

Waste Sorting Activity

Introduction:

This waste sorting game was originally designed to be one of eight activity stations in the 'Amazing Race' competition hosted by the Dalhousie Student Union during Dal's Orientation Week 2010. Teams composed of about 10-15 new first-year students competed to see which team could complete the highest number of activities in the least amount of time. To accommodate the number of students, we designed the station so that two teams could participate in the activity simultaneously. Several hundred students visited the station over the course of 2 hours. While some teams may have completed the waste sorting activity quickly, no team was able to complete the waste sorting task without hesitation. The activity clearly provided learning opportunities to many new Dalhousie students who were unfamiliar with Dalhousie's waste management system.

Goals:

- The primary goal of the activity is to introduce new Dalhousie students to Dalhousie's waste management system by asking them to organize 14 various waste items according to their appropriate bins. Ideally, the activity will have a long-lasting impact, influencing students' waste management behavior throughout the duration of their time at Dalhousie.
- The secondary goal is to raise awareness of the Dalhousie Office of Sustainability by being part of a large campus-wide Orientation Week event.

Objectives:

- By being part of a larger Orientation Week event, this fun activity will engage students who might not normally be concerned about waste management.
- Although the activity is simple and straightforward, the activity is also challenging enough that the participants will have to think carefully about where the waste items go, thus creating learning opportunities.
- By working together as a team to sort the waste items, students will have the opportunity to learn from each other. Many students are not from Halifax and will have the chance to compare Dalhousie's waste management with the waste management system in their home town, initiating thought-provoking discussion among participants.

Desired Outcomes:

- To influence and educate 25% of the participants:
 - 25% of the participants will remember what waste item goes in which bin.
 - 25% of the participants will modify their behavior and begin putting waste items in the correct bin.
 - 25% of the participants will remind their friends as to which bin their waste goes into.

Activity:

At the activity location the covers of the four waste sorting bins are placed in a line on the ground (recyclables, paper, garbage, organics). Upon arriving at the station each participating team would nominate one person to lead the waste sorting activity. The leader would be provided with 14 'waste items' represented by photos of waste glued onto cardboard squares. Another participant would be provided with a copy of *Dalhousie's Waste Management guide* which would serve as a reference to assist with the sorting.

The goal of the activity is to sort the 14 pieces of waste according to which bin each item belongs to. This is done by placing the waste items on top of the bin lids on the ground. When the team says they are finished, a station staff person will review the sorted waste. If they are incorrectly sorted, the staff person will give them clues as to where the problem is (ex. 'this pile is ok, this one is ok, this one is not'). Once they have successfully organized the waste items, the cardboard squares are shuffled and then handed to the next team along with a copy of *Dalhousie's Waste Management guide*.



List of Waste Items:

(difficult items to sort correctly, are marked with an asterisk)

BIN: PAPER / CARDBOARD

- Cardboard box
- Magazines
- Newspaper

BIN: RECYCLABLES

- Milk carton
- Tin can
- *Plastic milk container – Plastic #2

BIN: ORGANICS

- *Cereal box (Does not go in the paper recycling - it is thin boxboard, not corrugated)
- Orange peel
- 1/2 eaten meat burger
- *Dirty paper plate (Does not go in the paper recycling)

BIN: GARBAGE

- *Disposable coffee cup
- Spray cans
- Burnt out light bulb
- *Yogurt container - plastic #5



Evaluation of waste sorting activity hosted on September 8th, during Dalhousie Orientation Week 2010:

Participating students engaged thoroughly with the activity and in most cases all the team members were involved in sorting the waste items. Many of them had different ideas of where certain waste items went which led to productive discussion and brainstorming. Incorrect assumptions about Dalhousie's waste management system were corrected during the activity. Although the long-lasting impact of the activity is difficult to measure, it is highly probable that a number of the participants began to sort their waste correctly as a result of this activity.