

D4: SMART PACKAGING

Overview

The aim of this activity is to illustrate the importance of **recycling** and the practical realities of waste disposal. Students learn how some types of waste break down quicker than others, and discover the impact that our waste disposal has on the environment. The activity gives them a chance to investigate the different **biodegradabilities** and **polluting effects** of the waste that they produce.

Smart packaging is not **solely** about the **environmentally friendly** disposal of packaging. It is also about using packaging to **enhance the shelf life** of locally produced foods. In this way, smart packaging should contribute to supporting locally produced food rather than sustaining a dependence on imports. The **connection** between **smart packaging** and the **agrifood market** is perhaps an aspect that students may not be aware of. This activity is an opportunity for them to research it.

Suggested approaches:

- Arrange students into small groups and ask them to build up their knowledge about recycling and waste disposal using the resources provided. The next step will be **D4 ACTIVITY 1: SMART PACKAGING**, in which students build a small compost bin and monitor the breakdown of the contents over a period of time.
- Alternatively, the compost bin can be built and monitored as described in **D4 ACTIVITY 1: SMART PACKAGING** first, and then students can consolidate their findings using the resources provided.
- Ask students to compare the time scale of the biodegradability of a selected number of bags with the time scale advertised. For example if the bag is labelled as breaking down in ten to fourteen days, put it to the test. Has it really broken down within that time?
- Set students the task of researching the connection between smart packaging and the agrifood business, and comparing Ireland's packaging performance with that of other countries that supply food to us.

Resources:

- [Click here](#) to view an interesting Irish Examiner article on smart packaging.
- The [EPA](#) has great [educational resources](#) containing useful videos and exercises for students.
- [Click here](#) for more detailed information on recycling.