

Computer Capers

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Trash Tracker

How long do you think the items that you throw out in the trash will last in a landfill? Begin your research by creating a spreadsheet to track your data. First, make a list in column A of some common items that you throw away on a weekly basis.

Next, in column B, make a guess as to how long you think it will take for this item to decompose in a landfill. Finally, in column C,

place the actual time it takes. To find out the answers *Google*, “trash decomposition rates,” and you’ll be amazed at the information you can find. When all your research is complete, consider what you learned.

Trash Items	Estimate	Actual Decomposition Time
Banana Peel		
Paper Bag		
Plastic Jug		
Tin Can		
Cotton Sock		
Styrofoam Cup		
Glass Bottle		

Do you think you’ll change the items you discard? What are a few small changes that your family can make to help reduce the amount of trash you generate?

Indiana Mathematics Standard 4.6 Students organize, represent, and interpret numerical and categorical data and clearly communicate the findings. They show outcomes for simple probability situations



Create a “Green” Trap

Celebrate St. Patrick’s Day by creating a Leprechaun Trap using recycled items:

“Green” items to catch something “Green!” What might you use to snare those tiny, mischievous guys? Take a trip to your recycling bin and pull out items that might be helpful. Assemble your trap using only recycled items, if possible, with perhaps a bit of glue or tape if needed. Once your creation is complete use a word processor to tell exactly how your trap works.

Describe your invention fully so that anyone looking at it would know exactly how it functions. Finally, set up your trap on St. Patrick’s Day and hide your instructions (Leprechauns can read! 😊) Do you think you’ll catch one? If you do, what will you do with him?



Indiana Language Arts Standard 2.4.5 Use a computer to draft, revise, and publish writing. 2.5.5 Use descriptive words when writing.

Unplugging Progress

Did you know that keeping many electronic gadgets and appliances plugged into the wall draws energy even when they are switched off? This is sometimes called phantom energy, or wall or idle current, and can account for up to 10 percent of your electricity usage each month. To help save energy and money, take some steps in your home to decrease power waste. Take a survey of your current situation, making a list of the rooms in your house and recording them in a spreadsheet across row 1. Print your spreadsheet so that you can take it from room to room and write, under the appropriate room heading, all the items that are plugged in to electrical outlets. As you go through each room, unplug as many of the devices as possible. Although it might be inconvenient to have to plug something in every time you want to use it, the savings may well be worth it. Finally, go back to your original spreadsheet and update it with your findings, entering all the items that were plugged in for each room. At the bottom of your list, calculate the total number of items plugged in and the total number of items that you were able to disconnect. Will it make a difference? Try your best to keep them unplugged until needed. Save your spreadsheet so that in one month you can check your progress. Go to each room and record how many items are plugged into the wall and insert this information beneath the previous month’s entry. Do you notice a difference? How does your data compare? You might also check your savings by comparing your electric bills. It is amazing how the smallest changes can make a big difference.

Indiana Science Standard: 8.3 Students collect and organize data to identify relationships between physical objects, events, and processes. They use logical reasoning to question their own ideas as new information challenges their conceptions of the natural world.

