



## RECYCLING RELAY RACE WASTE REDUCTION ACTIVITY

**Summary:** This active running game challenges students to correctly sort waste as quickly as possible, and serves as an introduction to waste disposal options.

**Length:** 20 – 30 minutes

**Grade Range:** K-5

**Objectives:** Master the art of sorting recyclable materials correctly.

**Background:** Ensure that everyone is clear on what the term recycling means.

**Materials:** Several large garbage bags filled with clean garbage (plastic fruit and vegetables for compostables, rinsed containers for recyclables, etc.) Four buckets/bins/pails for garbage, compost, recycling, and house hold hazardous waste (HHW).

### **Procedure:**

This activity combines active running with object sorting based on the principles of waste reduction as they are currently practiced in the area of Peterborough.

A number of large, very full garbage bags are brought into the gym or classroom – the more bags, the bigger the visual effect. The bags are placed at one end of the gym. At the other end of the gym (or designated play area), 1 garbage pail, 1 compost bucket, 1 recycling bin, and 1 HHW bin are placed for each team. The game can be set up so that there is actually no garbage (everything should get sorted into alternative disposal streams) or there can be actual items that require landfilling and should be put in the garbage pail.

Teams of students line up at the end with the garbage bags (also spread out to give each team at least one bag). Explain to the students that this game is about correctly sorting the waste materials, not about being the first team finished. When the game begins, the first student in the line reaches into the bag and removes an item. She runs to the opposite end of the gym and deposits the item into whatever container she thinks the item belongs (banana peel in compost bucket, plastic pop bottle in recycling bin, etc.). When she is back at the start line, the next student goes, until all of the items in the garbage bag are gone.

**Discussion:**

When the game is finished, inspect the containers for their contents. If the game has been played without any actual landfill garbage, the garbage pail should not have any items in it – everything in the garbage bags is recyclable, compostable, or requires special HHW handling. Any items that do end up in the garbage provide an opportunity for discussing Peterborough's waste management system.

If some items do require landfilling, that provides an opportunity to discuss whether there are alternative products that could be used (such as cloth diapers instead of disposable diapers) or other disposal options (such as a used clothing store for a sweater). Emphasize the large decrease in garbage going to landfill when students fully participated in recycling.