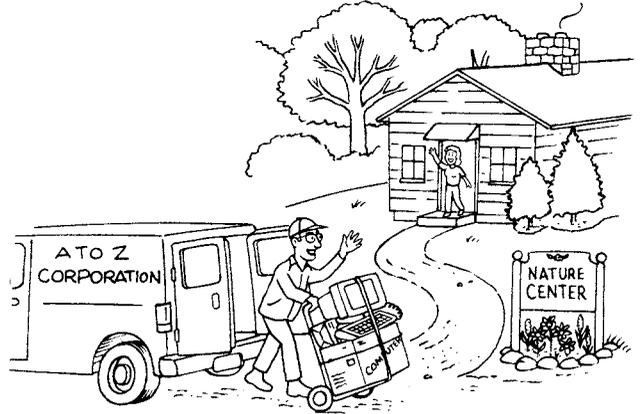
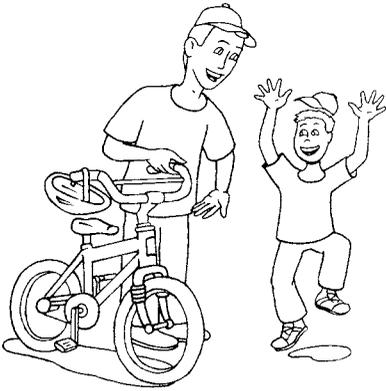


They can even **adopt** areas they care about to help keep them litter free.



# Lots of things we throw away can be **reused**.

Name what is being reused in these pictures.



# And many things can be recycled.

Leaves,  
fruits  
and  
vegetables



...CAN BECOME...



Compost  
to help grow  
new gardens

Milk jugs,  
laundry  
detergent  
bottles  
(HDPE  
plastic)



...CAN BECOME...

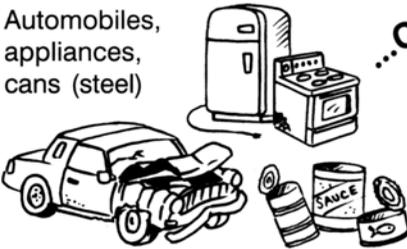


Decks and Lumber



Toys

Automobiles,  
appliances,  
cans (steel)



...CAN BECOME...



Automobiles



Wire

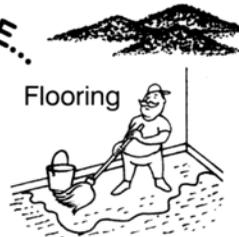


Bicycle frames

Tires



...CAN BECOME...



Flooring

Crumb rubber



Running track

Soda  
bottles,  
peanut  
butter  
containers  
(PET plastic)



...CAN BECOME...



Fleece jacket



Insulation



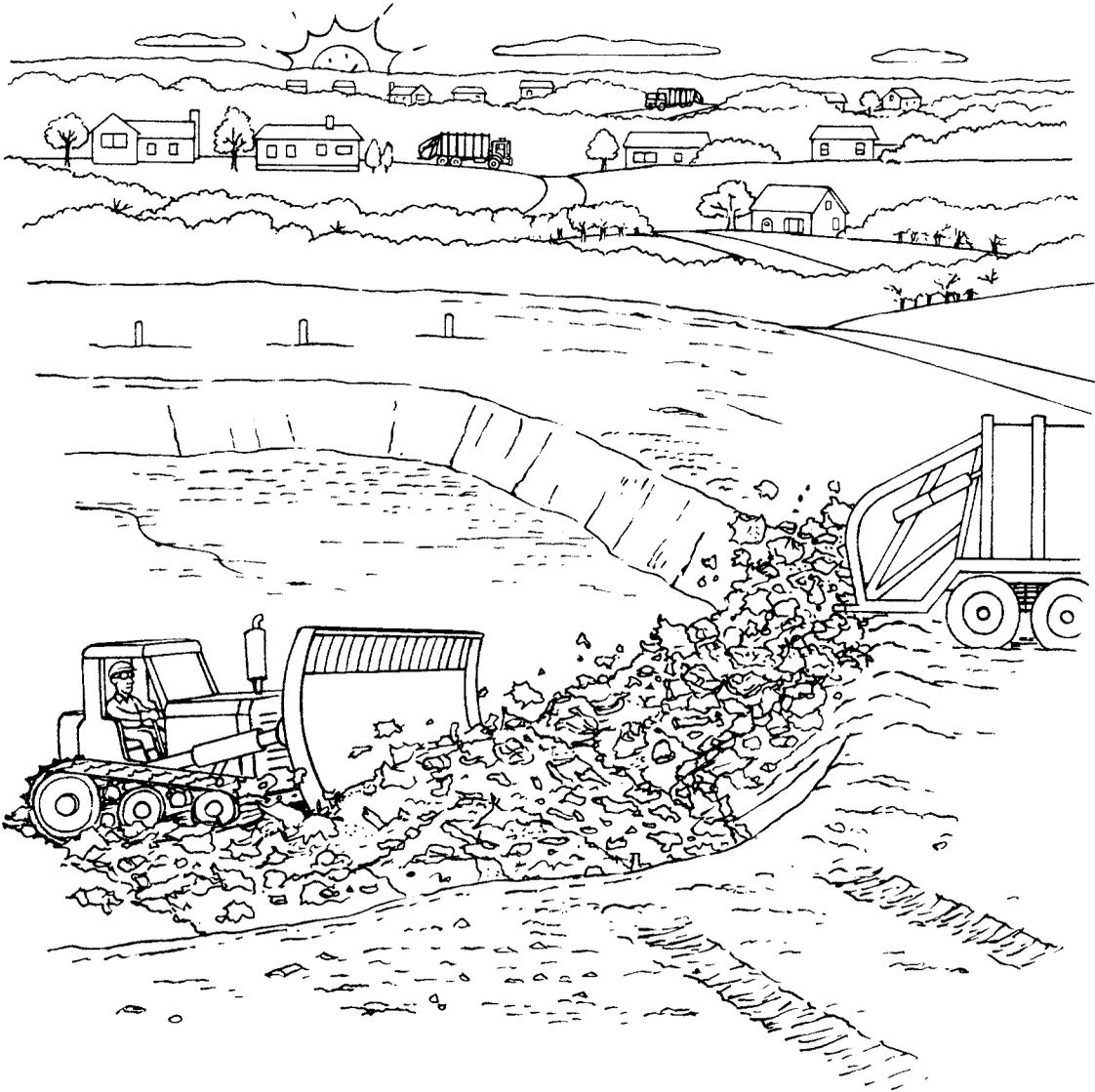
Carpet

Fiberfill



Shower  
curtains

# What happens to the trash we **throw away**?



When we put trash out for collection or in a dumpster, it is usually picked up by workers and carried away in a truck. Today most trash is buried in landfills, where it takes a **long** time to decompose.

**A landfill is a large area of land that is dug out and lined with clay or plastic to prevent pollution. Heavy equipment compacts each new layer of trash, and then covers it with soil.**

*Check out this cross section of a typical landfill.*

**Caped area**

This part of the landfill is full. It has been covered over with clay and top soil and planted with vegetation.

**Entrance gate**

**Office and scale**

Trucks are weighed as they enter.

**Cover material**

Usually soil used to bury trash

**Gas vent**

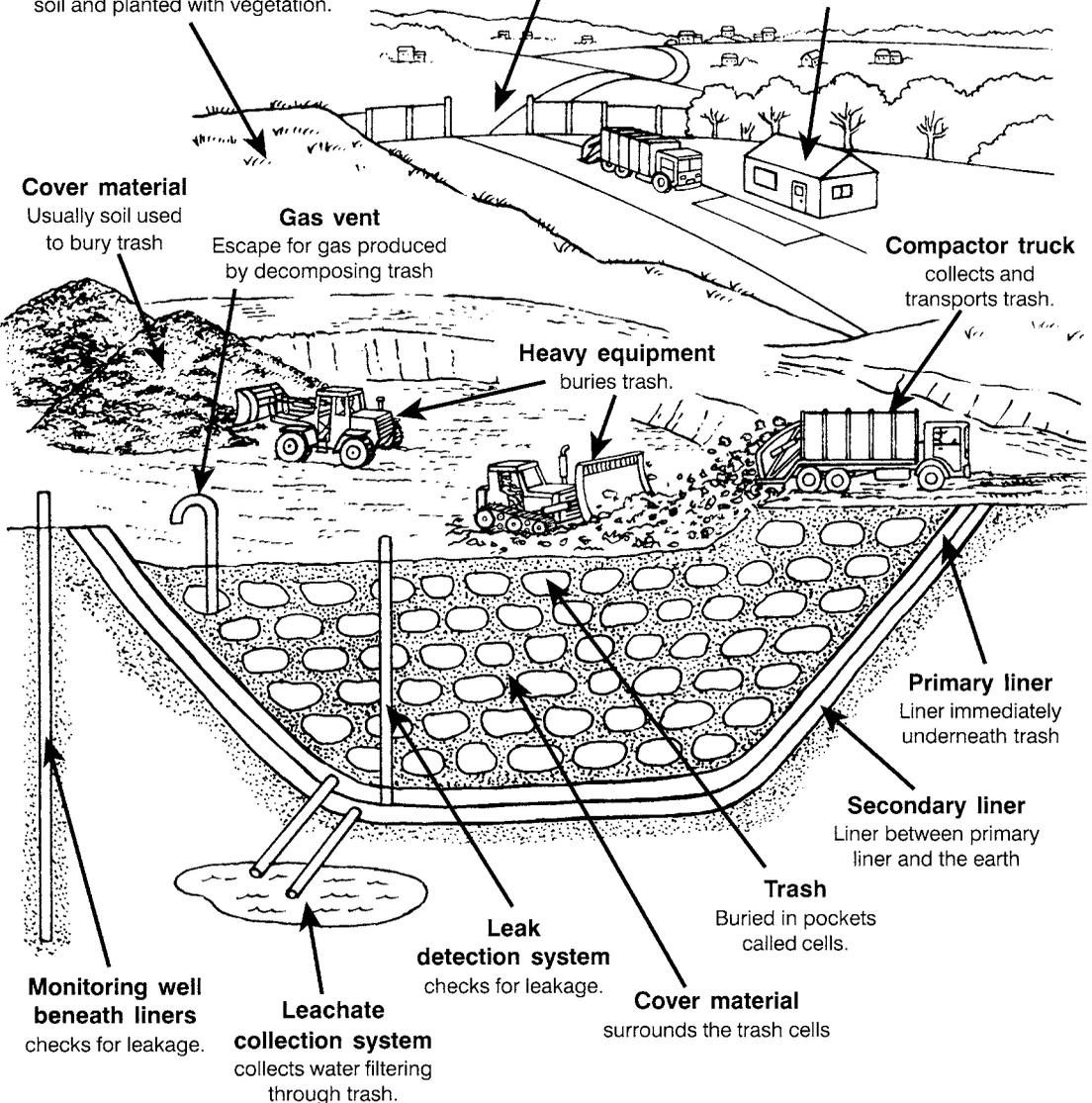
Escape for gas produced by decomposing trash

**Compactor truck**

collects and transports trash.

**Heavy equipment**

buries trash.



**Monitoring well beneath liners**

checks for leakage.

**Leachate collection system**

collects water filtering through trash.

**Leak detection system**

checks for leakage.

**Cover material**

surrounds the trash cells

**Primary liner**

Liner immediately underneath trash

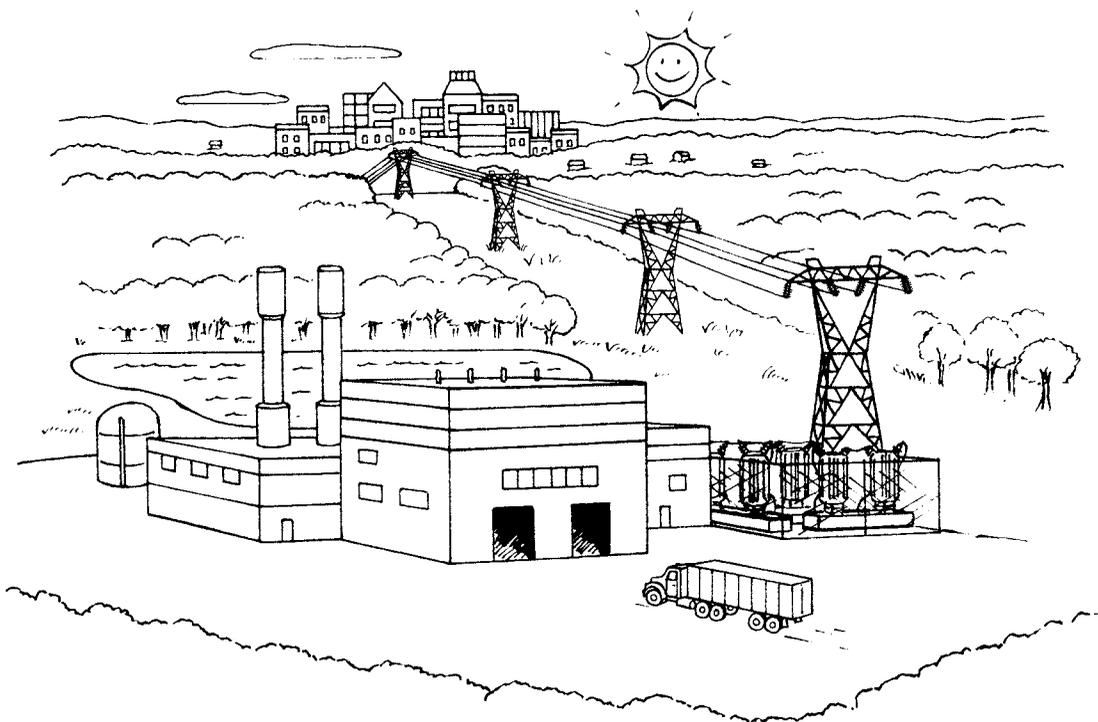
**Secondary liner**

Liner between primary liner and the earth

**Trash**

Buried in pockets called cells.

Other trash is burned at special incinerators called **resource recovery facilities**. Resource recovery facilities have furnaces that burn trash at a very high temperature to make steam and generate electricity.

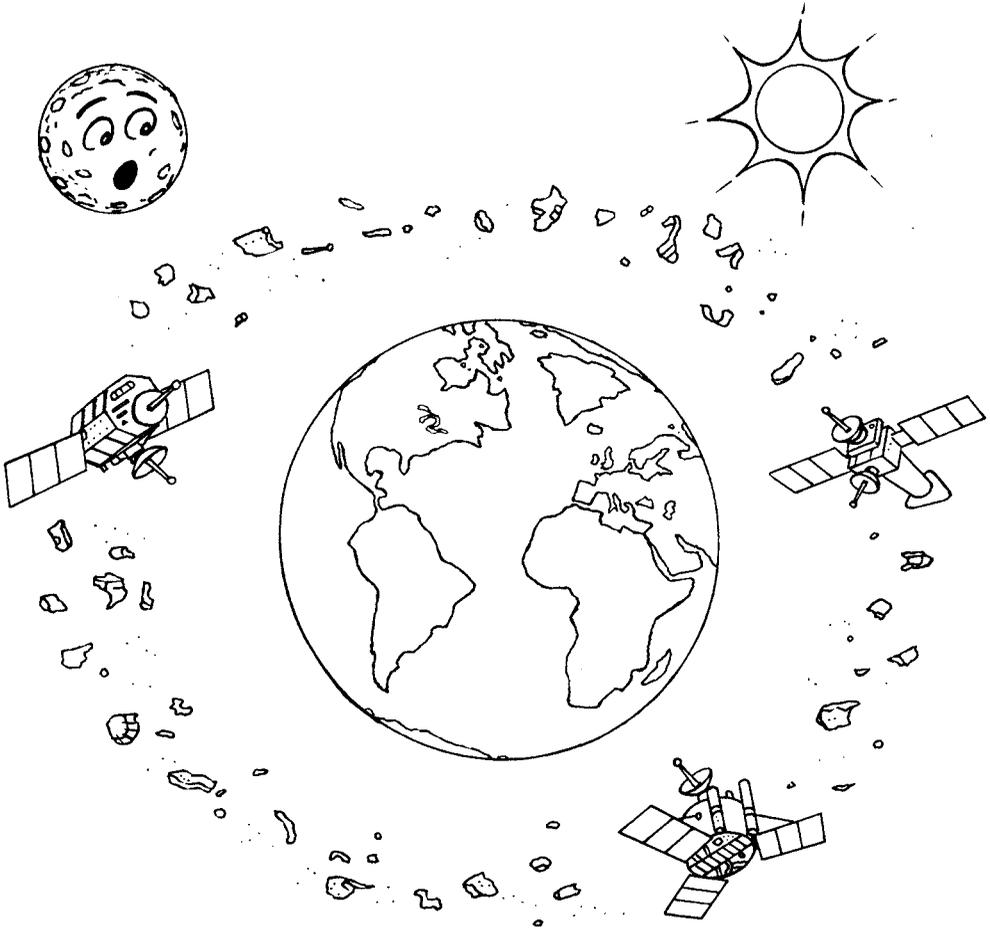


Every method we now use to dispose of our trash has some limitations. For example, even landfills that close today will have to be watched and taken care of for many years to come. This makes it more important than ever to...

**think before we toss.**



**Scientists agree there will always be some kind of trash. The biggest challenge will be how to control it safely.**



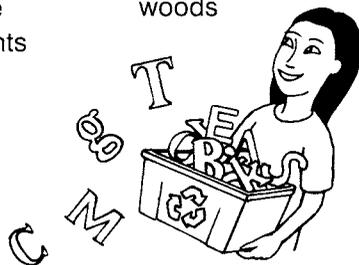
**Today there is even trash in outer space! Thousands of pieces of old rockets and satellites orbit the earth. They must be carefully tracked so they do not damage new space equipment. No volunteer group can go into space and clean up this trash. It will remain a problem to be solved in the future.**

# Think Before You Toss **JUMBLE**

C O M M U N I T Y D W S D O R W L J A P F K  
 N I M A G I N A T I O N T Y O Z O V R M A D  
 H I G H W A Y S T R E E T F D A D O P T R Q  
 B T C A A H T E L T B I L L E G A L D U M P  
 C P S T R E A M E Y U C X Y N S O U I S E L  
 L A O U T E R S P A C E E I T A S N K T R A  
 E C R L I T T E R E U S E E S G J T P O M Y  
 A K S E L N C T S V U N S A F E D E A R O G  
 N A B L L U C O E C R E C Y C L E E R M P R  
 U G A E A E T I N B H W E R O S C R K D A O  
 P I U M A N S I N S U O V C M S O X I R Q U  
 N N G F E C D S O E E T O S P T M R N A R N  
 W G E T Y R H F M N R R T L O N P B G I E D  
 B U R Y S L I M I T A A V S S X O C L N D V  
 D F P R O D U C E L E R T E T T S Y O U U J  
 S I D E W A L K A E L A S O D F E G T K C L  
 V S D R E Y R T R A S H V B R E P A I R E Z

**Can you find the hidden words in the puzzle?**

adopt	decompose	packaging	school
America	dirty	parking lot	sidewalk
beach	farmer	playground	storm drain
bury	highway	pollution	stream
careless	illegal dump	produce	street
cleanup	imagination	recycle	trash
cigarette butts	incinerator	reduce	unsafe
community	landfill	repair	volunteer
compost	litter	reuse	woods
conserve	outer space	rodents	



How can **YOU** make a difference today?  
What can you do at home, in school and  
in your community to help?

**Think**  
before you toss.



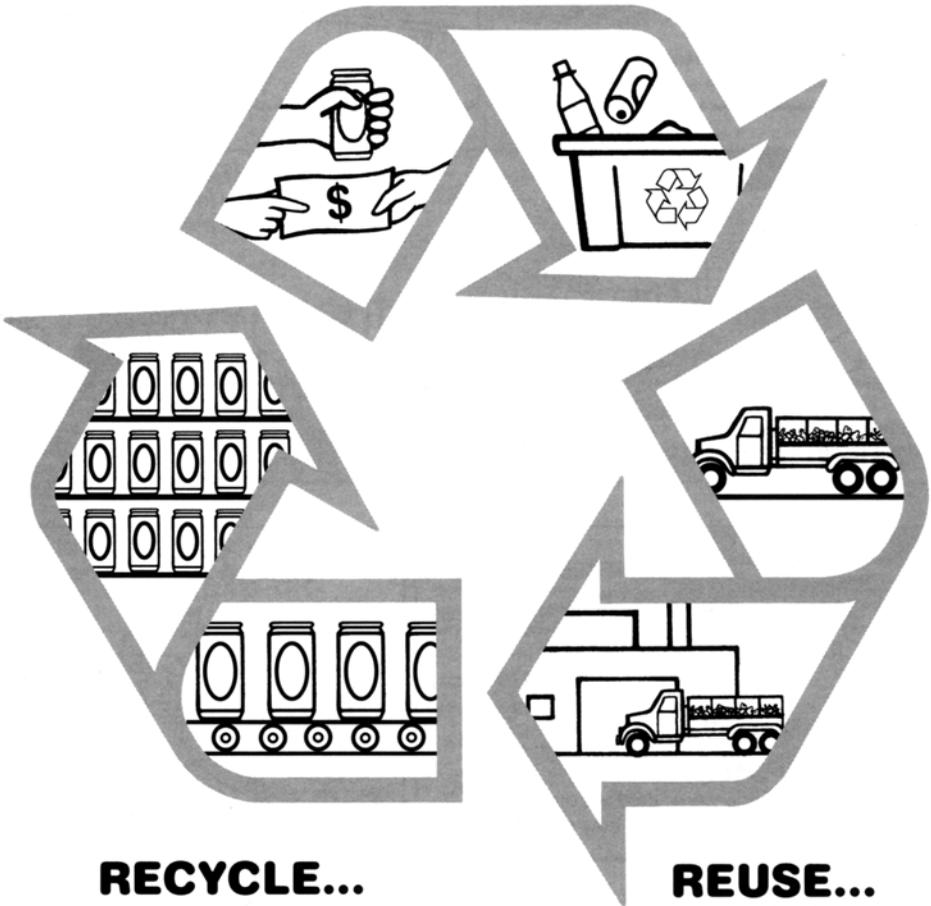
**Care about**  
what you do with things you  
don't need or want anymore.



**Buy recycled products**  
and products that can be recycled.  
Read labels and look for recycling logos.

## **REDUCE...**

How can we use less of something so that it will last longer?



## **RECYCLE...**

Can it be made useful again and again?

## **REUSE...**

Can it be repaired or used in a different way?

# These young people are making a difference in

## Taking action...



McKean County, PA students realized the "woods were dirty" and wanted to do something about it.

They created a photo presentation and talked to their county commissioners.



## Real world lessons...



Eighth graders in Erie, PA did storm drain testing as a science project.

They found oil and grease from parking lots, pesticides and fertilizers from lawn care products, lead and cadmium.



## No ifs, ands, or butts...



Three kids in Florida were "grossed out" by cigarette butts littering the beach they adopted.

They found a cigarette maker that provided disposable ashtrays on request.



## Hands on recycling...



Sixth-grade students in Latrobe, PA found out their parochial school stopped its recycling program because of cost.



So they got permission to create one if it was student-managed.

# their worlds... **YOU** can make a difference too!

One of them coordinated an illegal dump clean up and created a booklet on illegal dumping.

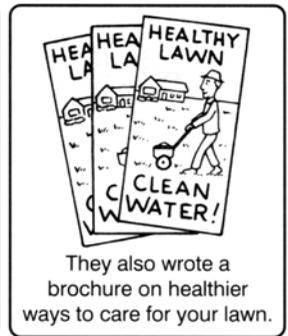
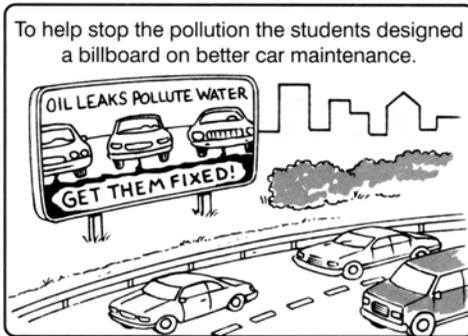


She even became a coordinator of a local Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful affiliate!

These pollutants ended up in the water supply.



To help stop the pollution the students designed a billboard on better car maintenance.



They also wrote a brochure on healthier ways to care for your lawn.

The kids created a poster, which their city printed.

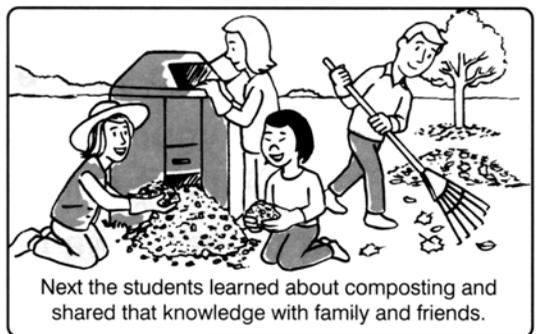


Then they started distributing ashtrays with good results.



Finally they started writing governors to ask for support of laws requiring cigarette makers to include the ashtrays with cigarettes.

The first year they recycled newspapers to a farmer who shredded them for animal bedding.



Next the students learned about composting and shared that knowledge with family and friends.

**As our world becomes more crowded, the best way to conserve our natural resources is to use our imaginations and change the way we live.**



## **Think before you toss.**

**Open your eyes to litter.**

**Open your mind to think and care  
about our environment.**

**Working together we can help make less trash  
and keep tomorrow's world litter free!**

# What Happens to **Your** Trash After You Toss?

## Great Websites to Help Your Learning!

### General Resources

Earth 911

[www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org)

Institute of Scrap Recycling

[www.isri.org/industryinfo/index.htm](http://www.isri.org/industryinfo/index.htm)

Keep America Beautiful

[www.cleansweepusa.org](http://www.cleansweepusa.org)

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

[www.keppabeautiful.org](http://www.keppabeautiful.org)

PA Department of  
Environmental Protection

[www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us)

Professional Recyclers of  
Pennsylvania

[www.proprecycles.org](http://www.proprecycles.org)

U.S. Environmental  
Protection Agency

[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

### Additional Resources

Composting

[www.howstuffworks.com/composting](http://www.howstuffworks.com/composting)

Glass

[www.isri.org/industryinfo/index.htm](http://www.isri.org/industryinfo/index.htm)

Landfill

[www.howstuffworks.com/landfill](http://www.howstuffworks.com/landfill)

Plastics

[www.napcor.com](http://www.napcor.com)

[www.plasticsresource.com](http://www.plasticsresource.com)

Re-Use Options

[www.redo.org](http://www.redo.org)

Steel

[www.recycle-steel.org](http://www.recycle-steel.org)

Tires/Rubber

[www.isri.org/industryinfo/rubber.htm](http://www.isri.org/industryinfo/rubber.htm)



Research the answers to these questions and find out how your community deals with its waste.

-  Is my community required by law to have **waste pickup**?
-  Who are the **waste haulers** in my community?
-  Does my community have a designated **recycling coordinator**?
-  What does my community collect for **recycling**?
-  Find out **where** the recycled items go. And **where** do they go **from there**?  
Plastic, glass, aluminum, steel cans, paper, corrugated cardboard, appliances, batteries, tires, Christmas trees, leaves/yard waste can be recycled.
-  Find out where the trash goes after it is picked up. Does it go to a **landfill, an incinerator or a resource recovery/waste-to-energy plant**?
-  How does my community handle the **items that are NOT accepted** by the landfill or waste-to-energy plant? Are there any **special collections**?
-  **How many years of landfill space** are remaining at landfills used by my county? Then what will happen?

The more you **know**,  
the better **choices** you can make!

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

105 W. 4th Street • Greensburg, PA 15601-2981



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**PENNSYLVANIA**  
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[www.keppabeautiful.org](http://www.keppabeautiful.org)



**pennsylvania**

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

[www.dep.pa.gov](http://www.dep.pa.gov)

**Special Thanks to:**

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful staff for their time, talent, and effort  
Illustration, Design and Layout: Mark Jackson

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is a nonprofit organization whose mission is empowering Pennsylvanians to keep our communities clean and beautiful. For more information call us toll free at 877-772-3673 or email us at [info@keppabeautiful.org](mailto:info@keppabeautiful.org)