

Litterblock Ramble

Target Level:
Grade 6

SOLs:
Science: 6.11

Materials Needed:
“Litterblock” signs
Trash can sign
Blindfolds (bandannas or
other pieces of material)

Note: a large, cleared
playing area will be
needed

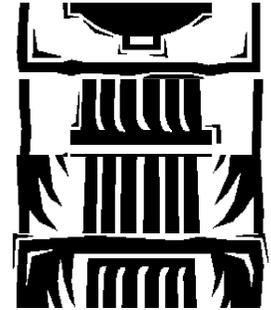
Time Needed:
One class period

Summary

Students will navigate around “roadblocks” in an interactive exercise that stimulates problem solving litter challenges.

Objectives

Students will be able to examine why people litter and be able to discuss public choices regarding litter policies. They will also be able to devise solutions to the “litterblocks” or barriers to litter prevention.



Background

One way to change inappropriate behavior such as littering, is to help people find a reason to change or a solution to the problem. In this activity, students look at reasons why people litter and suggest solutions for these reasons. Some of the excuses people use for not disposing of litter are real problems, for example, “the trash can was full, so I put my bag of trash next to it.” Other reasons, such as “I saw someone else doing it,” are founded in personal attitudes and values.

Another way to help people change their behavior is to help them understand the impact of their behavior. They can look at the consequences or costs of the behavior and examine the trade off or benefits of change. Either the person will have to find the appropriate receptacle or carry the trash home with them or they will choose to litter somewhere. The “cost” of littering might be the cost of a visit to a hospital emergency room visit for a child stung by bees that were attracted to a drink can thrown on a playground or the cost of a veterinarian to stitch a dog’s paw cut from broken glass in a picnic area. The benefits would be a clean, safe park for all visitors.

Advance Preparation

1. Cut pieces of poster board or cardboard into generally like sizes. Record a different excuse onto each of the signs (from the examples on the Copy Page). Put holes in the top of each sign and lace them with string or yarn to enable students to wear them around their necks. These may be laminated for multiple usage.
2. Copy, cut, and paste the trash can picture onto a separate sign. String this card for a student to wear also, and laminate if desired.

Procedure

1. Ask students if they have ever littered. Discuss reasons why people might have littered. Record these reasons where everyone can see them.
2. Tell the class they will play a game that will help them develop solutions to the litter blocks they listed. Divide the class into two groups. The first group should include about three-fourths of the students. Give each student a litterblock sign to wear. Have the students turn them over so no one will see their excuses for the moment.
3. Ask for a volunteer or assign a student from the second group to be the “trash can.” Give him/her the picture of the trash can to wear. Explain that this will be the only person allowed to talk during the game-- he or she will need to talk so that the “park visitors” can find the trash can.

4. Position the trash can at the far end of the playing area. Have the park visitors stand in a line across the near end. Explain that after the park visitors have put on their blindfolds, the litterblock signs will randomly arrange themselves between the park visitors and the trash can. Once in place, the litterblocks cannot move again, nor can they speak. Tell the park visitors that they should try and reach the trash can. If they run into a litterblock, they should stop and remove their blindfolds. Explain that after all visitors have either stumbled into a litterblock or reached the trash can, each will be given the opportunity to announce its progress. If facing a litterblock, he/she will tell how they would solve or prevent that excuse for littering.

5. After the park visitors have put on their blindfolds, give the “Litterblocks” a chance to position themselves and turn their signs over. Have the park visitors begin to navigate themselves through the litterblocks. On the first round, few if any park visitors will make it to the trash can. After a particular litterblock is solved, that person will remove his or her sign and stand along the sides of the playing area.

6. Have the park visitors return to their starting positions and replace their blindfolds. Keep repeating #5 until several park visitors have reached the trash can. The trash should encourage visitors to move forward by making comments like “It’s messy here,” or “I’m hungry,” etc.

Wrap Up/Assessment

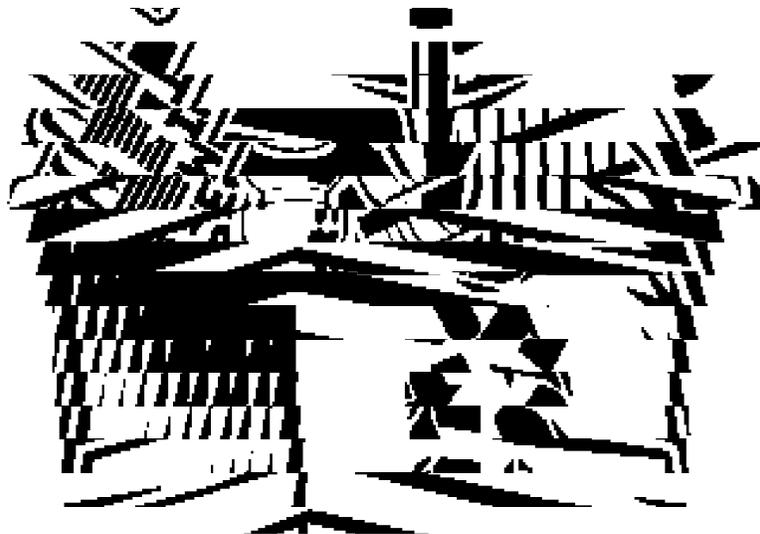
1. Ask the students why they think it is easier for the park visitors to reach the trash can when there are fewer litterblocks. Ask the students if they think that the litterblocks are difficult barriers to overcome. Which litterblocks are tangible problems are situations they can control? Are any of the barriers due to perspective and/or values?

2. Discuss the originally generated list of reasons why people might litter to other public places (e.g., shopping centers, sports fields, and school grounds). Ask the students if there are positive things that can be done to address the public’s “litterblocks”. Discuss ways to reduce and prevent the amount of litter. Have students suggest the general differences in costs/impacts of litter clean-up versus litter prevention. What is involved that would have an associated cost?

Variation

Include a recycling bin to be placed beside the trash can during the rounds. The students will need to assess whether their litter item can be recycled prior to “depositing it in one of the receptacles”. Note: Additional materials will be needed: a recycling bin sign and a collection of (clean) common litter items.

Confirm the students’ understanding that the term recycle (re-cycle) means to use over again during Step 3. Additionally, ensure their recognition of the recycling symbol. Explain that the three arrows represent the three stages involved in recycling materials: collect, reprocess, and reuse. Note that when a product is recycled, it does not go into our garbage but is reused (either for the same or similar purpose, or made into something new).



Why Shouldn't I?

There's already trash there.

I don't want to mess up my car.

Too hard to find a trash can.

Mom would get upset if she knew I ate before dinner.

Everyone does it.

Someone else will pick it up for me.

It's just a candy wrapper.

It's too heavy to carry along the trail.

Nobody told me not to.

The trash can was too yucky to touch.

Animals will eat the apple core.

It's so tiny, it won't matter.

Bees were around the trash can.

I saw an adult do it.

I don't care about the park.

There wasn't a sign telling me not to litter.

It fell out of my pocket.