

What is waste?

Before you begin

Waste is something that we do not need. Unwanted or unusable material. Waste is anything discarded, rejected, abandoned, or otherwise released into the environment in a manner (or quantity) that could have an impact on that environment.

How is waste generated?

Waste is generated in many ways.

1. Give students the example of a Banana peel as to why is it not eaten by most of people and becomes “waste” for us. When we eat a banana, we eat the white part which is inside, but not the peel. We throw the peel away as “Waste”.
2. Ask students about the boxes and packaging of new toys and how the packaging is discarded as “waste”.



Where is waste generated?

Waste is generated in many places: at home, in schools, stores, hospitals, workplaces, markets etc.

Does waste occur in nature?

There is no such thing as waste in nature. Consider a fruit which you do not like. For example, pomegranate. There might be many reasons you do not like the fruit, but if you leave it outside in the garden for a few days, ants and other insects will start appearing around it. Maybe a few birds as well. There will be animals, birds and insects who will feed on that fruit. This way nature takes care of it by itself. Waste for one organism becomes food or a source of energy for the other organism.

Waste - A human-made phenomenon

Humans have made progress in how to use science and technology to develop new products that we can use. New products also need more resources which are extracted from nature or made. Many of the things we use are made in such a way that we can use and then discard them. This means mountains of waste that need to be disposed of.

The more people use things, the more waste they generate. Some people are aware and create very little waste, but many of us like to buy, use and throw away things we no longer find useful. These habits have increased across the world and waste has become a big challenge. While some people manage their waste better than others, it is still a big challenge that continues to grow. Different types of materials create different types of waste. This includes types of waste that are possible to break down and those that are not possible to break down through a natural process.

What is waste management?

The collection, transportation, disposal and processing of waste generated is called waste management. The different types of waste we generate need to be managed according to the material they are made of. Therefore, the waste collection system has to collect them separately to send them off for recycling or landfilling.

The natural balance

Nature breaks down everything and reuses it in the form of food or directly in the form of nutrients. For example, Waste is not a part of the natural cycle and therefore it is hard for nature to treat it on its own. This means that there is a disturbance in the natural balance because of the waste that is produced. The things that are generated by nature are taken back by nature itself, but unwanted things which are a result of human activities, cannot be consumed by nature.

