



Project Guide

Community Swap

Waste Reduction & Recycling





Generation Earth Program

Generation Earth is a Los Angeles County Public Works environmental education program presented by TreePeople. Our goal is to educate and encourage youth in Los Angeles County to be an active part of the solution to environmental concerns in their community. We offer do-it-yourself environmental projects that help youth make a positive difference in their schools, at home, and in the world. Our programs are built to support the needs of teachers, students and schools.

Waste in Los Angeles

Waste is a vital issue in Los Angeles County. Each person generates an average of five pounds of waste per day. This may not sound like much, but when multiplied over a period of a year, the amount of waste each person creates is staggering.¹ Waste is generally transported to one of ten solid waste landfills around Los Angeles County. It costs money to dispose of it and valuable open space is used to create landfills to store waste.

Community Swap Project Guide

To help promote the reuse of items and reduce waste in the process, this guide provides the guidelines for students on how to run a community swap event. It includes a timeline, checklists, suggested management roles and more to ensure a successful event.

The Steps

1. Did You Know

The topic sheet provides useful information that can be used as an introduction to the topic to share with others and poses thoughtful questions for discussion.

2. Community Swap Preparation Checklist and Timeline

Using the Community Swap Checklist and Timeline, students take the first steps needed to plan and run a community swap event.

3. Promotion Plan

Students create a promotion plan for reaching the largest audience possible. Guidelines are provided.

4. Community Swap Event Team

For a well-run event, team members or assigned volunteers are provided roles to create the Community Swap Event Team.

5. Event Day Setup, Supplies and Management

Students run through the guidelines provided for event day details, including station set-up, supplies needed and helpful hints for managing during and after the event.

6. Evaluation

Complete the project by answering questions that serve to evaluate the process and offer next steps for potentially taking on an additional trash related project.



DID YOU KNOW?

In the U.S. the average person consumes twice as much as they did 50 years ago.²

Why do you think this has changed?

Consumerism is the concept that an ever-increasing consumption of goods is an advantage to the economy – it promotes the idea that the more we buy the better off we are.

The production, processing and consumption of goods requires the extraction and use of natural resources (wood, ore, fossil fuels and water).

How does this impact the environment?

According to the Global Footprint Network, at current American levels of consumption, it would take four Earth's worth of natural resources to produce the quantity of goods needed to sustain the entire planet's population.³

To keep costs low, many goods are produced in developing countries.

How does this affect the people who make the products and the surrounding community?

In developing countries, there are longstanding issues of occupational health threats in agriculture (especially pesticide exposures), mining and oil, fishing and forestry. There is almost always a “community exposure” associated with the operations of new industrial facilities. Plants which do not devote adequate resources and efforts to protect worker health rarely protect the surrounding community from ground, air and water pollution.⁴

Planned obsolescence is a policy of designing a product so that it requires replacement due to it being out-of-date or less functional than a newer version.

What products do you use that are created to become obsolete before their function expires?

The goal is to improve a company's sales by reducing the amount of time between the repeat purchases consumers make of products.⁵ This is done so that in the future the consumer feels a need to purchase new products and services that the manufacturer brings out as replacements for the old ones.

Ninety-nine percent of the things people buy are discarded within six months of purchasing without the material being recovered.⁶

How does a linear use of materials differ from a cyclical use?

Unfortunately, the majority of goods that are used run a linear path from resource extraction, to production, to consumption and finally to disposal at a landfill. Participating in reuse closes the loop, extends the life of a used object and also decreases the need to utilize resources and transportation to produce a new object. There are a number of ways to dispose of items in a way that helps their reuse:

- List unwanted items online for free.
- Arrange to have items picked up by second hand thrift stores.
- Find a charity or an organization to drop off unwanted goods for donation.
- Swap them with other people in the community.

MAKE A PLAN & GET STARTED

A student-run community swap event is an opportunity for students to promote the reuse of items. There are steps to ensure a well-run event. Use the resources provided to get organized, set a date and complete the necessary tasks.

Preparation Checklist

- Have students use the Community Swap Preparation Checklist to plan and complete the first steps.
- Work as a team to assign tasks.

Timeline

- It takes two to three months to plan and produce a Community Swap event.
- Once a date is set, use the Timeline on page 5 to complete the necessary tasks needed to ensure a successful event.

How a Community Swap Works

- Members of the local community bring unwanted goods, portable and reusable items to donate on the day of the swap. Items include books, clothing, housewares, toys, etc.
- Volunteers receive the donations at the front of the swap, then sort and place items on tables in categories.
- Participants are invited to look through all of the donated items and take anything for free.
- Participants can bring and take as much as they want. This includes participants who do not bring items to swap.
- Items left over at the end of the swap are donated or recycled.

Helpful Hint

Review the Preparation Checklist and Timeline ahead of time to understand what will be required.

Community Swap Checklist

Choose a Location

- Large enough to hold 150 to 200 people.
- One main access door to help control the flow of traffic.
- Accessible to a parking lot.
- Handicap accessible.

Choose a Date

- Consider a weekend to attract more participants.
- Check with the local community and campus calendar to ensure there are no conflicting events.
- If held on campus, check with school administration to ensure the date and location is available and can be reserved.
- Avoid local holidays or religious observances.

Choose a Time

- Plan to have the swap open to the public for three to four hours.
- Plan for a volunteer and space commitment of five to six hours total, which includes one hour for set-up and one hour for breakdown.

Get Permission

- Choose a team to compile the information about the event and present.
- If held on campus, ensure permission is given from the Principal and Onsite Maintenance/Plant Manager.
- If held off campus, make sure the location point-person gives permission to use the parking lot, restrooms, garbage and recycling bins including to assist promoting the event.

Secure Materials

- Check that approximately 16 or more six foot tables are available for use.
- If needed, consider renting or reserving a table donation for use from the local councilmember's office.
- Arrange for garbage and recycling bins to be available.
- Bring brooms and other cleaning supplies before and after the event
- See pages 8 to 9 for full list of materials needed.

Get Volunteers

- At least ten to twenty students or volunteers are needed.
- Plan for more to ensure coverage if someone drops out.

Locate Leftover Donation Venues

- Identify a thrift store donation center for any left over clothing or items
- Identify a clothing donation bin for clean clothing that is unfit for wearing
- Identify a dry cleaner that can take any leftover metal hangers.
- Identify a grocery store, pharmacy or other stores that will take any left over plastic bags by visiting the plasticfilmrecycling.org website.
- See page 12 for more details.

Community Swap Timeline

It takes two to three months to plan and produce a community swap. Once the date is set, assign tasks and due dates.

Two to Three Months Before the Event

- Identify and secure a location for the swap.
 - Evaluate the desired site and ensure it is suitable.
- Prepare a community swap event plan for the event day including time (event set-up through take down), location and desired participants.
 - Use the details determined in the Cleanup Event Checklist.
- Present the community swap event plan to key stakeholders to obtain permission.
 - Investigate the need for volunteer safety and photo release waivers.
- Designate roles or teams for different tasks, including the Swap Event Manager (see page 11).
- Create a promotion plan (see page 7).
 - Assign tasks to promotional team members.
- Begin the Promotion Plan.
 - Make, distribute and post promotional materials for the event.
- Secure tables for use.

One Month Before the Event

- Locate a nearby thrift store donation center to take any leftover items (see page 12).
- Recruit volunteers for before, during and after event duties, including any delivery of leftover items to donation centers (see page 11).
- Solicit other student groups or local community organizations to have an outreach booth at the event, if needed.
- Secure parking and establish vehicle loading areas for donation pickup and drop off.
- Distribute and collect any necessary volunteer waivers.



One Week Before the Event

- Continue Promotion Plan.
- Coordinate with the location staff about key details, including:
 - entry time
 - getting keys
 - where to take trash and recycling
 - location of cleaning supplies
- Verify swap site layout, including the following:
 - location of the intake and sorting tables
 - reusable bag station
 - trash cans and recycling bins
 - display tables
 - where partner organizations will be located
- Verify restrooms.
- Secure all needed supplies (see pages 8 and 9).
- Arrange a place for volunteers to store their personal items.
- Create category signs (reusable if possible).
- Assign a volunteer manager for the event day who will ensure volunteers are signed in, trained and given tasks.
- Arrange water and snacks for volunteers.
- Continue promotion of event.
- Ensure all necessary volunteer forms are received.

Create a Larger Event

A community swap event is a great opportunity to share the work of others. It also increases community participation.

Invite the following to have an outreach table:

- Local non-profits and community organizations
- Neighboring schools
- Youth clubs or organizations

One Day Before the Event

- Pick up water and refreshments.

Event Day!

- Have fun and be safe!
- Take pictures.

After the Event

- Return tables.
- Donate leftover items (see page 12).
- Send thank yous to the volunteers and organizations that participated.
- Share the event results, photos and data.
- Complete an evaluation (see page 13).

PROMOTION PLAN

Create a promotion plan for reaching the largest audience possible for the community swap event.

Consider:

Who do you want to reach in the community?

- Who is your audience?
- Will some materials need to be in another language?

What do you want to communicate?

- The reasons for the community swap.
- Date, time and location.
- Free for all participants.
- Details for involvement.
- Items accepted.
- Any additional activities happening or organizations attending.
- Phone number or email for more information.

How do you want to communicate?

- Create and send ads
 - School PTA newsletter
 - Local newspapers
 - Radio stations
- Create and distribute flyers
 - Community centers
 - Local businesses
- Social media
 - Online blogs
 - Facebook Event
 - Neighborhood websites
 - Tweets
 - Instagram
- Word of Mouth
 - Door Knocking
 - Classroom Announcements

Posters and Flyers

- Create posters and flyers that are appealing to your audience.
- Present information in a way that it is easily understandable.
- Include important information such as: who, what, when, where and why.
- Make sure the title and subheadings can be noticed from a distance and are eye-catching.
- Include appropriate graphics and photos.

Sample Flyer



EVENT SETUP

Create a map of the site and plan your setup to create optimal flow of traffic.

Volunteer Table and Sorting Station

- Three to five long tables
- Located near the entrance
- Run by the volunteer manager
- Serves as volunteer sign-in and training location
- Information booth for participants
- Serves as donation intake area, first stop for participants
- Include an area that is not accessible to the public for sorting
- Include a large space for volunteers to sort and take them out to the display tables
- Tape a list of category items on the sorting tables or on the wall above the sorting tables to indicate the different items you are separating on to different tables (category suggestions on page 15)
- Have cardboard boxes available for either packing up donations after the swap or broken down for recycling (store under the sorting tables)
- Have bag or box available for unwearable clothes to be recycled as scraps
- Secure a place for dangerous or unswappable items (food, cosmetics, knives, cleaning products, inappropriate items)

SUPPLIES

Set-up

- 16+ six foot tables
- One to two rolls of masking tape for hanging signs
- 20 sheets of paper or poster board for category signs
- Colored markers
- Scissors
- Other small necessities, safety pins, rubber bands, etc.

Volunteer/Donation Check-in Table

- Hand sanitizer
- Sign-in sheets
- Pens
- Name tags
- First aid kit
- Tissues or face mask for people with dust allergies

Volunteer Refreshment Table

- Cups, napkins, plates
- Food
- Water

Recycling Table

- Located outside the sorting area
- Set-up area for reusable bags including paper bags and large sturdy bags that can be used by participants taking home swap items

Swap Display Area

- 10 to 12 tables
- Located along the walls and spaced at least four feet apart in the middle of the room
- Block off any doors or areas where the public is not allowed.
- Clear the area of any items that could be mistaken as a free swap item, including lamps, decorations, books, etc.

Sorting Tables

- Large and thick garbage bags for garbage (10+)
- Clear bags for recycling collection (10+)
- Large bags for leftover clothing donations (10+)
- Two large boxes for clothing hanger collection and dangerous item collection
- Gloves for sorting items
- Face masks



EVENT DAY MANAGEMENT

During

- Keep count of how many participants come to the swap. Use a sign-in sheet or assign a greeter volunteer to count the number of attendees when entering.
- Take photos and videos of the event.
- Have the assigned point person available to deal with any issues.
- Be mindful that many people can't tell the difference between a personal item and an available item. Remind volunteers and attendees to keep an eye on their personal belongings and that lost or stolen items are not the responsibility of the volunteer team.

After

- Clean up the floor.
- Collect leftover items and sort depending on where the donations or items are going.
- Make sure all personal belongings are retrieved.
- Take any leftover lunch or opened drinks home or donate any unopened food to a local food shelter.
- Collect any supplies that were brought.
- Thank the volunteers.
- Thank the location staff for helping and ask if there is anything else they need from you.
- Reflect, record data, share the results and photos and celebrate!

Sign Categories

These can be handmade or printed ahead of time.

- Men's Clothing
- Women's Clothing
- Children's Clothing
- Shoes
- Accessories/ Jewelry
- Housewares
- Unwearable Clothing
- Unswappable items (Food, Toiletries)
- Electronics
- Games
- Toys
- Books/Magazines
- Music
- Arts and Crafts
- Miscellaneous
- Plastic Bag Recycling
- Reusable Bags
- Bottles, cans, paper and metal recycling
- Garbage (Landfill waste)
- Hanger Recycling

Additional signs:

- Hold On To Your Personal Property
- Donation Drop Off Here
- Swap This Way

VOLUNTEER ROLES

Arrange a group of volunteers to help you with set-up and then divide up the volunteer task

Volunteer Manager(s)

- One to two volunteers needed
- Be familiar with event details and the schedule
- Make sure to rearrange tasks as needed
- Greet, sign-in and train the volunteers
- Include in the volunteer training, restroom locations, separating of donated items, separating of recyclables, lunch/break time, cleanup plan and location of supplies
- Organize the Swap site layout for event set-up and break down
- The Volunteer Manager should ensure that volunteers take turns taking breaks

Donation Intake

- One to two volunteers needed
- Remain at the front table to greet swappers and take their donations from them

Runner

- Two to four volunteers needed
- Take separated items to the floor display area

Sorter

- Two to four volunteers needed
- Remove any broken, unwearable, dangerous items and separate others into category piles for the runners

Floor Floater

- Two to five volunteers needed
- Greet participants and direct them where to take their donations
- Help carry large loads to the donation table
- Keep track of how many people come to the community swap event

Photographer/Videographer

- One to two volunteers needed
- Capture shots of the set-up and action during the event
- Quickly edit final material for post-event promotion
- Send photos or video to Generation Earth

Donation Deliverer

- Two to three volunteers needed
- Has access to a vehicle with enough room to deliver leftover items
- Knows the location of organizations, hours of operation and types of items that are accepted at each location to drop off items after the event

AFTER SWAP DONATING

Identify volunteer staff who have cars with enough room to deliver any left over donation items to the following locations:

Thrift Store Donation Center

- Donate any leftover items
- Determine if the donation center can pick up items or call ahead to arrange times and location for a drop-off
- Allow at least two hours to arrive after the end of the swap
- Inquire if there are any types of items they do not accept
- Locate an alternative source to donate any items not accepted. Ask Generation Earth for help if needed.

Clothing Donation Bin

- For clothing that is clean, but unfit to wear

Local Dry Cleaner

- Arrange to donate leftover wire hangers

Grocery Store, Pharmacy or Department Store

- Recycle plastic bags
- Coordinate ahead of time to determine best drop off location
- Ensure bags are clean and empty. Find the nearest location by visiting bagandfilmrecycling.org

Household Hazardous Waste Dropoff

- Safely dispose of any beauty products, cleaners, chemicals, prescription medications that were mistakenly brought to the swap. For a list of drop off locations visit CleanLA.com or call (888) CLEANLA.



EVALUATION

Once the community swap event is complete, have students answer the following questions to evaluate their project and introduce some possible next steps.

Questions

1. What was the most successful part of the project?
2. What was the least successful?
3. What would you do differently next time?

What's Next?

Are you interested in another project?
Consider using another Project Guide:

- E-Waste Collection Event
- Composting
- Campus Curbside Recycling
- Textile Recycling Event
- Food Rescue



RESOURCES

Curriculum Ideas

- The Story of Stuff: storyofstuff.org
- The Effects of Consumerism: globalissues.org/article/238/effects-of-consumerism

Sample Swap Events

- Swap Out LA: facebook.com/SwapOutLA
- House Party Swap N Shop: facebook.com/House-Party-Swap-n-Shop-75925044190

Donations

- Donation Town: donationtown.org/california-donation-pickup/los-angeles-ca.html
- Baby 2 Baby: baby2baby.org
- Habitat for Humanity: habitatla.org/support-us/donate/
- Re-Bookit: rebookit.org/
- Useagain Donation Bins: usagain.com/

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Vocabulary

Consumption: The buying of goods or services, the using up of resources.

Virgin Material: Resources extracted from nature in their raw form such as metal ore.

Consumerism: The theory that an increasing consumption of goods is economically desirable. Also, a preoccupation with and an inclination toward the buying of consumer goods.

Extraction: The act of obtaining or pulling out something, such as natural resources like mining for metal ore or logging.

Ore: A naturally occurring mineral or rock for which a valuable or useful substance, can be mined or worked.

Global Footprint Network: Develops and promotes tools for advancing sustainability.

Obsolete: When something is no longer produced or used; out of date because something newer exists.



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