

Litter Walk Toolkit

Challenge Objective:

Go on a litter walk to reveal your community's litter story and how you can reduce trash in your neighborhood.

Challenge Overview:

Through this toolkit, you'll become a litter investigator. You can do this on your own, with friends, as a club, or with your class. You can...

- Conduct a photo walk and map out litter "hotspots"
- Learn from an expert about litter patterns
- Create an illustrated "litter timeline" showing how the space could look before and after litter is present
- Share your findings with the community and help drive ongoing meaningful change

Short on Time? Choose Your Path:



Explorer:

Do the Litter Walk and take photos only



Storyteller:

Focus on the Explore and Create steps



Mapper:

Go for the Create section to make a litter map



Advocate:

Do the Research, Create, and Share Steps

RESEARCH

Goal:

Understand how and why litter patterns form.

Activity:

Choose one or more of these to start:

- **Watch or listen:** Look up a short documentary or video on how litter travels through communities (search “storm drains litter flow” or “how trash spreads in cities.”)
- **Read a story:** Find a news article about litter cleanups or hotspots in your town.
- **Reflect:** Why do you think litter builds up in certain areas? What do different types of litter (fast food, packaging, bottles) say about the habits of people passing through?

Tip: Keep a notebook handy for recording your thoughts and questions.



EXPLORE

Goal:

Conduct a photo-logged walk to map out litter types and patterns.

Choose a Site:

A local park, schoolyard, street, bus stop, shopping center, or neighborhood path.

Bring the Following:

- Camera or phone for photos
- Notebook or survey sheet
- Optional: Gloves or grabbers to pick up trash along the way!

During Your Walk:

- Take photos of litter along your route (try to capture wide shots and close-ups)
- Mark hotspots on a simple map (sketch or print a map of your site)
- Note what kinds of litter you come across most, including frequency (plastic bottles, wrappers, cigarette butts, cans, etc.)
- Think about the story each piece might tell. For example:
 - A soda can tossed near a bus stop → someone waiting left it behind
 - Fast food wrappers near school → lunchtime hangout spot
 - Plastic bottles along a trail → lack of recycling bins nearby

Alternative Option: *If you can't get outside, use Google Street View to virtually walk a street or search for community litter photo galleries.*

LEARN FROM AN EXPERT

Goal:

Understand what litter patterns mean from a professional perspective.

Choose One:

- **Interview a local expert:** City waste manager, cleanup organizer, or park ranger
- **Email your Insights:** Send an email to one of the local experts above with your questions

Sample Questions:

- What factors can cause some areas to have more litter than others?
- How can mapping litter help communities reduce it?
- What actions have you seen work to reduce litter in your community?

Come prepared with your own questions, write down key takeaways, and compare them with your own observations.



DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS

Goal:

Turn your Litter Walk into a visual story.

Your final product could include:

- Your Litter Map showing hotspots and types
- A Photo Gallery with captions telling the “story” of each type of litter
- An Illustrated Timeline showing:
 - Before litter (a clean space)
 - Now (with litter you saw)
 - Future (if litter continues...OR if solutions are put in place)

Options for final products:

- Poster or infographic
- Interactive digital map (using Google My Maps or similar tool)
- Video presentation or slideshow



TAKE ACTION

Goal:

Share your findings and inspire action within your community!

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

- *Present to your community:* Share your timeline or photo map with your school, HOA, club, or city youth council.
- *Email leaders:* Send your map and findings to local officials and suggest solutions (like more bins or signage).
- *Start a monthly Litter Walk:* Repeat the project with your class or club and track changes over time.
- *Join a bigger effort:* Sign up for Keep America Beautiful's Greatest American Cleanup or partner with your local KAB affiliate to expand your impact and connect with other volunteers.



REFLECTION

Ask yourself:

- Where did I notice litter collecting the most, and why might that be?
- What do these patterns reveal about people's habits in this space?
- How could sharing these stories motivate others to take action?

Whether you continue tracking litter, presenting to leaders, or starting a monthly walk, remember: your observations are the first step to solving the problem.

