

Teaching activities: Zero Waste Day

Level:	B1
Skills:	reading, speaking
Interaction:	individual, pairs/small groups
Time:	45'–60'
Learning objective:	By the end of the session, learners will be better able to identify the purpose of a reading text about reducing waste in schools.

These activities have been written to coincide with the International Day of Zero Waste on 30 March 2026. Zero Waste Day exists to help address the global waste crisis and to promote sustainable production and consumption practices. Learners read an article about reducing waste and use it to identify the writer's purpose. Then they discuss the tips in the article and think about how they could reduce waste in their own school.

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Student worksheet

A. Read the definition and think of some examples of waste in your school or at home.

waste /weɪst/ *noun*

things that are not wanted, especially what is left after you have used something
(Cambridge Learner's Dictionary)

B. Read about Zero Waste Day. Do you think it's a good idea? Why/Why not?

What is Zero Waste Day?

Around the world we create over two billion tons of waste each year from plastic and food to clothes and electronics. The International Day of Zero Waste happens every year on 30 March. It reminds us how important it is to throw away less and to buy, use and produce things in a way that is better for the planet.

C. Read the text quickly, ignoring the gaps. Who do you think it is talking to?

- a. teachers b. students c. parents

D. Read the text again and put the headings below in the correct place.

Reduce waste: small actions, big differences

We throw away a lot of things every day, often without thinking. But reducing waste is easier than you think, and you can make a real difference at your school.

1. _____: Plastic bottles and food packaging create a lot of rubbish. Use the same bottle and lunchbox every day and you can stop hundreds of pieces of plastic from going in the bin each year.
2. _____: Before buying new pens, notebooks or folders, check what you have at home or ask friends and family. Many students already have school equipment they have forgotten about.
3. _____: Don't throw it away, give it away! For example, when you finish a book, give it to a friend to read. Or organise an event where everyone brings clothes, games and other things they don't want. Then you can choose something new to take home.
4. _____: Learn to say 'no, thank you' to plastic knives and forks, straws, leaflets or free gifts you don't really want or need. Taking fewer things means throwing away less later.
5. _____: You can help the whole school reduce waste. Make posters about why it's important to reduce waste. Give short talks

in class or share tips with other students. You could even count how many bins of rubbish your class fills up in one week and try to reduce that number together.

Finally, look after your things. Try not to lose your water bottle, sweatshirt or lunchbox. Replacing things you lose just creates more waste.

Which idea will you try first?

Just say no	Start a class project	Bring a reusable water bottle and lunchbox
Use what you already have	Give and take	

E. Answer the questions then talk to your partner about your answers.

1. Where would you read this text? Remember the answer to question C and also think about things like the length and the types of language in the text. You can circle more than one.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. In a school magazine | e. On a school website |
| b. In a student blog | f. In a supermarket magazine |
| c. In a newspaper | g. In a business report |
| d. On a noticeboard in a shop | h. In a storybook |

2. Why did the writer write this text?

- a. To give advice
- b. To advertise something
- c. To describe a school project

F. Discuss these questions.

- Which tip in the article do you think is the easiest to follow? Why?
- Which tip is the most difficult to follow? Why?
- Do you or students at your school already do any of these things? Which ones?
- Which idea from the article would you like to try?
- What else can you do to reduce waste?

I think tip number ___ is the easiest/most difficult because ...

Most/some students do number ___ ...

I'd like to try tip number ___ as ...



Reflection

	Draw an emoji to show what you think 😊 😐 😞
I thought the article was ...	
I thought activity E. was ...	
The most interesting activity today was ...	

Action plan

Think about the answers you gave in F. Write three goals for yourself that will help to reduce waste in your school. For example:

- I will try harder to look after my things.
- I will bring my lunch in a reusable box.
- I will use every page in my notebook.

Compare your answers with a partner and say why you wrote these goals.

Activity and suggested timing	Notes	Answer key and further reading
Lead in, 10' <u>A.</u> <u>B.</u>	<p>Let learners read the definition and elicit a couple of examples of waste, then put learners in pairs to think of more examples.</p> <p>Learners read the text individually. Clarify the meaning of 'two billion tons' (one ton is 1,000kg, 1 billion = 1,000 million).</p> <p>Learners discuss if they think Zero Waste Day is a good idea or not and why.</p>	Possible examples: anything in the bin or recycling bin, food left and not eaten, extra photocopies, broken computer equipment
Objectives, 5'	Share the learning objective with the class, explaining what you are going to do. Give learners a couple of minutes to check understanding with their partner then clarify any questions in open class.	
Vocabulary, 5'	<p>Clarify the meaning of 'food packaging' (paragraph 2 of the reading text) by showing an example and eliciting others: tins, plastic bottles, drinks cans, etc.</p> <p>Explain the meaning of 'reusable' and 'single-use' using your water bottle, coffee cup or another example. (Although not in the reading text, 'single-use' may be useful for the learners' discussions.)</p>	
Reading, 10' <u>C.</u> <u>D.</u>	<p>Ask learners to read the text quickly and decide who it is talking to. In pairs, they justify why they think this, using examples from the text.</p> <p>Extra support: You may allow some use of learners' own languages in their discussion. The aim here is to help them analyse the text for audience and purpose rather than to produce language.</p> <p>Learners read the article again and put the headings into the correct places.</p>	b. students 1. Bring a reusable water bottle and lunchbox 2. Use what you already have 3. Give and take 4. Just say no 5. Start a class project
Identifying purpose, 5–10' <u>E.</u>	Give learners time to look at the options and think about their answers then put them in pairs to discuss. They should bear in mind that they've already identified	1. a, b, e, possible reasons: talking to students,

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	<p>the reader (in C) and think about things like the type of language and the length to help them decide. Encourage them to also say why they have ruled out some options.</p> <p>Again, you may allow some use of L1 in the discussion. The aim is to help learners think about the text type.</p> <p>Share ideas as a whole class.</p>	<p>the topic is school, the style is chatty and informal, it's not very long, headings and titles are often found in magazine articles and blogs</p> <p>2. a</p>
<p>Speaking, 5–10' E</p>	<p>Think-pair-share: give learners some time individually to think about the questions and look at the useful language. They can ask for language they need at this stage. Then, put learners in pairs to discuss their ideas. Next, put two pairs together so they can share their ideas.</p> <p>Elicit some ideas to the whole class.</p>	
<p>Reflection, 5'</p>	<p>Demonstrate to learners they can use any emoji they like. Allow them a moment to complete the chart then share their feelings with their partner. Ask for any volunteers to share their thoughts about the lesson, in particular activity E.</p>	<p>There are further ideas for reflection activities here, taken from the Exam Preparation Journey</p>
<p>(Optional extension) Action plan, 5'+</p>	<p>Learners write three goals that will help to reduce waste. They should think about ideas that are achievable and realistic. They could compare them with a partner and explain why they have chosen those goals.</p> <p>You could ask learners to put them on card or coloured paper and display the action plans in class. Alternatively, learners can keep them in their notebooks. Every few weeks, refer back to them and ask learners to reflect on how well they are achieving their goals and discuss any changes they would like to make.</p>	

Further reading: [Teaching tips and ideas on our Sustainability skills web page](#)