

# One Bag, One Bracelet

This foundational lesson in the Responsibility Unit focuses on self-discipline and how responsible actions affect ourselves first and foremost. There will be a running theme throughout this unit that focuses on responsible decision-making and self-discipline in a way that shows responsibility to self, others, and the environment. Life science will be addressed through the study of habitats and environmental impact of plastic. Each lesson will draw parallels with responsibility, self-discipline, and, ultimately, kindness. The focus of this fourth lesson demonstrates how we can take something that is unhealthy for the environment and turn it into a symbol of kindness and friendship for others.

## Kindness Concept(s)

Responsibility, Self-discipline,  
Habitat, Kindness

## Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

## Required Materials

- Plastic bags
- Scissors
- Duct tape
- Regular tape

## Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



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AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM  
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**

See last page for details.

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Investigate the impact of plastic bags on the environment and economy.
- Evaluate how different decisions impact habitat, especially the environment.
- Discuss the impact of responsible decision making on quality of life and habitat.
- Create recycled bracelets using plastic bags.

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

It is no coincidence that the first half of the word responsibility is the word response. We are responsible for how we respond to others. Although it can be a struggle, responding in kindness is a true gift that we can offer to those around us. The beauty of this response is that it is completely free for both you and the recipient! A change in attitude, an adjustment in your perspective, a deep breath before reacting: all of these actions allow you to respond in kindness regardless of the situation at hand. That said, some people and situations may require you to dig a bit deeper to conjure up the kindness needed to keep the tone upbeat. Don't despair! You can lead with kindness in every situation. The key is to plan ahead! This week, brainstorm tough situations that frequently lead you to struggle with a kind response. How can you add a kind word in these scenarios? Here are a few examples to get your juices flowing. 1) If someone is prone to complaining, build them up with kindness and suggest they take a stab at creating something to fix/adjust/replace the area of concern. 2) If a team meeting frequently ends with both sides becoming confrontational, plan ahead to write down the contributing thoughts of every member and then highlight similarities within the group to increase buy in. Now it's your turn. How can you respond with kindness?

### Tips for Diverse Learners

- You may need to assist students with the bracelet project in twisting the strips or tying knots.
- Be sure not to shame students for their use of plastic; rather, encourage them to think about small things they might change in their daily lives that could have a positive impact on the environment. It's easy to overlook the everyday items or practices that do harm to the environment over time and this lesson is designed to bring some of those items/practices to light.



### Share

5-7 minutes

*In the last lesson, what habitat did we talk about?*  
Invite student responses.

*That is right! We looked at forests and freshwater habitats. What animal did we study? Yes! We studied beavers. What do beavers build and how do they build it?*

Invite student responses for each question.

*Good! Beavers use their sharp teeth to cut down trees and haul branches and brush to build dams. They use mud to help the dam hold together. At the dam, they build a house called a lodge which has rooms and tunnels the beavers can move in and out of.*



### Inspire

10-12 minutes

*After the last lesson, I asked you to go home and observe natural habitats and examine the impact that humans have on those habitats. Did anyone do that and want to share what they saw?*

This can spur discussion about the impact of car exhaust, litter, or even of homes built where forests or other habitats might otherwise grow or be.

*There is something that most of us probably use on a daily basis that has a very large negative environmental impact. Every time we throw something away or go to the grocery store or to a store like Target or Walmart, what do we use? What lines our garbage cans and what does the store check-out person put our items into? When we open a bag of chips, what are we opening? When you unwrap your granola bar or open a bag of apples, what are you usually opening? That's right! Plastic bags! How many of you brought your snack today in a plastic baggie or had a plastic-wrapped snack? (Hold up an example if possible.) We use these a lot in our daily lives, don't we?*

*How many of your families use reusable bags when you go to the store? This is something that many stores and environmental groups are trying to get families to start doing. (You can talk about reusable bags that your school*

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might have with the school name or logo on them, if that's applicable.) *If you think about it, you use a reusable bag everyday with your backpack! Many of you bring the same backpack to school everyday to carry your work and special items. Sometimes we even use the same backpack for a couple of years! That is one way we can be kind to the environment: reuse what we have! Here are some interesting facts about plastic:*

- *There are about 5 trillion plastic bags used each year around the world (that is 160,000 bags per second!). [Source: TheWorld Counts: [http://www.theworldcounts.com/counters/waste\\_pollution\\_facts/plastic\\_bags\\_used\\_per\\_year](http://www.theworldcounts.com/counters/waste_pollution_facts/plastic_bags_used_per_year)]*
- *Researchers estimate that it can take up to 1,000 years for a plastic item to decompose, which means break down back into the soil, in a landfill! [Source: Center for Biological Diversity: [https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/population\\_and\\_sustainability/sustainability/plastic\\_bag\\_facts.html#:~:text=It%20takes%201%2C000%20years%20for.continue%20to%20pollute%20the%20environment.](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/population_and_sustainability/sustainability/plastic_bag_facts.html#:~:text=It%20takes%201%2C000%20years%20for.continue%20to%20pollute%20the%20environment.)]*
- *90% of the non-naturally occurring ocean debris floating in the ocean is plastic! [Source: National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/oceans/ocean-plastics.htm>]*
- *About 100,000 animals, such as dolphins, turtles, whales, and penguins, are killed every year when they eat the plastic bags that are floating in the ocean. The toxins from the plastic get into the animals or they choke. [Source: HelpSaveNature: <https://helpsave-nature.com/environmental-pollution-harmful-effects-of-plastic-bags>]*



## Empower

20-25 minutes

*We are going to read/listen to a story about the impact that plastic bags had on one woman's community and what she did to help reuse the bags to both save the environment and help her family!*

Read/Listen:

*One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia*

 ONE PLASTIC BAG: ISATOU CEESAY AND THE RECYCLING WOM...

*(10:40 total time, though you can watch from 1:06 to 8:50 to hear just the story.)*

Questions to ask the class after the book:

*What happened with the plastic bags?*

*What did Isatou do with the bags?*

*How did that help the community and her family?*

*Today we are going to do something unique with plastic bags. We are going to make recycled bracelets to give to someone else. Maybe we want to give them to a special friend or maybe to a parent to help them remember to use reusable bags when they shop!*

*Here is how we do it:*

Show students this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XH4BxPasz70>

(To save time, you can come with the bag strips pre-cut; you need three strips per student.)

Or share these instructions on how to make a recycled bracelet from a plastic bag:

1. Find several plastic bags (varying colors, if possible).
2. Cut the bags along the seams so it lays flat.
3. Cut the bags into strips about 1-1.5 inches wide, and the long length of the bag.
4. Make sure there are three strips per student.
5. Give each student three strips.
6. Students individually roll or twist each strip until it forms a thin rope.
7. Students put all three twisted ropes together and tape one end of the bunch to their desk or table.
8. Students do a simple braid starting at the taped end and working their way to the loose end.
9. Pull the braid tight and tie a knot at each end of the braid.
10. Students can then tie each knotted end together or can use duct tape (printed or colored tape is fun) to secure the two ends together.



## Reflect

5 minutes

*Great job making your recycled bracelet everyone! Who do you think you will give your bracelet to and what will these bracelets remind you of?*

Invite student response.

*What else can you do to help reduce your use of plastic?*

Invite student response.

*Remember to reuse whatever you can, including your plastic bags. If you don't have reusable bags for groceries, be sure you save your plastic bags and use them for something else; maybe you can even bring them back to the store to use again. Sometimes department stores like Target or Walmart have a place where you can recycle your plastic shopping bags. Work hard to think about your impact on the environment, especially when it comes to plastic!*



## Extension Ideas

- There are other DIY projects for kids and plastic bags, including purses like the character in the story made or even mats that can be donated to shelters.
- Kids can brainstorm other ways to reduce their plastic use with their families, including encouraging parents to use reusable bags.
- If kids don't already, have them encourage their family to start recycling plastics at home. They can check with their local sanitation department to see if there are recycling programs nearby.
- Do a quick geography lesson about Gambia; where it's located and what the culture is like there. You could also research the impact of plastic and pollution on this region specifically or talk about the habitats that Gambia has.

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The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>