

Ontario's Litter Cleanup Guide for Educators and Schools



**ACT on
LITTER**

Thank you for your interest in helping to keep our province clean and litter free!

This guide was developed by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and is intended for schools and educators across Ontario, to engage students and youth in litter reduction and prevention efforts.

A separate guide is also available online for the broader public – we encourage educators and schools to share this guide link with parents and guardians:

www.ontario.ca/page/litter-cleanup-guide

If you have questions, please visit:

www.ontario.ca/actONlitter or contact actONlitter@ontario.ca.



Ontario's Commitments and the Provincial Day of Action on Litter

We are taking real action to keep our neighbourhoods, parks, lakes, rivers and streams clean and free of litter and waste, by continuing to lead the annual Provincial Day of Action on Litter. Reducing litter and waste in our communities and encouraging local environmental actions helps keep our province clean and beautiful.

The [*Provincial Day of Action on Litter Act, 2019*](#) established the second Tuesday of May each year as the Provincial Day of Action on Litter. It encourages individuals, students, municipalities and businesses across the province to work together to raise awareness about the impacts of litter and waste, and to take part in a litter cleanup.

You can learn more on our [actONlitter webpage](#).

Although the Provincial Day of Action on Litter takes place only once a year, we share a number of ways students, educators and schools can get involved year-round in this guide!



How your class or school can support litter prevention and reduction efforts:



1. Recognize the annual Provincial Day of Action in your schools and classrooms.

- Add the Day of Action to your school calendar.
- Encourage students to go waste-free for the day (for example no disposable lunch products).
- Host an event on the day, such as litter-less lunch gathering.
- Connect your planned activities for the day to the topic of litter and waste.

2. Organize a litter cleanup on the Provincial Day of Action on Litter (or any other day) around your school or community! Check out the 'Organizing a Litter Cleanup' section below for more information.

3. Teach students what can be recycled and put in the green bin in your community (if applicable), to minimize the amount of waste going to landfill. Visit your local municipality's waste management webpage for more information and whether your municipality offers downloadable posters, online resources or in-person programs for students.

4. Educate on the importance of proper waste disposal while students are on recess or outside, to help reduce litter from entering our environment! Consider placing anti-littering posters on exit doors.

5. Find connections within the curriculum about litter and waste and incorporate into your lessons.

Organizing a Litter Cleanup

This section provides information and resources to help you organize a litter cleanup, including:

- A comprehensive checklist to help educators and schools organize a safe, successful litter cleanup.
- A form for you and your students to track what you collect during your cleanup.

In addition to your local municipal waste management department, there are a number of organizations that support litter cleanup initiatives who may be able to support schools.



Checklist:



Leading up to the cleanup

- ☐ Choose a clean up day. The Provincial Day of Action on Litter takes place the second Tuesday in May each year, but you can clean up any day of the year!
- ☐ Identify your cleanup team participants.
- ☐ Choose a cleanup site for your cleanup. Ensure you follow all guidance of your school and school board when selecting a location. Your school property is a good cleanup site. Litter tends to collect along school fence lines, where wind blows litter.
- ☐ Distribute permission slips for activity outside the school, if appropriate.
- ☐ Gather protective equipment, such as gloves or a litter grabber, for your students. It is also a great idea to have hand sanitizer available.
- ☐ If your school and school board are ok with your class cleaning up a public space, contact your municipality to identify if any permits are required to host a cleanup there and request help obtaining a permit (if applicable). If cleaning up a private space, ensure you have permission from the property owner.
- ☐ Choose a disposal method, a few examples include:
 - Garbage and recycling bins at your school. You will need to speak with your school caretaker or custodial staff about disposal.
 - If no available methods exists for you, reach out to your municipality to see if they can support your disposal, such as by using a city street disposal garbage can and recycling bin, or scheduling a waste pick up at your school.
- ☐ Prepare your cleanup team to collect data during their cleanup. See page 11 and 12 of this document for a Litter Cleanup Reporting Form and more information.
- ☐ Share important information with your students ahead of your cleanup day, such as:
 - safety tips/recycling tips
 - reminder of what to bring (for example garbage and recycling collection bags, water bottle, appropriate clothing for the weather, a mask and gloves, etc.) – you may be able to acquire garbage and recycling bags from your school's waste management department, but make sure you check first
 - when and where you are meeting



On the day of the cleanup

- ☐ Prepare any of your coordinator materials (participant attendee list, pens, first aid kit, hand sanitizer, etc.).
- ☐ Go over:
 - safety requirements (i.e. wearing gloves and watching for traffic)
 - cleanup boundary
 - end time and meeting point
 - disposal requirements
- ☐ Have students use both a recycling bag and garbage bag to correctly separate recyclable materials from garbage.
- ☐ Have participants collect data on the litter they cleanup (see page 11-12 for more information).
- ☐ Have fun! Take photos of your progress and your cleanup team – consider taking a before and after photo of your site to show the progress.

After the cleanup

- ☐ Dispose of your collected litter properly, and ensure collected recyclables are recycled. Ensure used personal protective equipment such as gloves are disposed of properly and safely in a sealed garbage bag.
- ☐ Submit all collected litter data to the ministry by completing this [Litter Cleanup Reporting form](#).
- ☐ Share pictures of your Provincial Day of Action on Litter event on your school's social media page using the #actONlitter hashtag, for the ministry to see and possibly re-share your post.

Safety tips!

Safety first! Review the safety tips below and take the necessary precautions during your community cleanup.



- Follow all rules and advice of your school and school board.
- Use personal protective equipment (gloves) or a litter grabber when picking up litter and properly dispose of your own personal protective equipment safely in a sealed garbage bin after your cleanup.
- Cleanups should take place during school hours and daylight hours.
- Be mindful of unstable or slippery ground (for example ravines, riverbanks), in tunnels or near stormwater management ponds.
- Consider wearing a safety vest or brightly coloured clothing if collecting litter along a roadway.
- Do not pick up dangerous materials such as glass, barbed wire, syringes/needles, medical waste, pipes, chemicals and debris with sharp or rusted edges. Instead note down the item and the location, and after your cleanup contact your local municipality's waste management department to make them aware.
- Avoid water-filled areas such as ditches, streams or ponds. Be extra cautious in areas where there could be water or ice.
- Be careful of wild animals, insects, hives and nests, and noxious weeds such as poison ivy and giant hogweed.
- Report suspicious items to the local police department via their non-emergency telephone number or to the Ontario Provincial Police non-emergency number at 1-888-310-1122.

Recycling tips



- Use separate disposal bags for recyclables and garbage whenever possible.
- Some municipalities have a mobile waste app that you can use on the go to find out what items should be recycled versus put in the garbage or that are hazardous waste – check with your local municipality and download the app in advance if available!
- Keep hazardous waste separate from garbage and recycling. Remember safety first! You can always leave certain items as you found them, note down the item and the location, and after your cleanup contact your local waste management department to make them aware or to ask how and where to properly dispose of these items.
- Examples of hazardous waste include:
 - syringes (don't touch!)
 - batteries
 - aerosol/spray containers
 - fluorescent tubes and compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs)
 - helium and propane/BBQ tanks/cylinders

Cleanup site ideas



Make sure you select a site that is large enough for your full class to clean up. Depending on the grade of the students, you may want to select a site that allows you to keep an eye on all students at the same time (for example, an open field).

- your school yard
- trails close to your school
- common play areas in your community
- a public park
- the sidewalks along a neighborhood street
- vacant lots or parking lots (ensure you have owner's permission)

Instructions

- **Before you leave for your cleanup:** Download or print out the litter cleanup reporting form on the next page.
- **During and just after your cleanup:** Track and record the litter collected using the form. Please follow the safety tips when collecting litter and track only those materials listed on the form.
- **When your cleanup is over:** Take the information you tracked home and go online to www.ontario.ca/actONlitter and select the 'Litter cleanup reporting form' link on the right-hand side of the page to submit this information to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.
- This information will help us to better understand litter in our environment and may help inform future government decision making – we thank you for taking part and submitting your litter cleanup data!

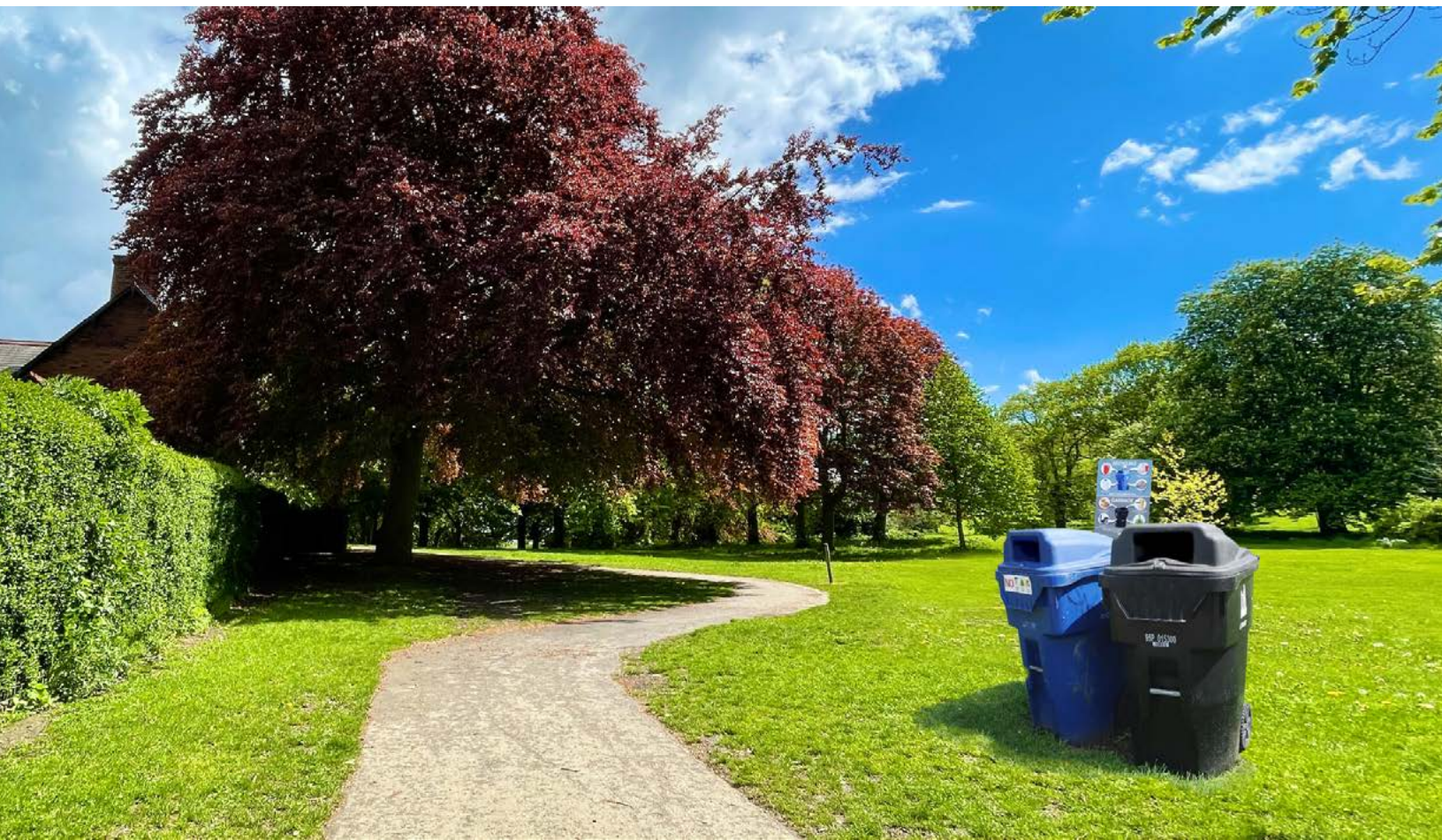
Litter cleanup reporting form

1. Date of cleanup	
2. Number of people participating in cleanup	
3. Municipality of cleanup	
4. Other cleanup site location information (address, park name, road name , lake name, etc.)	
5. Type of cleanup site (park, shoreline or beach, trail, street, etc.)	
6. Total number of garbage bags collected	<p>Small (for example grocery bag)</p> <p>Medium (for example kitchen garbage bag)</p> <p>Large (for example black garbage bag)</p>
7. Total number of recycling bags collected	<p>Small (for example grocery bag)</p> <p>Medium (for example kitchen garbage bag)</p> <p>Large (for example black garbage bag)</p>
8. Most unique or funny piece of litter collected	
9. Email address to contact organizers for future Days of Action on Litter (optional)	

Litter breakdown (optional):

The litter breakdown below is optional, to help the province better understand the amount and types of litter being found. Thank you for your participation!

MATERIAL	COUNT (estimates ok)
Plastic Items	
1. Plastic beverage containers & bottle caps	
2. Plastic straws	
3. Plastic utensils	
4. Plastic grocery bags	
5. Other plastic packaging (for example food wrappers, zipper bags)	
Other Items	
6. Cigarette Butts	
7. Other foodware items (for example foam take out containers)	
8. Glass Bottles	
9. Metal items (for example aluminum cans, metal bottle caps)	
10. Personal hygiene products (for example toothbrush, disposable wipes)	
11. Clothing items	
12. Pet Waste Bags	



We thank you for your support and interest in litter and waste prevention and reduction, and for recognizing the Provincial Day of Action on Litter.

Questions? Email actONlitter@ontario.ca

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