

Challenge 7: Have students compare cost of disposable vs reusable products (0.5 credit per unique class report; up to 4 classes / 2 credits)

Similar in some ways to a waste audit, have students compare the cost of using disposable items vs reusable items. They can find the cost of products online and create charts or reports on their findings. Have students decide what products they want to compare, for example paper towels vs cloth napkins over time, and guide them towards creating a narrative with their data. Each participating class will need to choose a different product. Make sure to also include a specific time frame -- a month, a year, etc. -- that the analysis would cover. For example, what are the cost differences between using disposable lunch bags for a year vs a reusable lunch bag? Be sure to report out of the classroom; either present to the school or include findings in a green newsletter/greenboard.

To accommodate younger students, elementary school classes can opt to perform a detailed pros and cons list and report on their observations, rather than a cost comparison. Considering economic, environmental, and social pros and cons should help you start thinking about your list!

Attached below are example items from U Konserve

DISPOSABLE lunch		REUSABLE lunch
buying packaged food in pre-packaged, single-serving sizes	vs.	making food from scratch, and buying food in bulk and in large jars or cans for reusable containers
buying plastic bags, foil and plastic wrap	vs.	reusing stainless containers or recycled plastic food cozys
buying juice boxes and water in plastic bottles	vs.	refilling and reusing a stainless steel water bottle
buying paper lunch bags	vs.	reusing a cloth, stainless steel or recycled plastic lunch box or bag
buying paper napkins	vs.	reusing cloth napkins
buying plastic utensils	vs.	reusing utensils

To receive credit for this project, submit the cost comparison reports as well as photos of how you reported out. This could include photos of the presentations or photos of the green board / newsletter. You will receive 0.5 credits for each classroom that participates, up to 2 credits.