For College and University Students

Objective/Overview: Encourage students to recycle by demonstrating the volume of recyclable materials that go to waste by being thrown in the trash.

In this activity, volunteers will sort waste into bins or piles. As the piles grow, the goal is to show students that every time they toss “just one” can, bottle, or mobile device into the trash, it adds up to a lot of wasted recyclables.

1. **PLANNING AND PERMISSION**

   Before you begin planning this activity, get permission from your student activities or waste management office to sort waste from your cafeteria or student union. Choose an outdoor area or another place with lots of passers-by. Check in advance if you need to have facilities or campus security representative present at the event location.

2. **GATHER MATERIALS**

   - Caution tape or rope to designate waste sorting area
   - Protective suits for volunteers (can buy a disposable one for $5 at pkafety.com)
   - Posters advertising your event and explanatory signs to post near the site (pages 3-4)
   - Tables or clear bags to emphasize recyclables that went into the trash

3. **PROMOTE AND PREPARE**

   Promote the event in advance with fliers around campus (see sample fliers on pages 3 and 4). Make it fun by listing who will be “dumpster diving,” and consider adding your campus logo. Also be sure to hang signs near the event so that people walking by understand what’s happening. Need some inspiration? Check out this documentary on dumpster diving by Alex Mallis—*Spoils: An Extraordinary Harvest.*
OUTFIT YOUR TEAM IN GLOVES AND PROTECTIVE CLOTHING, AND START SORTING! HOWEVER YOU CHOOSE TO SEPARATE TRASH FROM RECYCLABLE MATERIAL, MAKE SURE THE RECYCLABLES ARE CLEARLY MARKED. IF YOU WANT TO INVOLVE SOME ARTIST ON YOUR CAMPUS, YOU COULD HAVE A FEW VOLUNTEER TO MAKE SCULPTURES WITH FOUND OBJECTS OR RECYCLABLES AS YOU SORT THROUGH THE TRASH. DISPLAY THE SCULPTURES LATER TO CALL ATTENTION TO ALL THE RECYCLABLE MATERIALS THAT WERE IN THE TRASH. ALSO CONSIDER DOING VOLUME-TO-WEIGHT CONVERSIONS (SEE RECYCLEBOWL.ORG) SO THAT YOU CAN SHARE THE WEIGHT OF TRASH VERSUS RECYCLABLES FOUND IN YOUR SCHOOL’S WASTE STREAM.

SHARE YOUR RESULTS AND TAKE ACTION

- Take pictures at your event and share the album with us on Facebook.com/AmericaRecyclesDay.
- Write an op-ed for your school newspaper, or ask them to send a reporter to cover your event.
- Share your findings with a school administrator.
Do you ever feel that tossing one little can into the trash doesn’t matter? Well, all those potential recyclables add up! Come see how much recyclable material ends up in our campus waste stream as volunteers sort trash for America Recycles Day.

**Who:** ________________________________

**What:** Sorting out the recyclables from our trash

**Where:** ______________________________

**When:** ______________________________

**Why:** To show our campus recycling potential!

[Your college logo here]
What is this “rubbish”? 

Your fellow students are going through the campus trash in search of recyclables and sorting their findings to see how much recycled material gets thrown away. The next time you’re about to toss “just one” item in the trash, think of the piles of recyclables you see here and remember: it all adds up.