

**Schools  
Recycle  
Right**



**NATIONAL  
RECYCLING WEEK**

**PLANET ARK**

# Recycled Arts and Crafts Guide



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# About This Guide

Planet Ark has developed the Recycled Arts and Crafts Guide for the **Nature Schools Recycle Right Challenge**, an initiative of National Recycling Week.

We hope that this Guide will spark ideas for teachers and educators who want their students to learn about the importance of reusing and recycling resources for environmental sustainability – and who also believe that learning should be fun! These recycled craft projects are a good way to reinforce the key messages of sustainability that are being learned elsewhere in the classroom.

The projects in this Guide vary in difficulty. You'll find projects that are suitable for students in preschool and primary school. We encourage you to adapt and amend the projects to suit the needs of your own students.

## Using Art To Raise Awareness: A Recycled Arts and Crafts Exhibition

Exhibiting your students' artwork for the whole school or local community to see is a great way for students to share and display their creativity. It also raises awareness about the importance of reusing and recycling, especially if you simultaneously display recycling-themed posters or other educational materials that the students have produced themselves. For example, in the **Recycle Right To Save Resources** lesson plan students produce a poster aimed at encouraging others to recycle. In the **Recycle Right To Avoid Contamination** lesson plan, students produce an

educational resource (e.g. a poster, video or other media) as part of an educational campaign that they have devised to reduce recycling contamination.

Recycled art competitions are growing in popularity and you may wish to consider entering your students' artwork in such competitions – or even starting your own! To find an existing recycled art competition, check with your local council or local art groups. Holding a recycled art exhibition or competition in your local community could be a great opportunity to find a local sponsor and attract local media attention for your school.

## 'Wastruments' and 'trash bands'

Some of the arts and crafts projects in this Guide are for making 'wastruments' - musical instruments made from reused objects. With a classroom full of wastruments there's only one thing to do – form an orchestra or 'trash band'!

## Finding Materials For Your Activities

Each project in this Guide has a list of required materials. Most projects require at least one recyclable item commonly found in the home, such as milk and juice cartons, plastic bottles, plastic containers, jars and cereal boxes. Ask your students to collect the necessary recyclable items from home.

Most of the projects also require materials for decorating. Ask your students to think creatively about what 'waste' or 'found' objects they can use. Examples include:

- ♻️ lolly wrappers
- ♻️ colourful pieces of plastic, foil and packaging
- ♻️ scraps/offcuts of paper, cardboard and fabric
- ♻️ discarded buttons
- ♻️ empty used pens

- ♻️ CDs that can't be given away
- ♻️ old magazines and catalogues

Community re-use centres and 'tip shops' are also a great source of art and craft materials – you can often find textile offcuts, unwanted colour samples from paint manufacturers, beads, foam, cardboard, ribbons, cards and more.

## And finally ....

- ♻️ For the ultimate in freedom of creativity, don't use the projects in this Guide at all! Provide your students with a variety of used, recycled and 'waste' materials and ask them to make whatever they want.
- ♻️ Don't forget to reuse or recycle any materials left over after your arts and crafts activities. If you need information on how or where to recycle a particular item, search on [RecyclingNearYou.com.au](http://RecyclingNearYou.com.au) or call Planet Ark's Recycling Hotline on 1300 733 712 (EST 9am-5pm).
- ♻️ For more information about the Schools Recycle Right Challenge, visit [SchoolsRecycle.PlanetArk.org](http://SchoolsRecycle.PlanetArk.org)
- ♻️ For more information about National Recycling Week, visit [RecyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org](http://RecyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org)

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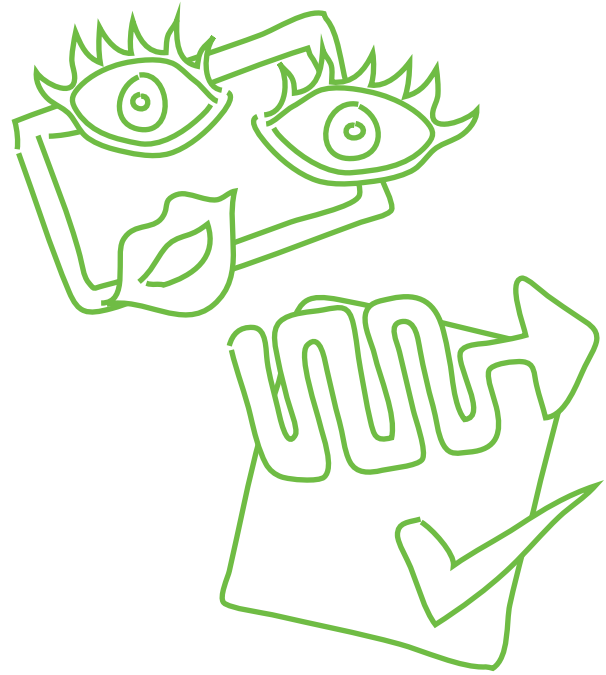
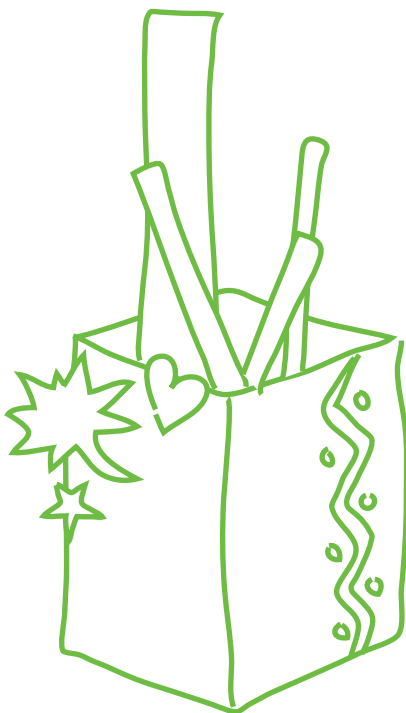
## Desk Tidy

### Materials:

- ♻️ A clean milk or juice carton, or a plastic container with a stable base
- ♻️ Scissors and glue
- ♻️ Assorted craft materials e.g. paint, crayons, scraps of fabric, pictures from a magazine or catalogue, buttons, cardboard, paper etc

### Instructions:

1. Cut the top off the carton so that you are left with an open-top container.
2. Decorate the outside of the carton any way you choose, using the materials at hand. Use your desk tidy to store your pens, stationery or other odds and ends on your desk.



## Fridge Friend

### Materials:

- ♻️ An unwanted fridge magnet (e.g. the flat, promotional magnets that businesses use to advertise, often appearing unsolicited in your mailbox)
- ♻️ Scissors and glue or sticky tape
- ♻️ Assorted recycled arts and crafts materials

### Instructions:

1. Have a look at the craft materials at hand. Use them however you wish to make your fridge friend – the design, shape and ‘look’ is completely up to you. Just keep in mind that your fridge friend can’t be so heavy that the magnet falls off the fridge.
2. Use glue or sticky tape to attach your fridge friend to the magnet.

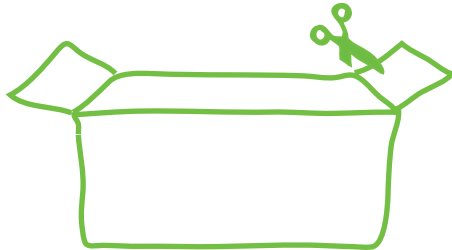
# Castle Storage Box

## Materials:

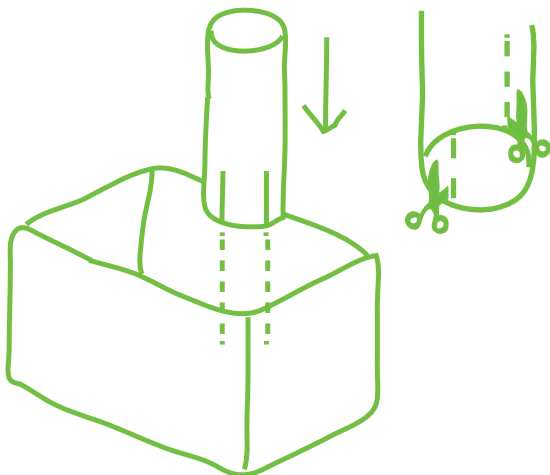
- ♻️ A shoebox or a small box (the lid isn't necessary)
- ♻️ Four toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls, for towers
- ♻️ Cardboard, for the tower roofs
- ♻️ Scissors, glue and tape
- ♻️ Assorted craft materials e.g. paint, crayons, scraps of fabric, pictures from a magazine or catalogue, buttons, cardboard, paper etc

## Instructions:

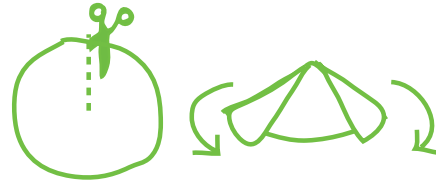
1. If you have a box with flaps that fold over the top to close the box, cut off the flaps so that you have an open-top box.



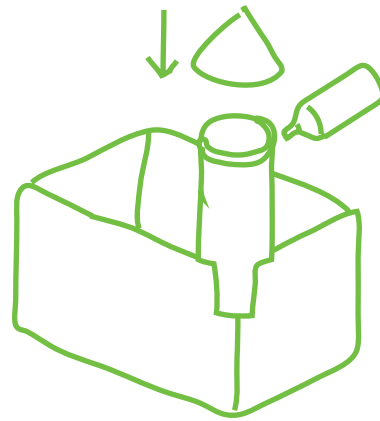
2. If you have paper towel rolls, place them in each corner of the box, standing up. Glue them into place.
3. If you have toilet rolls, you'll need to fix them to the top corners of the box. Take one toilet roll and cut two slits (about 5 cm long) into one end



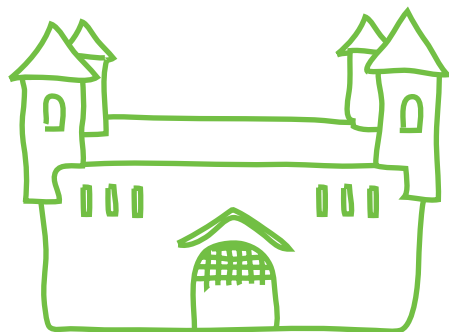
of the roll. Then push the roll on to the two sides of a corner of the box. Use tape, if necessary, to secure it in place. Do the same with the remaining toilet rolls.



4. Make four cones by cutting out four cardboard circles, cutting the circles halfway across and then curling them. Glue a cone on top of each roll to form the roofs of your towers.



5. Decorate your box like a castle, with a drawbridge at the front and windows on the walls.



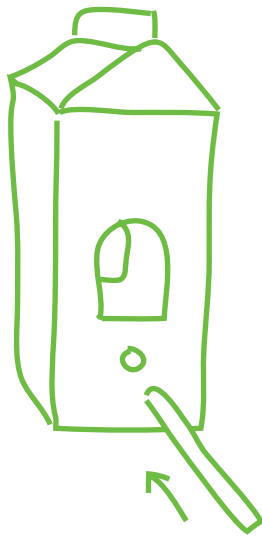
# Carton Bird Feeder

## Materials:

- ♻️ A one-litre gable-top or fresh product carton is ideal, but you can also use other kinds of cartons or a plastic milk bottle
- ♻️ A UHT or long-life carton (the type with the silver lining inside)
- ♻️ A thin stick, rod or a used pen
- ♻️ Scissors and glue
- ♻️ Paint and paintbrushes

## Instructions:

1. Cut a small opening in the front and back of your gable-top carton. The bottom of the opening should be about 4-fingers-width above the bottom of the carton.



2. Make a small hole in the front and back of the carton, halfway between the bottom of the carton and the opening. Push your stick/rod/pen through both holes, leaving a 'perch' on either side of the carton.
3. To make the roof of your bird feeder, cut open your UHT carton so that you can spread it out. Cut a rectangular shape from the carton. It's better to cut a large piece that you can trim down later, than a small piece that won't cover the birdfeeder properly.
4. Bend the rectangle in the middle so that it's shaped like a tent with the silver foil on the

outside. Place it on top of the gable-top carton so that it forms a roof and attach it with glue. You'll need to leave some overhang on your roof to protect the birdseed from rain, but not so much overhang that it catches the wind too easily, as then the birdseed might tip out.



5. Apply a small amount of glue to the edges of the roof. This will stop water seeping into the cardboard layer of the roof.



6. Decorate the outside of your bird feeder with paint.
7. At home, fill the bird feeder with birdseed and use string or wire to fasten it to the eaves of your roof, clothesline or another suitable place. It's a good idea to put bird feeders out in the open so that it's harder for cats or other predators to ambush the birds while they're feeding.

# Stars and Moon Mobile

## Materials:

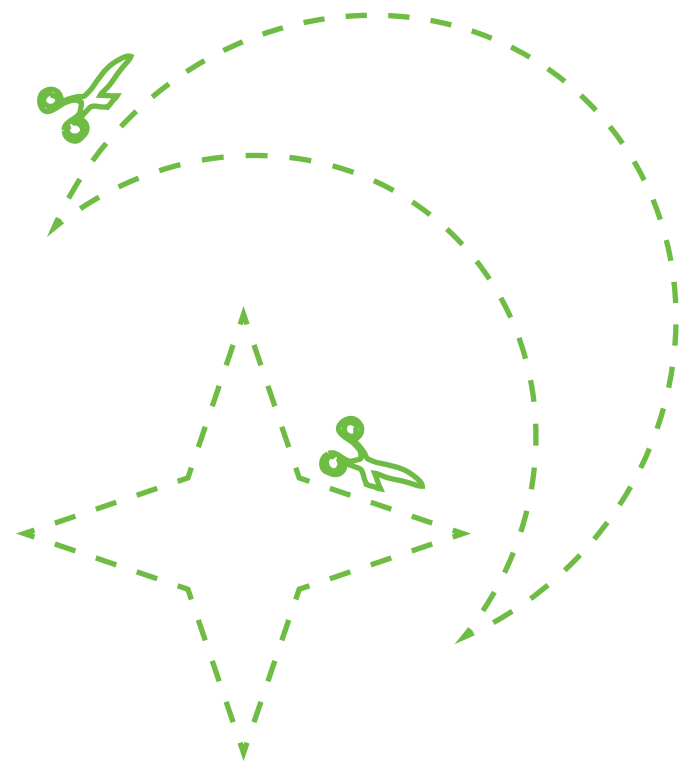
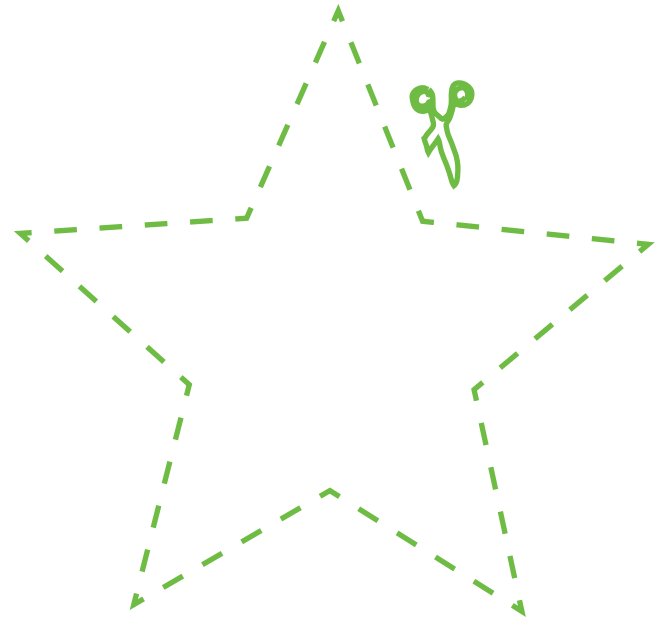
- ♻️ UHT or long-life cartons with the silver lining inside
- ♻️ Scissors and glue
- ♻️ A pencil, pen or marker
- ♻️ String or yarn
- ♻️ Blunt darning needle, mathematical compass or a suitable tool to make holes for the string
- ♻️ A stick, rod, coat hanger or similar (you'll use it to suspend the stars and moon).

## Instructions:

1. Cut the cartons open and make sure the insides are clean and dry.
2. Draw a star on the silver side of a carton. You can draw your own star or use the one below as a template. Then cut out your star.
3. Trace the outline of the star onto another piece of carton, then cut out your second star.
4. Glue the two stars back to back, so that the silver sides are on the outside.
5. Use a blunt darning needle, compass point or similar to punch a hole in one arm of the star. Thread a piece of string through the hole and tie a knot so that your star will dangle on the end of the string.
6. Repeat these instructions to make a moon and more stars. You might like to make big stars and little stars.
7. Tie the ends of the strings to your stick, rod or coat hanger. You might like to have your stars and moon hanging at different heights.
8. To finish your mobile, tie another piece of string to the stick, rod or coat hanger so that you can hang it up from above.

## Options

- ♻️ You can choose a different theme for your mobile. Stars and a moon are just one suggestion.
- ♻️ If you can't find a suitable stick or rod, you can tape a few wooden skewers together.



# Woven Placemat or Potholder

## Materials:

- ♻️ Cardboard from a cereal box or similar (or re-use unwanted pieces of cardboard). The bigger the piece of cardboard, the bigger your placemat can be.
- ♻️ Paint
- ♻️ Scissors and glue

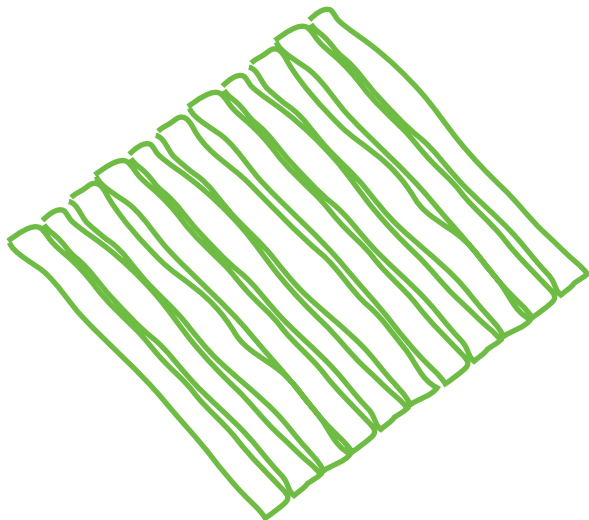
## Instructions for making a placemat

### Stage 1: Painting the cardboard

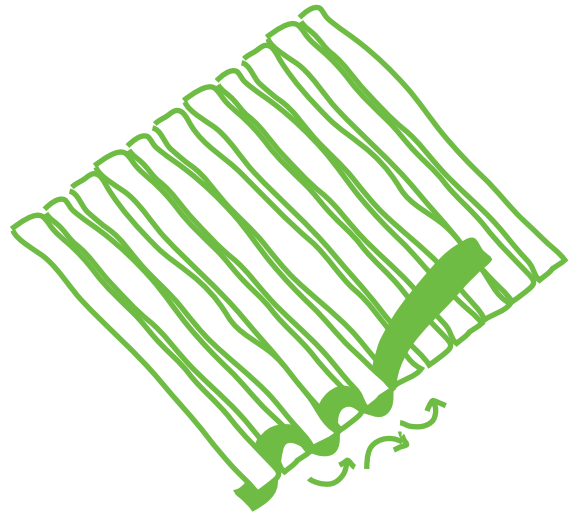
1. Cut open the cereal box, flatten it and cut it in half.
2. Paint the two halves of cardboard in different colours. If you use one colour per half, you will end up with a placemat of two different colours. If you use many colours in each half, you will end up with a mixture of colours on the placemat.
3. Leave the cardboard to dry.

### Stage 2: Cutting strips and weaving

4. Cut each piece of cardboard into long strips. The width of the strips is up to you (2 cm strips work out nicely) but try to make the strips as even as possible.



5. Lay all the strips from one half of the cardboard down in neat rows on the table, just touching each other, 'right' side facing up.



6. Take a strip from the second half and weave it through the other strips: under, over, under over etc, 'right' side facing up.
7. Continue with the remaining strips.
8. Tighten the weave by pressing the strips into place so that there are no big gaps or holes in the placemat.
9. You should now have a square or rectangle of woven strips. Trim any irregular edges and glue the ends of the strips in place.

### Instructions for making a potholder

Follow all the instructions for making a placemat. There is just one additional step: Cut out one or two pieces of cardboard in the same shape as the placemat, and glue it to the underside of the placemat. This will give you a thicker layer to absorb heat.



## CD Case Photo Frame

### Materials:

- ♻️ An empty CD case (the type made out of clear plastic)
- ♻️ An assortment of craft supplies and items to decorate the frame
- ♻️ A photo to be framed
- ♻️ A piece of cardboard, about the size of the CD case. You can use cardboard packaging, e.g. from a cereal box or carton.
- ♻️ Scissors and glue
- ♻️ Sticky tape

### Instructions:

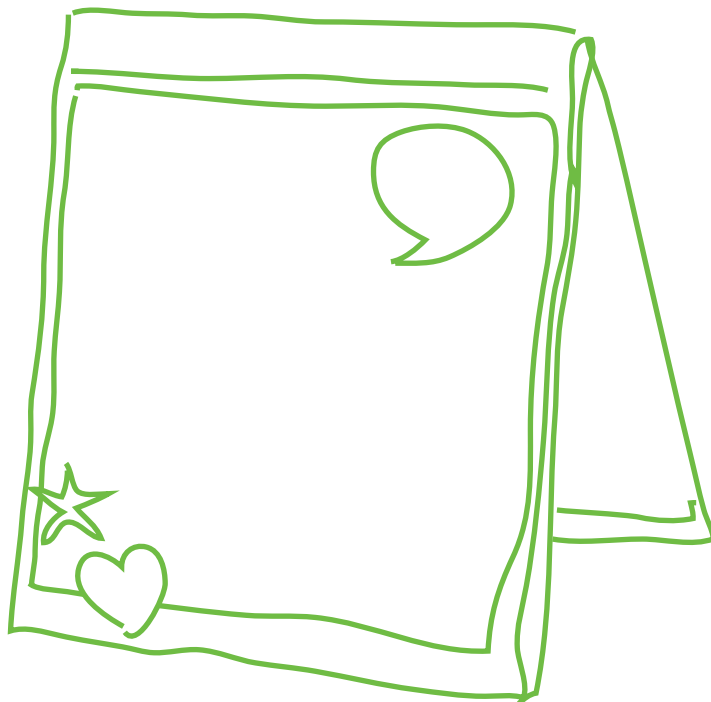
1. Open the CD case and take out any paper inserts and the inner plastic housing which holds the CD itself.
2. Trim the photo to the right size so that it will just fit inside the case. You can use the paper inserts that you've just removed to help you cut to the right size. Keep in mind that the hinge of the case will be at the top of the frame. The

frame will stand up by opening the case into an A-frame, using the front of the CD case as a prop at the back of the photo frame.

3. Place the photo against the back of the CD case, so that you can see the photo through the plastic.
4. Trim the cardboard to the right size so that it will fit into the case. Place it up flush against the back of the photo and secure it into position using small pieces of sticky tape. The cardboard will protect your photo and prevent it from falling out.
5. Decorate the front of the photo frame using whatever materials you have at hand and using glue for attachment. You could use seashells, small pebbles, buttons, flowers and shapes cut out of coloured paper or foil or old wrapping paper, string, tinsel, beads, feathers etc. Another idea is to paste pieces of cardboard around the four edges to create a framed effect around the photo, and write messages on the cardboard.

### Options

Instead of a photo, frame a piece of your own artwork, or a poem, picture or message that you find particularly inspiring.



## Recycled Mosaic

A mosaic is a picture or pattern made by assembling many small individual pieces into one large design. Traditionally, mosaics were made by setting tiles of glass, pieces of pottery or stones into plaster or cement. Because this is a recycled mosaic project, we'll make a mosaic out of old magazines or other materials destined for the recycling bin or garbage bin, such as brightly coloured lolly wrappers or shopping catalogues.

### Materials:

- ♻️ Old magazines, catalogues, expired calendars, paper and cardboard scraps, fabric scraps, foil, lolly wrappers etc
- ♻️ A piece of cardboard from which you can cut out a circle about 20-30 cm in diameter (a cereal box is fine)
- ♻️ Glue and scissors

### Instructions:

1. Use an upturned plate or a large compass to mark the outline of a circle. Make the circle as big or small as you want your mosaic to be. Cut out your circle.
2. Once you've decided on the design of your mosaic, use a pencil to draw the outline of your picture onto the cardboard circle.
3. Cut small squares or triangles out of your magazines or other materials. You might like to organise the pieces into piles of different colours, e.g. blues, reds, greens etc.
4. Assemble the coloured pieces onto the design you have drawn. Don't be afraid to play around with the arrangement of colours and shapes. You can be as neat or haphazard as you like. Once you're happy with the look, glue the pieces into position.



## Bottle Cap Mandala

This is a project where the whole class works together to make one giant mandala made out of bottle caps and any other suitable 'waste' objects. The class may need to collect materials from home for a few weeks before the project can commence.

### Materials:

- ♻️ As many bottle caps as the class can collect. Examples include the plastic caps that come on plastic bottles, some milk/juice cartons, aerosol cans and vitamin jars; jar lids; and the steel caps that come on beer bottles and some glass soft drink bottles.
- ♻️ Other small 'waste' or recyclable objects that you think are suitable, such as, small yoghurt pot lids, small rigid pieces of plastic, etc.

### Instructions:

1. Choose a mandala design and print it out on a piece of paper so that the whole class can refer to it as a guide.
2. Sort the bottle caps and other objects into groups determined by their colour.
3. On a clear area of the floor or ground, build your mandala by arranging the differently-coloured objects in accordance with the design. The size of your mandala will depend on how many objects the class was able to collect.
4. Ultimately, the mandala will be dismantled. You might want to take a photo of the mandala and the class before dismantling! Recycle as many of the objects as you can and dispose responsibly of the rest.

### What to do with your plastic bottle caps

Normally, very small objects can't be placed in your recycling bin. This is because they will fall through the gaps in the machinery of the recycling facility onto the floor and will not be recycled. So how small is too small? A useful rule of thumb is the 'milk bottle cap rule': plastic milk bottle caps and anything smaller are too small to put in your recycling bin on their own. Plastic jar lids larger than a milk bottle cap can be placed in your normal recycling bin.

Unfortunately it's not good to leave the caps on plastic bottles either. There are two reasons for this:

1. When the lid is left on a bottle it's more likely to have liquid left inside, which means the bottle will weigh more than it should. Because of this extra weight, the automatic sorting machines can't process the plastic properly.
2. Leaving the tops on the bottles also means there is air trapped inside. When the bottles are baled together at the end of the sorting process, they get crushed. The air pressure inside a crushed bottle could mean that the bottle explodes or the cap shoots off like a projectile. Just imagine jumping on an empty bottle with the lid on – it's like that, but with lots of bottles at once! Popping bottles can result in bales breaking open and can present a danger to workers inside the recycling facility.

So unless you can ensure that a bottle is fully crushed and the air removed, just take off small bottle caps and throw them into your garbage bin. There's no need to remove the ring from the bottle – the recycling process can deal with that.

### What to do with your steel bottle caps and lids

Steel lids from jars are generally large enough to go in the recycling bin on their own.

Small steel bottle caps (the size of a milk bottle cap or smaller) can be recycled with just a little effort. Put them in an empty steel can until the can is about half-full. Then squeeze the top closed and put the can in the recycling bin. At the recycling station, magnets will pick up the steel can, with the tops inside, and place it with the other steel cans ready to be melted down and recycled.



## Paper Mache World Globe

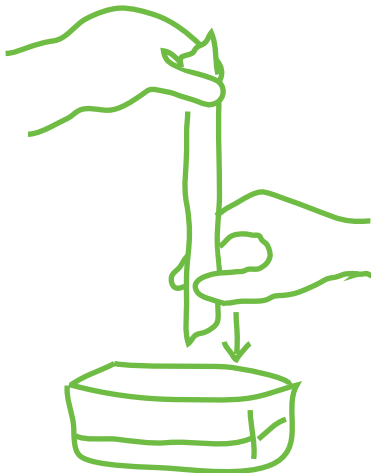
This project needs to be done over several days, as each layer of paper mâché needs to dry before another layer is added.

### Materials:

- ♻️ Newspapers or other paper that would be destined for recycling
- ♻️ A paper mâché paste in a bowl-like container. You can make this by mixing two parts white glue with one part water. Alternatively, you can mix one part flour to two parts water, then mix well to remove any lumps. The consistency should be reasonably thick yet still thin enough to 'run'.
- ♻️ Paint brushes
- ♻️ Paint
- ♻️ A round balloon

### Instructions:

1. Blow up the balloon and tie the end. You might want to place the balloon on a bowl or a cup so that it stays in place without you holding it.
2. Tear the newspaper or paper into strips or patches that are no wider than 5cm. It's important to tear the paper rather than cut it, as torn edges will create a smoother paper mâché layer.
3. Take a strip of paper and dip it into the paper mâché paste. Run the strip between two fingers to remove excess paste so that you have a strip which is saturated but not dripping. Lay the wet strip onto the balloon.



4. Continue with more strips until the balloon is completely covered in a layer of paper and paste.
5. Let the first layer dry completely.
6. Add another two layers of paper mâché, letting the second layer dry completely before adding the third.
7. You're now ready to paint your globe. It will probably help to look at a 'real' globe, or a map of the world. Use a pencil to sketch the outline of the continents onto your globe, then finish it with paint.

### Options:

Instead of making a globe of the world, you could paint your paper mâché object to represent anything you choose – a soccer ball, a Halloween pumpkin or just an eye-catching ball.

## Recycled Greeting Cards

Receiving birthday cards, festive greeting cards and special occasion cards are great, but we don't always want to keep them all. Unwanted cards can be recycled with your normal paper recycling, or you can use them to make your own unique recycled greeting cards.

### Materials:

- ♻️ Any old greeting cards you no longer wish to keep
- ✂️ Scissors and glue
- ♻️ A4 or A5 sheets of cardboard (A5 is half the size of an A4 page)

### Optional:

Assorted craft materials for extra decoration

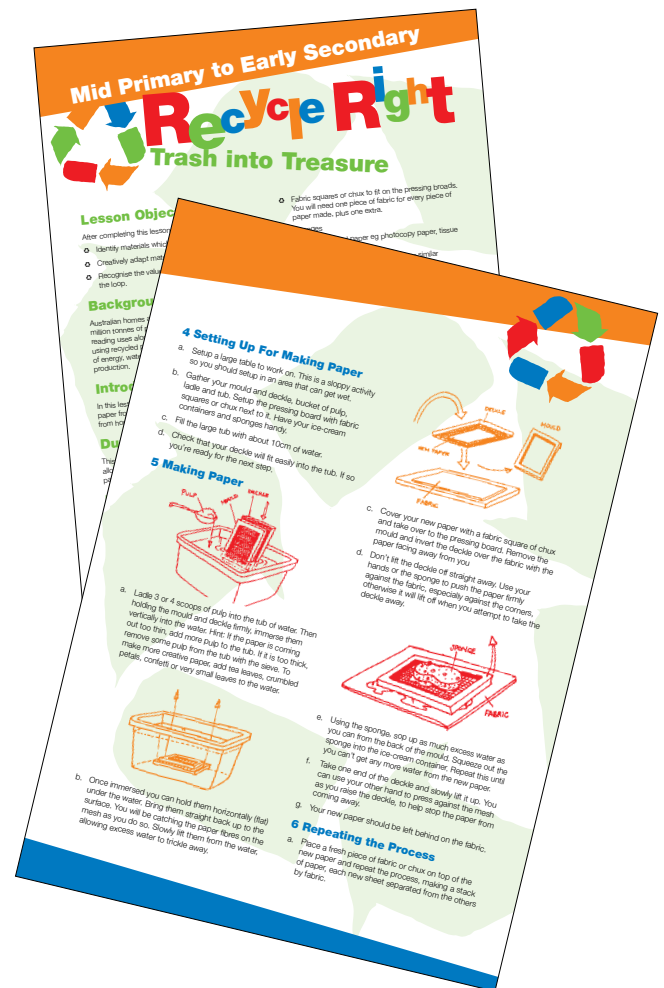
### Instructions:

1. If you have an A4 piece of cardboard, cut it in half so that you have two A5 pieces.
2. Fold each A5 piece in half to form a new card.
3. Using the old greeting cards, cut out any images, shapes, colours, letters or words that you might wish to use on your new cards.
4. Make your own unique cards by sticking on material from the old cards, as well as any other materials you may wish to use – ribbons, tinsel, crayons, colour pencils, etc.



## Recycled Paper

Planet Ark has a detailed lesson plan on how to make recycled paper. Please refer to the Recycle Right... Trash Into Treasure lesson plan (available at [SchoolsRecycle.PlanetArk.org/documents/doc-655-lp-making-paper.pdf](https://SchoolsRecycle.PlanetArk.org/documents/doc-655-lp-making-paper.pdf)).



# 'Wastruments': Musical instruments made from reused objects

## Shaker

### Materials:

- ♻ Any clean container with a lid, e.g. jars, coffee tins or plastic bottles
- ♻ Dry rice, beans or pasta
- ♻ Paint and other craft materials for decoration

### Instructions:

1. Simply place a small amount of rice, beans or pasta inside the container and put the lid on securely.
2. Decorate the outside of the shaker however you wish. You could paint it, cut out pictures from a magazine and glue them to the container in a collage, put stickers on it, glue on ribbons or shapes cut from coloured scraps of paper, etc.

### Options:

If you can collect enough small, hard objects, you won't need to use rice, beans or pasta inside the shaker. Examples of objects you could use include the plastic clips used to fasten a bread bag (cut each clip into quarters) or small, dry gumnuts that have fallen to the ground.



## Drums

### Materials:

The beauty of drumming is that it can be done with many different objects. All you need is something that makes a nice sound when struck with your hand or a drumstick.

### Suggested objects include:

- ♻ cartons
- ♻ tins or cans (turn them upside down if one end is open)
- ♻ jars with plastic lids
- ♻ plastic containers such as ice-cream containers, yoghurt pots or takeaway-style containers
- ♻ sturdy plastic bottles
- ♻ sturdy cardboard boxes
- ♻ Drumsticks can be improvised from objects such as a wooden spoon, spatula, pencil or stick.

### Instructions:

Drum! Experiment with how you can create different sounds from the same objects.

## Steel Can Scraper

### Materials:

- ♻️ A clean, empty steel can (make sure there are no sharp edges where the lid has been removed. For extra precaution, you can cut a circle of cardboard with a diameter a few centimetres larger than the diameter of the can, and use it to cover the open end of the tin, fastening it into place with sticky tape.)
- ♻️ A flat stick, pencil or ruler

### Instructions:

The steel can scraper is one of the simplest musical instruments to make and play and you actually get two instruments in one, as it's also a drum. Remove the label on the tin to expose the ridges on the sides of the tin. Run the stick up and down the tin to create a scraping noise, and hit the ends or the sides of the can to make a drumming sound.



## Glass Jar Xylophone

### Materials:

- ♻️ Empty glass jars
- ♻️ Water
- ♻️ A wooden spoon, spatula, stick or even a pencil to use as a 'mallet'

### Instructions:

Fill the jars with varying amounts of water. The more water there is in a jar, the lower the pitch will be. Line up the jars. To play your xylophone, gently strike the jars with your mallet. Adjust the water levels in the jars if necessary to produce the range of sounds you want.

## Plastic Bottle Panpipe

### Materials:

- ♻️ Empty plastic bottles (600 mL size or smaller is best)
- ♻️ Water

### Instructions:

Like the glass jar xylophone, the plastic bottle panpipe works by varying the amount of water in the bottles, however this time the sound is produced by blowing across the top of the bottles. You can line up the bottles on a table, or you can tape the bottles securely together so that you can pick them up and raise the whole thing to your lips – just be careful not to tip the panpipes so much that you spill the water.

