

Organising a Litter Survey

A litter survey is a very useful way to begin any litter related topics or activities and can be used to kick start any action on litter. You can look into what litter is, find out what sort of litter is causing a problem, where it is found, if there are enough litter bins and if they are in the right places.

The results of a litter survey can be used to decide what further action is required, for example, developing an anti litter campaign, reordering more bins, relocating bins, litter picking or introducing penalties or rewards.

Further surveys can be used to monitor the effectiveness of the action taken.

Making a Start

Before beginning your litter survey, it is important to decide what sort of information you are looking for as this will determine how the survey is organised and in particular how results are recorded.

For example, is there a specific type of litter you are concerned about e.g. crisp packets, or are you trying to determine the source or cause of litter in a certain area?

If you alter the survey record sheet to suit, this will help you. If you want to compare different locations, then these need to be chosen carefully to make sure that the comparison is fair and realistic i.e. the same size of area surveyed at the same time by the same method.

Resources

- Map of school grounds or area to be surveyed (available from the Map Room on ERIC, or from a Waste Awareness Coordinator)
- Survey recording sheet
- Clipboards, pencils and coloured pencils
- Camera

Choosing the right level of survey

Simple Litter Survey (P1-3)

- The area to be surveyed should be divided up into manageable areas with clear boundaries if possible
- Divide the children into supervised groups to survey the different areas, using a pictorial tally sheet
- Collate the results

Standard Litter Survey (P4 -P7)

- For older pupils, the areas surveyed may include some outside the school grounds
- Results are recorded on a standard tally sheet -this can be adapted to suit the types of litter that the children expect to find
- In addition to tallies for different types of litter record, a Cleanliness Grade for each area (A,B,C or D) can be used, although the meaning of each grade should be discussed to ensure consistency. The number and location of litter bins and the presence of dog fouling can be recorded too. Note: Dog mess should not be touched.
- Collate the results and present them in the form of tables, graphs and plans etc

Using the Results

Once you have the results of your survey you can use them to decide on what further action, if any, needs to be taken against litter.

Follow up surveys can be carried out at regular intervals and can then be used to check whether or not your action has been effective.

Results can also be displayed on your 'Eco Notice Board', presented at assembly and included in newsletters to parents, the PTA or School Board.

If part of the problem is related to parts of the community outwith school, such as a local shop or youths using the school grounds in the evenings, you might want to present your results to the community by writing to relevant people and by displaying your results in e.g. the local library, or other public place.

Good Luck!