

Litter Behavior Toolkit

Challenge Objective:

Explore the “why” behind littering behaviors through community interviews, observing social cues, and creating a campaign to encourage positive change.

Challenge Overview:

Through this toolkit, you’ll become a psychology expert. You’ll investigate what makes people litter (or not!), discover how social norms and convenience matter, and design a creative campaign to inspire change. You can...

- Interview peers, family, or community members about littering habits
- Observe your environment for social cues (like number of bins, signs, and cleanliness)
- Research why people litter from a psychology/behavioral science perspective
- Share your findings with your school or community

Short on Time? Choose Your Path:



Interviewer:

Focus on the Explore and Expert Research steps



Observer:

Collect data with the Explore step



Designer:

Jump straight to the Document and Action pieces



Advocate:

Combine Exploring with a creative Take Action step

RESEARCH

Goal:

Understand the behaviors behind littering.

Activity:

Choose one or more of these to start:

- **Watch or listen:** Search for short videos or TED Talks on human behavior and littering (keywords: “why people litter,” “behavior change environment”).
- **Read a story:** Look up an article about social experiments on litter (for example: how signs or bin placement affect behavior).

Ask yourself:

- Why might people litter even when bins are available?
- What factors influence *your own choices* about whether to properly dispose of waste?



EXPLORE

Goal:

Collect real-world data on litter behaviors.

Observation Walk:

- Visit a park, schoolyard, or your neighborhood street.
- Note how many bins you find and their locations.
- Note whether clear signage is visible.
- Record if litter is near bins, in hidden corners, or spread out.

Interviews:

- In this same site, talk to 3 - 5 people (peers, family, neighbors).
- Ask questions like:
 - “What makes it easy or hard for you to throw trash in the appropriate bin?”
 - “Have you ever seen others litter? How did that influence your own behavior?”
 - “What changes or strategies do you think could help people litter less?”



Tip: Use a simple interview sheet or checklist to organize answers (or record them with permission!)

LEARN FROM AN EXPERT

Goal:

Connect your findings with expert insight.

Choose One:

- **Interview a local expert:** Psychologist, teacher, or environmental educator.
- **Email:** Send your questions to one or more local experts.

Sample Questions:

- Why do people litter even when they know it's harmful or wrong?
- What role do peers and social influence play in littering behaviors?
- How can schools, cities, or community organizations encourage better disposal habits?

Make sure to write down major takeaways and come prepared with your own questions too.



DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS

Goal:

Summarize what you learned in a creative way.

Include:

- Highlights from your interviews.
- Notes on your observation walk (bin placement, litter hotspots).
- Key takeaways from experts or research.

This can be compiled into:

- A summary chart of common answers.
- A word cloud of attitudes toward littering.
- Short stories/quotes from interviewees.



TAKE ACTION

Goal:

Use your research to inspire change through communication.

What's one way you can bring this to your community? Choose one of the following actions (or create your own!):

- Put your summary chart, word cloud, or quotes along with catchy slogans or visuals on a poster at your school or local community center (e.g., “Bins Are Closer Than You Think!”).
- Place your poster or sign in a litter-prone area and document changes with before/after photos.
- Create a mini video or slideshow with your interview quotes, charts, and visuals to tell the story of your findings.
- Lead a small session with peers or community members to talk about litter behavior and possible solutions.



REFLECTION

Ask yourself:

- What surprised me about why people litter?
- How do my own habits compare to the people I interviewed?
- What small actions could I take to make the biggest difference in my community?

Remember: changing habits starts with awareness. By combining psychology, observation, and creative design, you're helping build a litter-free culture.

