

REDUCE - INTERMEDIATE ACTIVITY 2

A Gum Wrap

OBJECTIVE: To create packaging that is less harmful to the environment.

MATERIALS: samples of packaged gum

VOCABULARY: excessive packaging, resources, biodegradable, recyclable, reusable

BACKGROUND:

There is a monster growing in North America. It has nearly doubled in size since the 1960's. This monster is called packaging. Over the past 30 years the amount of packaging in garbage has increased by 80%, it is now responsible for half of the volume of municipal waste produced in North America.

Originally, packaging was designed to prevent theft, breakage and spoilage of products. Today it is primarily a form of advertising. The public pays for excessive packaging when we purchase an item, through recycling and disposal costs and, in an environmental sense, through the resources used to produce the packaging.

PROCEDURE:

1. Inform the class that they are going to design a better form of packaging. Mention the statistics given in the BACKGROUND section of this activity. Lead discussion amongst the students asking them to think of all the different types of packaging available to them.
2. Each student is to purchase some gum, the type or flavour is not important. The only stipulation is the gum must somehow be packaged (gum from a gumball machine does not qualify for the activity).
3. The gum is to be brought to school unopened. Each student is to examine their gum. The child should consider the different material used for packaging (foil, paper, plastic film, etc.), why the gum is packaged the way it is (manufacturers have to take safety, freshness, advertising, marketing, consumer handling and many other factors into consideration when designing packaging) and whether the gum is excessively packaged or not.
4. Students now design better packaging for their brand of gum. Small sketches or drawings are ideal to convey ideas. The children should consider areas such as whether the packaging is to be recyclable, reusable, or biodegradable. Other considerations could include how much packaging is sufficient, what form of packaging is environmentally sound yet appealing to the consumer and where or how should the packaging's advantages be explained to the consumer (on the package itself, through a display, etc.).
5. Have the children write a short essay explaining the design of their packaging.

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A Gum Wrap (cont.)

EXTENSION:

1. Have the students actually build the packaging they have designed. Models should be several times the actual size of the packaging. Use the models for displays during your school's Earth Day or as entries in the science fair.
2. Have the class either individually or in groups, plan a marketing campaign for their new packaging.

EVALUATION:

1. Is the majority of packaging really necessary? If not, why?
2. Have the students adjusted their purchasing habits because of packaging.
3. What could you do to change excess packaging practices?