

Trash Troop: tackling trash together!

Plastic-free at the store

Low plastic lunch

Goal

Make lunch for everyone with as little plastic packaging as possible.

Introduction

When shopping for groceries, it is nearly impossible to go through your shopping list without picking up items not packaged in plastic. This activity is aimed at trying to get students to think about plastic packaging when shopping. Divide students into groups of 4-6 and assign an adult to go with each through the grocery store. You can leave them to their own devices or engage in discussion as you shop (for example, some of the kids do not know that there is a plastic tray inside packages of cookies, or that sliced cheese can be individually wrapped in plastic). Let them make the final decisions.

Next Generation Science Standards

Practices

- Scientific Knowledge is Based on Empirical Evidence
- Planning and Carrying Out Investigations

Core Ideas

- Human Impacts on Earth Systems

Crosscutting Concepts

- Influence of Science, Engineering, and Technology on Society and the Natural World
- Science Addresses Questions About the Natural and Material World
- Cause and Effect

Supplies

- Shopping list
- Shopping bag
- Scale
- Adult

Procedure

- Take shopping list to grocery store and, under supervision, try to buy as many of the items with as little plastic as possible.
- Once back in the classroom or lab, calculate the weights of plastic that each group bought. Packaged foods list the product weight so that packaging weight can be calculated from the total weight (total wt – product wt = packaging wt) if needed. Add the totals.
- After finishing the meal, discuss the shopping experience in terms of plastics.



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Shopping list for each group (enough food for 4-6 people)

- 1 loaf of bread
- ½ pound (8 oz) deli meat
- ½ pound (8 oz) sliced cheese
- 1-1½ pounds total of tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, and/or lettuce
- 1 bag of chips or pretzels (savory side dish/snack)
- ½-1 pound of dessert (enough for ~4-6 people)
- 2 liters of drink

Discussion

- Were you surprised at how much plastic packaging is present in grocery stores?
- Were there items that used excessive amounts of plastic packaging?
- Is there a department that used more plastic than the rest?
- Which department used the least amount of packaging in their products?