

What Goes Into Compost?

Objectives:

Students will!

- Gain an understanding of what goes into a healthy compost
- Be able to use the compost more successfully and independently
- Participate in a sorting activity

Educator Notes

- Only certain materials can be placed in a compost to ensure that it remains healthy
- At the basic level, things that are inorganic (things that were never alive) like plastics must stay out
- Beyond inorganics, it is also important to keep out dairy, meat and fats as they can cause odor and attract pests to the pile

Materials:

- Flashcards with pictures of different kinds of trash (eg. banana peels, white paper, leaves, plastic etc.)
- Two labels: one says COMPOST, one says NOT COMPOST

Preparation:

Educator will construct flashcards with pictures of different materials that students might want to put into the compost bins. Some will have pictures of things that CAN go into the compost, while some will be things that CANNOT. These cards will serve as manipulables for the activity. Examples can be taken from the educator facts diagram above.

Key Vocabulary:

compostable | organic waste | inorganic waste

Activity:

Students should be introduced to the components of compost in the form of a short lesson. Either in groups or as a class under the direction of the educator, they should work to sort each of the materials on the flashcards into the piles COMPOST or NOT COMPOST. The flashcards should have pictures, allowing the children to work with the ideas without reading. They will be able to physically move the pictures into the correct piles to ensure that they understand the

ideas. They can repeat this activity until they thoroughly understand the concepts. This will ensure that they are able to interact with the compost independently.

Wrap-Up:

Once students can successfully complete this activity, they can each choose one item (from their lunch trash or other source) to put into the compost bin. The educator can check to make sure that the students have understood the rules of the compost and have picked items that are compostable.

Extension Activity (K-5):

Older children can be tested with more difficult examples. The activity could become a competition for elementary school children- divided into small groups, they would have to sort their flashcards quickly and correctly. Perhaps a jeopardy style could also be used, with a reward for the team that sorts the fastest and most accurately.