

Environmental Education Activity Guides



Use these activity guides to teach a variety of audiences and age groups about many environmental topics, including:

- Air, energy and climate change
- Protecting land and water
- Recycling
- Reducing food waste
- Reducing waste
- Toxicity and hazardous waste

www.hennepin.us/environmentaleducation



Introduction



The decisions we make every day can have either a positive or negative impact on the environment, so we all play a role in creating a more sustainable future. These environmental education activity guides can be used to engage audiences of all ages in learning about and taking action to protect the environment.

The activities were developed based on the feedback and experiences of a variety of program managers, and they are designed to be flexible to work with different types of programs and age groups. The activities can be used by both formal and nonformal educators in a variety of settings and working with a range of audiences, including community groups, school classes, youth groups, congregations, early childhood education programs and more.

The activities were developed following best practices for environmental education. The activity guides:

- Feature hands-on, experiential learning.
- Help participants develop knowledge, critical-thinking and decision-making skills, self-confidence, and creativity.
- Allow for participants to help lead the activities and, in many cases, design their own learning.
- Use supplies that you may already have or that are easy to get and are free or low cost.
- Include up-to-date and accurate information on local environmental issues.

Organization

Activities are included on a variety of environmental topics, including reducing waste, recycling, reducing toxicity and hazardous waste, air, energy conservation and climate change, protecting land and water, and reducing food waste. There are also a few general activities that could be applied to any environmental topic. Each section includes background information to help educators and participants learn about the environmental issue.

Each activity includes:

- Introduction to the activity
- Recommended age group
- Estimated time requirement
- Outcomes for the activity
- Concepts to reinforce
- Supplies
- Preparation steps
- Procedure for carrying out the activity
- Discussion questions
- Additional activity ideas
- Other resources

Motivating behavior change

Hennepin County's environmental education activity guides were developed based on strategies for motivating people to take action to protect the environment. Motivating behavior change goes beyond sharing information.

For a person to take action they need to:

1. Be aware of a problem.
2. Know specifically what they can do about the problem.
3. Desire to do the action.
4. Believe they are capable of doing it and that it is worthwhile.

The steps to planning a project or activity that engages your audience in taking action includes selecting behaviors that are relatable and actionable for your audience, identifying the perceived benefits of and barriers to those behaviors, then using applicable strategies to encourage action.

It's important to remember that being effective in motivating behavior change often means starting small – focus on engaging your audience in one activity or changing one behavior and build on those successes to create additional change.

Selecting behaviors

The first step is deciding what behaviors you are encouraging people to change.

Behaviors should be specific. For example, instead of reducing waste, you should select more specific behaviors such as using a reusable bottle, using reusable bags, reducing packaging waste, shopping at reuse stores, etc. If the behaviors you select are too broad or vague, you will struggle to identify the barriers and benefits.



You should also focus on the direct environmental impact of the behaviors you select. For example, it's not about just getting a compost bin, but actually composting, or going beyond purchasing a programmable thermostat to make sure the thermostat is installed and programmed so that it is saving energy.

Finally, think about the impact the behavior will have with your audience. How many of them are already doing the behavior? How likely are they to take this action? If the majority of your audience has already adopted this behavior or if they are unlikely to take this action, you may want to focus on a different behavior.

Identifying barriers and benefits

The next step is finding out what barriers exist for your audience in taking this action and what they find beneficial about the behavior. This step is critical because it is easy to assume what the barriers and benefits are for a specific action for your audience, but the only way you can really find out is to ask. Gathering this information will help you develop effective strategies to motivate behavior change.

There are many ways to gather this information, including surveying or interviewing your audience,

observing the behavior, looking for applicable case studies and articles, or conducting focus groups. Even a simple interview that asks two questions – what stands in the way of taking this action and why you would take this action – can provide valuable insights.



Develop strategies

Once you've selected the behaviors you're focusing on and identified the barriers and benefits for your audience, you can develop strategies that will engage your audience in taking action. The research on behavior change tells us to do the following when encouraging people to make changes in long-held beliefs and actions:

- **Use pledges or commitments**

Pledges speak to our internal need to be consistent - if we say we are going to do something, we feel the need to follow through and actually take that action. They also help build self-perception. For example, by committing to recycle or reduce waste, we start to think of ourselves as someone who cares about recycling or reducing waste.

Use commitments when you need to enhance motivation, especially when your audience believes it is important to act but need a nudge to actually take action. You can consider using written, verbal, public or group commitments. For example, invite people to fill out and return a simple pledge form for one or more actions they commit to take, or have people share the actions they are pledging to make on a poster. Following up to see if people have taken action and to offer additional resources or support – either one-on-one or in group discussions – can make commitments an even more effective behavior-change strategy.

- **Create norms**

Norms get at our need to be socially accepted. They send the message that “this is how we do things,” and can be an effective strategy to motivate action on an issue your audience doesn't necessarily care

that much about. Use messaging, announcements, posters, buttons, lawn signs, etc., to let everyone what actions the community is taking.

- **Encourage social diffusion**

We make many decisions – small and large – in our lives based on the recommendations of others. Social diffusion involves engaging leaders and early adopters to encourage others in the community to take action. Using the train-the-trainer model, train leaders on the behavior you are encouraging and ask for their commitment to speak to others. This is an effective strategy to use when your audience lacks the knowledge or skills to take action.

- **Use prompts**

Prompts address the issue that we often operate in auto-pilot, getting stuck in our routines and forgetting to take action. Prompts remind people to engage in a behavior they may otherwise forget to do, such as bringing reusable bags with them to the store. Provide a visual reminder such as a sticker, window cling or flyer that reminds people to take action. Prompts can be a useful way to remind people of actions they have committed to take. If you're asking people to take a pledge, think about how you can have them take home a reminder of the commitment they made.



- **Let people try an activity**

Social anxiety or feeling incompetent can prevent people from taking action. Engage people in hands-on activities that give them the opportunity to learn the specific steps needed to take action in a safe and comfortable space.

- **Offer supplies and resources**

Help people take action by providing the tools they need. Be sure that any giveaways are closely related to the behavior you are encouraging. Relevant giveaways could include reusable shopping bags, recycling bins and labels, bottles of green cleaner or compost bins. Be thoughtful when using incentive items as they can undermine commitment – you want people to be motivated by their desire to take action, not by your prize.



- **Use effective communication and have effective conversations**

Giving people relevant information and helping them plan how they will take action can help motivate behavior change. Make your communications personal, concrete, local, and easy to remember. Integrate specific community goals and impact. Reinforce the message by getting it out through all of your communication channels.

- **Capitalize on trigger and major life events and celebrate successes**

Times when people are already making changes in their lives is a great opportunity to integrate new habits. Trigger and major life events that you may want to focus on include when people move, start a new job, graduate, or become parents. These may also include celebrations such as Earth Day or during the holidays when people are planning celebrations. It's also important to recognize how your community is making progress on your goals or when you reach milestones. Celebrating successes helps create momentum for further change.

Use strategies that address the barriers you have identified

Barrier	Strategy
Lack of motivation – value action	Commitment
Lack of motivation – don't value	Norms
Forget to act	Prompts
Lack of information	Communication Social diffusion
Lack skills; anxiety	Let people try an activity Social diffusion
External barriers	Make it easy to act: infrastructure, tools, supplies

For more information, see the Environmental Action Project Planning Checklist and Worksheet and in the Appendix.



Calendar

Take advantage of seasonal milestones and environmental holidays:

Winter (December – February)		Spring (March – May)	
Occasion/topic	Message	Occasion/topics	Message
January 1: New Year's Day	Commit to a green resolution for the new year.	March 22: World Water Day	Take actions to protect water by keeping grass clippings and leaves off the street, using a rain barrel, limiting chemical and fertilizer use or planting rain garden.
February 2: World Wetlands Day	Take actions to protect wetlands by limiting winter salt use on ice and picking up trash near wetlands.	Second Sunday in March: Daylight Savings	Conserve energy while you spring ahead. Ideas include drying clothes outside, conducting a home energy audit, and converting to renewable energy.
Salt and ice care	Salt used to treat ice and snow contains chloride that can end up in nearby water resources, causing permanent damage. Take the following actions to reduce the amount of chloride getting into lakes, rivers and streams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply salt before a snow storm to prevent snow and ice from building up. • Use sand for traction below 15 degrees Fahrenheit because most salts stop working at this temperature. • Remove snow and ice manually. • Sweep up excess salt and properly dispose of it. 	Second or third week in April: National Environmental Education Week	Check out environmental education programs and resources from Hennepin County at www.hennepin.us/environmentaleducation and get involved.
Green celebrations	Use reusable supplies, dishware, and decorations. Provide recycling and organics recycling at celebrations.	April 22: Earth Day	Celebrate Earth Day by attending or planning a cleanup event in your community and commit to taking action to protect the environment.
Green gift giving	Give low- or no-waste gifts such as a homemade treats, gift cards, tickets to a show or a service like babysitting.	Last Friday in April: Arbor Day	Celebrate Arbor Day by planting a tree in your yard or at your organization.
Air quality	Sign up for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's air quality alerts and take appropriate action during alerts, such as limiting snow blower use.	Spring cleaning	Make homemade green cleaners with water, vinegar, dish soap and lemon juice as an alternative to chemical cleaners and properly dispose of household hazardous waste and other items. For more information, visit www.hennepin.us/greendisposalguide .
		Yard and lawn preparation	Don't rake grass clippings and leaves into the street. Leave them on your lawn, use them for compost, or bag them up. Grass clippings and leaves left in the street end up in the storm sewer, where they are carried to nearby lakes and streams.

Summer (June – August)		Fall (September – November)	
Occasion/topic	Message	Occasion/topic	Message
August through October: Choose to Reuse campaign	Reduce waste and support local businesses by ordering a Choose to Reuse coupon book to get discounts at local reuse stores.	August through October: Choose to Reuse campaign	Reduce waste and support local businesses by ordering a Choose to Reuse coupon book to get discounts at local reuse stores.
First Tuesday in August: National Night Out	Plan a low- or no-waste National Night Out event in your neighborhood. Provide recycling and organics recycling containers for event attendees.	Back to school	Go green when you go back to school. Use supplies you already have at home before going back-to-school shopping. Shop reuse stores for school supplies and clothing and pack low- or no-waste lunches.
Recycling on the go	Recycle everywhere you go by looking for recycling containers and asking if you don't see one. Collect recycling while camping, at summer barbeques or picnics, etc.	October 31: Halloween	Plan a costume swap party where people can trade old or unwanted costumes, or shop at a reuse store for your costume. Remember to compost pumpkins.
		First Sunday in November: Daylight savings	Conserve energy while you fall back. Ideas include conducting a home energy audit or converting to renewable energy.
Aquatic invasive species	Prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species by cleaning, draining and drying watercraft when entering and exiting water bodies.	November 15: America Recycles Day	Review all the items you can recycle, and make sure you are recycling all you can everywhere you can.
		Yard and lawn preparation	Properly dispose of yard waste such as grass clippings and leaves. Ask your waste hauler about a yard waste pick-up service or bring yard waste to a drop-off site.
Air quality	Sign up for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's air quality alerts and take appropriate action during alerts, such as limiting driving, mowing the lawn, and backyard bonfires.	Fourth Thursday in November: Thanksgiving	Reduce food waste when celebrating Thanksgiving by planning meals in advance to avoid food going in the trash, understand date labels on food to use up food you already have in the cupboard before heading to the store, and giving leftover food to guests.

Free resources and recommended websites

Visit www.hennepin.us/environmentaleducation or call 612-348-4168 to find out more about free handouts, literature, articles, learning trunks, displays and tours available through Hennepin County.

These organizations offer free environmental education information and resources:

- Hennepin County Environment and Energy
www.hennepin.us/environmentaleducation
- RethinkRecycling
www.RethinkRecycling.com
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
www.pca.state.mn.us, go to Living Green, Resource Center
- SEEK: Sharing Environmental Education Knowledge
www.seek.state.mn.us

TIPS FOR TEACHING OUTSIDE

Using the outdoors as a classroom for formal and non-formal education can help students of all ages gain knowledge and skills while connecting with nature. Many of the activities in Hennepin County's Environmental Education Activity Guides could be completed outside. Use the following tips for teaching outside to increase confidence among those leading activities outdoors.

Outcomes

- Leaders will gain confidence in teaching outside.
- Use the outdoors as a classroom to better engage participants and connect them to nature.

Audience

Leaders conducting activities

Time

Varies based on activity

Concepts

- Teaching outside can enhance learning.
- Teaching outside can connect participants with nature and motivate them to protect the environment.

Supplies

- Supplies vary based on which activity is being done outside



TIPS FOR TEACHING OUTSIDE

Preparation

- A variety of settings can be used for outdoor learning including a yard outside your school or organization, a local park, or a small forest or woodlot. Be creative and remember any outdoor setting can be used to connect participants with nature.
- Get permission before using an outdoor space and plan safe transportation or route to get there.
- Before going outside with participants, get to know the area's outdoor spaces on your own. Look for any hazards ahead of time so you can avoid them when you bring participants outside. Ask someone who is familiar with nature to identify plants and animals and point out any natural hazards.
- Make sure you inform parents beforehand that their children may get dirty during the outdoor activity.
- Be aware of the weather forecast before going outside with participants. Make sure participants have appropriate clothing for the weather.
- Establish and practice expected behavior in the outdoor classroom using the same rules you have established in the indoor classroom. If you have younger participants, remind them that learning outside is not the same as recess.
- Make sure you have a first aid kit and cell phone on hand before going outside.
- Create an outdoor classroom setting by bringing appropriate supplies, which may include blankets or sheets to lay out, clipboards, magnifying glasses, notebooks, and writing utensils.
- Make an "outdoor kit" for yourself that includes supplies for the activity you plan to do, a first aid kit, cell phone, water bottle, insect repellent and sunscreen.
- Make accommodations for participants with disabilities. Arrange for a paraprofessional to escort participants with special needs.

Procedure

Use the following tips to help you teach outside:

- Remember to have a balance of structured activities and free time for participants to explore the outdoor space. Be flexible and take advantage of unexpected learning opportunities such as spotting a bird close by, noticing changing leaf colors, observing the weather, etc. These "teachable moments" can be a powerful education tool.
- Try a simple activity for the first time you bring participants outside. Let participants learn their boundaries and get to know the outdoor space.
- Plan short activities to keep participants engaged on the way to the outdoor space. Ideas include picking a color and having participants find as many things in nature that have that color, picking a letter of the alphabet and having participants find as many items as they can that begin with that letter, or looking for signs of the season and making predictions about what will happen to the landscape in the next one to two months.
- Establish a central meeting place for your outdoor space. Use a signal that participants will recognize to meet at the central meeting point. Tell participants to go to the central meeting point if they get lost.
- If you are teaching with English Language Learner (ELL) students, the outdoors is a great place to learn new vocabulary terms.
- Have participants use field journals to make observations about what they see outdoors. Field journals can be used over time to document changes in seasons. Creating the journals together can be a great introduction to outdoor learning.
- Document the process while you go through it so you can look back and learn from what went well next time you teach outside.
- Before you leave the outdoor space, make sure the area is left the way you found it. Check that no participants, supplies or equipment were left behind.

Discussion questions

- How did participants react to teaching outside?
- What went well for participants outside? What could be improved next time you teach outside?
- Did teaching outside reveal anything new about the area around your school, work, office, etc.?

SPREAD THE WORD: INVESTIGATING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CREATING CAMPAIGNS

Raising awareness about an issue and actions people can take is often an important part of any environmental action project. Many of the activities from Hennepin County's environmental education activity guides could be used as participants investigate a particular environmental issue and create a campaign around it. Investigating an issue and creating a campaign can help participants, especially youth, gain critical-thinking skills and analyze and communicate information.

Outcomes

- Participants will investigate an environmental issue.
- Participants will create a campaign on an environmental issue.

Audience

Youth (ages 9+), adults

Time

Varies based on activity

Concepts

- Investigating an environmental issue can help participants gain critical-thinking skills.
- Creating a campaign around an environmental issue can help participants learn to analyze technical information and communicate it to an audience.

Supplies

- Internet access
- Outreach supplies of the participants' choosing to fit the campaign (posters, writing utensils, event materials, etc.)



SPREAD THE WORD: INVESTIGATING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CREATING CAMPAIGNS

Preparation

Read through the background sections of Hennepin County's environmental education activity guides to decide which environmental issue participants will investigate and create a campaign for.

Procedure

- After deciding which environmental issue participants will investigate, use computers or go to a library to research the topic further. Encourage participants to explore different aspects of the issue, including the history of the issue, stakeholders in the issue and current or potential solutions to the issue. If you are working with a larger group, divide participants into groups and have each group investigate one area of the issue.
- When participants feel like they have learned enough information about the environmental issue, have a discussion about their findings. Ask participants what stood out during their research. If you split participants into groups, have each group present their findings to the rest of the group.
- Have your group brainstorm what needs to be done to solve the environmental issue. It may be overwhelming to think about the issue on a global scale, so encourage participants to think about what could be done individually, in their homes, schools or workplaces. Try to think of one to three concrete actions that participants could take to help solve the environment issue. For example, if participants are investigating water quality, actions could include picking up trash on the street so it doesn't end up in the storm drain and making sure rain gutters and downspouts are directed into grass or a garden to avoid runoff.
- After participants decide on actions to take for the environmental issues, have participants brainstorm ways they can encourage other people in their community to learn about the environmental issue and take that action. Encourage participants to be creative with their campaign and try something new to get the word out! Ideas include:
 - Creating a mural
 - Presenting the research findings to an audience and having a discussion about solutions
 - Educating the community by using all of your organization's communication channels including websites, social media, newsletters, bulletin boards, flyers and brochures
 - Using sticky notes to make a wall of commitments to taking action
 - Making posters and hanging them in an area where it will be seen
 - Hosting a neighborhood cleanup event to pick up trash while educating attendees about the environmental topic
 - Hosting a swap party where participants trade clothing, toys, movies, etc. and learn about the environmental topic

Discussion questions

- What did you learn about the environmental issue you investigated?
- What actions are you going to take on that environmental issue? Are there barriers to taking other actions? If so, what are they?
- Was the campaign successful at raising awareness or motivating action? Why or why not?
- What went well in the issue investigation? What could be improved upon next time?
- What went well in creating a campaign? What could be improved upon next time?

START AN ENVIRONMENTAL BOOK CLUB

Reading about an environmental issue or topic is a great way to learn more about the environment. Sharing the ideas from different books with others who are interested in environmental issues through a book club can spark invigorating conversations and inspire new ways to take action.

Outcomes

- Start an environmental book club with family, friends, coworkers, neighbors and anyone else interested in reading and/or the environment.
- Learn more about an environmental issue or topic by reading books and having a discussion with others.

Audience

Older teens and adults

Time

Variable (one 1-2 hour meeting once a month works well)

Concepts

- Reading and discussing an environmental issue with others through a book club can inspire new ways to take action.

Supplies

- Books with an environmental focus (see book list at the end of this activity for ideas)



START AN ENVIRONMENTAL BOOK CLUB

Preparation

- Recruit members for your environmental book club through the organization you are working with or talking to friends, family, neighbors, coworkers and others and asking if they want to participate.
- Find environmental books that you can read throughout your book club. Refer to the book list at the end of this activity or search online for more options. Consider choosing a theme for your book club. Ideas for themes include:
 - A specific environmental issue such as waste, water or energy
 - Adventure, outdoor or nature writing
 - Classic environmental authors such as Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold
- Decide on a meeting place and time for book club discussions.
- Make sure everyone in your book club has access to the books chosen. Hennepin County residents can get a library card for free at www.hclib.org.

Procedure

- Communicate which book needs to be read before each discussion meeting so all book club members are on the same page.
- After selecting a book and discussion meeting time, have each member of the book club take a couple weeks to read the book. Encourage participants to take notes while they read the book and write down any questions that come up so they can be addressed at the discussion meeting.
- Create questions or a discussion guide specific to the book you are reading for the discussion meeting or use the discussion questions below.

Discussion questions

- What did you like or dislike about the book? Why?
- What did you learn that was new about the environmental topic?
- What actions will you take or what will you do differently after reading this book?
- How did the author convey the environmental topic?
- Did the author suggest any solutions to the environmental issue?
- What more do you want to learn about the topic after reading the book?
- How did the book make you feel about solving environmental issues? Hopeful? Helpless?
- What other environmental topics do you want to learn about in the book club?

START AN ENVIRONMENTAL BOOK CLUB

Environmental book list

To get you started, the following environmentally focused books are available through Hennepin County libraries.

Toddler to preschool	Preschool to 2nd Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Earth, Little Me by Thom Wiley • Choose to Reuse by Miriam Latimer • Don't Throw That Away! by Laura Bergen • Is There Really a Human Race? by Jamie Lee Curtis • Joseph Had a Little Overcoat by Simms Taback • My Bag and Me! by Karen Farmer • The Berenstain Bears Don't Pollute (Anymore) by Stan and Jan Berenstain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Recycle by Earthworks Group • A Warmer World: From Polar Bears to Butterflies, How Climate Change Affects Wildlife • Crafting with Recycleables by Dana Meachen Rau • Crunch by Leslie Connor • E is for Environment: Stories to Help Children Care for Their World at Home, at School and at Play • Eillen Green The Recycling Queen by Penelope Dyan • Human Footprint: Everything you will Eat, Use, Wear, Buy, and Throw Out in Your Lifetime • Judy Moody Saves the World by Megan McDonald • Just Grace Goes Green (Fiction) by Charise Mericle Harper • Recycle This Book by Dan Gutman • What's It Like Living Green?: Kids Teaching Kids, by the Way They Live by Jill Ammon Vanderwood
3rd grade to 6th grade	7th grade to 12th grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Recycle by Earthworks Group • A Warmer World: From Polar Bears to Butterflies, How Climate Change Affects Wildlife • Crafting with Recycleables by Dana Meachen Rau • Crunch by Leslie Connor • E is for Environment: Stories to Help Children Care for Their World at Home, at School and at Play • Eillen Green The Recycling Queen by Penelope Dyan • Human Footprint: Everything you will Eat, Use, Wear, Buy, and Throw Out in Your Lifetime • Judy Moody Saves the World by Megan McDonald • Just Grace Goes Green (Fiction) by Charise Mericle Harper • Recycle This Book by Dan Gutman • What's It Like Living Green?: Kids Teaching Kids, by the Way They Live by Jill Ammon Vanderwood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47 Things You Can Do for the Environment by Lisa Petronis • A Kids' Guide to Climate Change & Global Warming: How to Take Action! by Cathryn Berger Kate • Generation Green: The Ultimate Teen Guide to Living an Eco-Friendly Life by Linda Sivertsen • Green Careers: Environment and Natural Resources by Pamela Fehl • Harbinger by Sara Wilson Etienne • Heroes of the Environment: True Stories of People Who Are Helping to Protect Our Planet by Harriet Rohmer • Just for Fins by Tera Lynn Childs • Katarina Brieditis, Katarina Evans • Lost Code by Kevin Emerson • Making Good Choices About Recycling and Reuse by Stephanie Watson • My Summer of Pink and Green by Lisa Greenwald • Not Your Typical Book About the Environment by Elin Kelsey • Second-Time Cool: The Art of Chopping Up a Sweater by Anna-Stina Linden Ivarsson, • The Green Teen: The Eco-Friendly Teen's Guide to Saving the Planet by Jenn Savedge • Teens Go Green!: Tips, Techniques, Tools, and Themes for YA Programming (Libraries Unlimited Professional Guides for Young Adult Librarians Series) by Valerie Colston • Recycling by Viqi Wagner • Wear No Evil: How to Change the World With Your Wardrobe by Greta Eagan

START AN ENVIRONMENTAL BOOK CLUB

Book list continued

Adults

- *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* by John de Graaf
- *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver
- *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It* by Al Gore
- *Beyond Ecophobia* by David Sobel
- *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* by William McDonough
- *Future: Six Drivers of Global Change*
- *Good Life Lab: Radical Experiments in Hands-on Living* by Wendy Jehanara Tremayne
- *Junkyard Planet: Travels in the Billion-Dollar Trash Trade* by Adam Minter
- *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv
- *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* by Paul Hawken
- *New Art of Living Green* by Erica Harris
- *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* by Alan Thein Durning and John C. Ryan
- *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices: Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists* by Michael Brower
- *The Naturally Clean Home* by Karyn Siegel-Mayer
- *The Story of Stuff* by Annie Leonard
- *Triple Bottom Line: How Today's Best-Run Companies Are Achieving Economic, Social and Environmental Success – And How You Can Too* by Andrew W. Savitz'
- *Wear No Evil: How to Change the World With Your Wardrobe* by Greta Eagan
- *Zero Waste Home: The Ultimate Guide to Simplifying Your Life by Reducing Your Waste* by Bea Johnson

GO ON AN ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD TRIP

Going on a field trip is a great way for people of all ages to learn about the environment. Hennepin County provides field trip transportation for groups of at least 25 participants to take an environmental education field trip. Whether or not you use Hennepin County's transportation funding, going on an environmental field trip can increase environmental awareness and encourage participants to engage in environmental issues.

Outcomes

- Go on a field trip that highlights or explains an environmental topic.
- Inspire participants to learn more about the environment and take action to protect it.

Audience

Youth (ages 7+ for Hennepin County's transportation funding), adults

Time

Variable

Concepts

- Going on a field trip is a great way for people of all ages to learn about the environment.
- Viewing an environmental issue or solution up close can help participants understand a topic more clearly.

Supplies

- Transportation to the field trip location
- Proper safety equipment and clothing (depends on field trip location)



GO ON AN ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD TRIP

Preparation

- Decide where you want to go on an environmental field trip. View Hennepin County's list of field trip destinations at www.hennepin.us/environmentaleducation for location ideas for a variety of environmental topics.
- If you apply to Hennepin County's field trip transportation, make sure to apply two to eight weeks before your field trip date.
- Coordinate with field trip participants to make sure your group size is appropriate for the field trip. Recruit chaperones for the field trip if needed (some field trip locations may require your group to have a certain number of chaperones).
- Make sure participants wear clothing and shoes that are appropriate and safe for the field trip and weather.

Procedure

- Have participants meet at one location on the day of the field trip. If you are taking a bus, make sure the driver knows where to meet participants and know the field trip location.
- At the field trip location, make sure all participants understand any safety instructions.
- Encourage participants to be fully engaged during the field trip and ask questions.
- After the field trip, encourage participants to reflect on their experiences and what they learned.

Discussion questions

- What went well on the field trip? What could be improved upon next time?
- What did participants learn from the field trip?
- What other field trips would you like to take?

LEAD BY EXAMPLE: GREEN YOUR OPERATIONS

When organizations begin to educate others about environmental issues, they may also want to look at their internal operations and makes changes to be more environmentally friendly. The following tips and resources can help you implement these changes.

Outcomes

- Green your operations within your organization by reducing waste and increasing recycling.
- Encourage employees to get involved with greening the organization by understanding how to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Audience

Organizations leading activities

Time

Variable

Concepts

- Nearly two-thirds of the waste created at businesses and nonprofits is recyclable. Improving recycling within the organization can reduce waste.
- Having a strong recycling program demonstrates your organization's commitment to sustainability and the community, conserves natural resources and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- Leading by example gives participants ideas for what they can do in their lives to protect the environment.

Supplies

- Hennepin County's Best Practices Guide for Business Recycling available at www.hennepin.us/businessrecycling
- Hennepin County's Event Recycling Checklist available in the Appendix
- Bins for collecting trash, recycling and organics (if you don't have them already)



LEAD BY EXAMPLE: GREEN YOUR OPERATIONS

Procedure

- Use the following tips to green the operations at your organization and remember that greening your operations is a continuous process that will take time to be fully implemented within your organization.

Reduce

- Preventing waste from being generated in the first place is an easy and effective way to lower disposal costs. Look for creative ways in your day-to-day operations to reduce waste.
- Avoid unnecessary printing and make double-sided printouts and copies. Start a paper reduction campaign in your office to encourage your colleagues to reduce paper waste.
- Use email and telephone for communications and consider using e-newsletters to reduce paper use.
- Reuse scrap paper for notepads.
- Use reusable cups and dishware for meetings. Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable coffee mug.
- Encourage employees to pack lunches in reusable containers.
- Make your own green cleaners that are less-hazardous. Find green cleaning recipes at www.hennepin.us; search: green cleaning.

Reuse

- Set up a system at your organization for reusing office supplies and equipment, such as a central storage area or online database.
- Consider donating office equipment and materials that your organization no longer needs. Go to www.RethinkRecycling.com/business and look under “donation opportunities” for options.
- When shipping items, reuse packaging materials or use shredded paper.
- Use reusable or recyclable nametags at meetings.

Recycle

- Nearly two-thirds of the waste created at businesses and non-profits is recyclable. Having a strong recycling program demonstrates your organization’s commitment to sustainability and the community, can help your bottom line, conserves natural resources and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Download Hennepin County’s Best Practices Guide for Business Recycling at www.hennepin.us/businessrecycling for more detailed information about implementing a recycling program at your organization.
- Visit all areas of your building where waste is generated. Look at the contents of your trash and any existing recycling containers to determine how much material is getting thrown away and how well people are recycling.
- Make sure recycling containers are clearly labeled and readily available. Posters and labels are available from Hennepin County for recycling programs.
- To encourage recycling, reduce the amount of trash bins in individual offices or cubicles; put them in the break room and common areas instead.
- Understand which materials are recyclable. Office paper, newspapers and magazines, cardboard, plastic bottles, metal cans and glass are all recyclable.
- Start an organics recycling program. Organic waste, including food waste and food-soiled paper, can be recycled into compost, a valuable resource used in landscaping and road construction projects. Visit www.hennepin.us/organics for more information.
- Gaining support and buy-in from everyone at your organization is crucial to the success of your recycling program. Train your entire staff to make sure that everyone knows what can and cannot be recycled and to ensure that recyclables and organics are sorted, collected and stored properly.

Discussion questions

- What did you learn when greening your operations?
- What was challenging about greening your operations? What could be improved upon moving forward?
- What else could your organization do to green its operations?