

BE HOST TO COMPOST!

Are waste reduction efforts like recycling already in full swing at your school? Try tackling a different green challenge by joining the world of composting. Much of the waste in your classroom garbage bin can be composted, which means less waste going to landfills. Yahoo!

What is composting anyway? It's the natural breakdown of organic material. Huh? Basically, this means gathering in a bin items like dry leaves and grass, known as *browns*. Next, you mix in your sometimes icky leftovers, known as *greens*, like veggies and fruit peelings; stir and water contents; wait for natural processes to take place; and PRESTO you've helped turn "waste" into nutrient-rich **compost** that can be reused for gardening. Read on for more details.

COMPOSTING AT SCHOOL: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

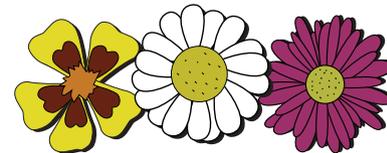
Step 1 – FIND A TEAM LEADER to guide your efforts, e.g., a teacher, a member of the maintenance staff, or a parent.

Step 2 – FORM A TEAM, A TEAM NAME AND A SCHEDULE. The schedule serves to identify those who are responsible for weekly composting duties. Students can take turns doing different tasks.

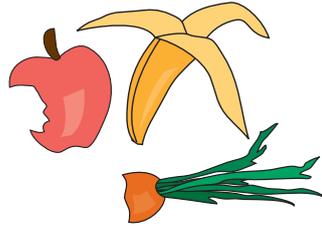
Step 3 – GATHER SUPPLIES. For example, a **compost bin**, a bucket with lid, a shovel, a watering can, and gloves will get you started.

Step 4 – SELECT A LOCATION. With help from your team leader, find a convenient, partially sheltered area for the compost bin.

Step 5 – GATHER YOUR COMPOST MATERIALS in a small bucket with a lid. *Greens* are typically moist, fresh items like coffee grounds, flowers, fruits/vegetables and peelings.



Browns are often dry items such as dry leaves and grass, coffee filters, newspapers, pine needles, tea bags, woodchips, and straw.



**Remember to collect cafeteria waste, and never put meat, fish, eggs, milk products, fatty food, animal waste or diseased plants in your compost bin.

Step 6 – EMPTY THE MATERIALS INTO YOUR COMPOST BIN. Start with about 6 inches of *browns*, then layer *greens* then browns, keeping each layer no larger than about 6 inches deep. A little soil between layers helps the materials breakdown and **decompose**.

Step 7 – ADD WATER. Keep the contents of the compost bin moist, never wet.

Step 8 – TURN THE CONTENTS OF THE COMPOST BIN. Once a week, use a shovel to turn materials in the bin. This will allow air (oxygen) to circulate and aid in the breakdown of materials.

Step 9 – BE PATIENT. With the proper ingredients, the **compost materials** will heat up (60-70 °C) and begin to decompose. Regular turning of the compost allows the ingredients to interact and heat again. Once the compost materials stop heating up as much, your compost should be ready. This may take a few months.

Step 10 – ENJOY THE END PRODUCT. When the contents of the bin no longer heat up, are dark, crumbly and earthy smelling, you've done your work. You now have COMPOST!

The trees, flowers and plants around your school will no doubt benefit from the addition of a healthy dose of compost. Remember: composting is nature's way of recycling!



Be part of the solution! Take action and make your commitment strong.

Definitions for **bolded** words can be found on the Keywords Index card.