



# How to...

## DID YOU KNOW?

Food is the most common material sent to the nation's landfills, making up 24% of waste.



# Try composting at home

Find out how to dispose of food scraps and more to help the environment.

You may have heard the word “composting,” but what does it mean? Composting is similar to recycling—it’s disposing of organic food waste in a way that allows it to break down naturally instead of being buried in landfills. When you compost food scraps instead of throwing them in the trash, that organic waste is processed into nutrient-rich soil that farmers and gardeners can use to grow new plants. It’s a planet-friendly cycle, and you can participate by following a few easy steps. Here’s how.

### Research your town’s rules

Some large cities in the US—such as New York, San Francisco, and Seattle—have made it a legal requirement to compost, providing special bins where people can put their food scraps. Other towns may have a drop-off spot for compost or a composting facility. To find out more, search online for your town name, state, and the word “composting.”

### Learn what to compost

“Green” waste such as fruits, vegetables, eggshells, and coffee grounds and “brown” waste like leaves, twigs, cardboard, and used paper plates are

commonly accepted for composting. With an adult’s help, check the rules for composting near you.

### Pick a spot to compost

With your family, decide what kind of container to use for compost and where you’ll store it. You can keep it simple by using a mixing bowl where you can toss kitchen scraps as you prepare meals. Be sure to cover the bowl with a plate to reduce odors and avoid attracting fruit flies. You can also buy a countertop compost container.

### Make it part of a routine

Because your container of food scraps will fill up pretty quickly, you and your family will likely want to bring it to your local drop-off site regularly. You can get into the habit of heading to the compost bin on the same day each week.

### Spread the word

Once you’ve started collecting and dropping off your food scraps, encourage other family members, friends, and neighbors to do it too. Share your composting success with your teacher and show them the box at right. You’ll feel great knowing you’re doing something to keep the Earth healthier!



Your food scraps can nourish soil.

## Students in action



Composting is catching on in many US schools. Here are a few examples of where and how.

**Classrooms** Teachers supervise students in the care of “worm bins.” Worms eat lunch scraps, like fruit or vegetable peels, and turn them into compost.

**Cafeterias** In New York City’s public schools, students dispose of food waste, napkins, and other material in bins. The items are then collected for composting.

**Clubs** Some schools have compost clubs or “green teams” that teach students the benefits of compost, like using it to enrich the soil of a school garden.