Composting at Home
Family Activity

INTRODUCTION
Composting recycles waste by breaking it down (decomposing) and using the compost in your garden as soil/fertilizer. Green waste is organic material that contains high levels of nitrogen. It will usually come from your home such as fruits and vegetables scrapes, coffee and coffee filters, flowers and grass clippings. Brown waste is high in carbon, like leaves, wood chips, ash, paper, and dryer lint.

What does a compost need?
There are four main components in order to produce good compost: green waste, brown waste, air, and moisture. Without all four of these components, your waste might not compost as quickly or it might start to smell bad.

Types of at Home Composting
- Vermicomposting - which uses worms to break materials
- Aerated Static Pile Composting - waste is mixed in a large pile or a hole in the ground for decomposition
- In-Vessel Composting - which is in a jar or enclosed container

Why is composting important?
Green waste accounts for approximately 25% of the refuse being hauled to our landfills each week. By diverting how much waste goes into the landfill, we can reduce our carbon footprint. There are many easy ways to do this at home to help reduce your landfill waste.

Composting Do's and Don'ts

DO compost:	DON'T compost:
• Grass and plant trimmings • Fruit and vegetable scraps • Egg shells • Wood chips, sawdust and ashes • Straw and hay • Shredded paper and cardboard (includes newspaper) • Manure from animals that only eat plants (e.g. horse, rabbit, chickens and other animals) • Coffee grounds and coffee filters	• Meat scraps and bones • Dairy products (will make it smelly) • Plastics or synthetic fibers • Plants that have been treated with herbicides • Palm fronds • Charcoal or ashes from treated wood • Manure from animals that eat meat (e.g. dogs and cats)

MATERIALS
- Container with a lid or covering (like a jar, bucket, or 2 liter bottle)
- Soil or dirt
- Paper (like newspaper, paper towels, napkins)
- Leaves
- Leftover vegetable or fruit scraps
- Worms - only if available
- Rainwater/water

INSTRUCTIONS

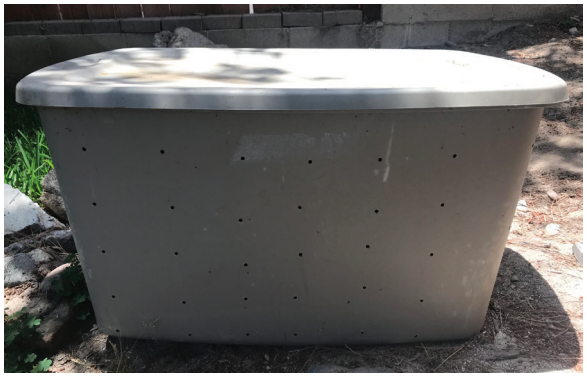
1. Add soil to the jar.
2. Add cut paper and food scraps to the jar. If you cut your items before they go into the compost, they will breakdown faster.
3. Add worms or other decomposers if available.
4. Add a layer of grass or garden clipping (brown waste).
5. Add water (rainwater or other recycled water if available).
6. Poke holes in lid of jar, can be done with a nail or by drilling a hole using a screwdriver.
7. Close the lid.
8. Place in a sunny spot.
9. Watch your compost decompose!
10. The process takes about 10-12 weeks
11. You can make many jars with different amounts of soil, scraps, water, grass and newspaper to test out different predictions of which composition will more readily decompose.

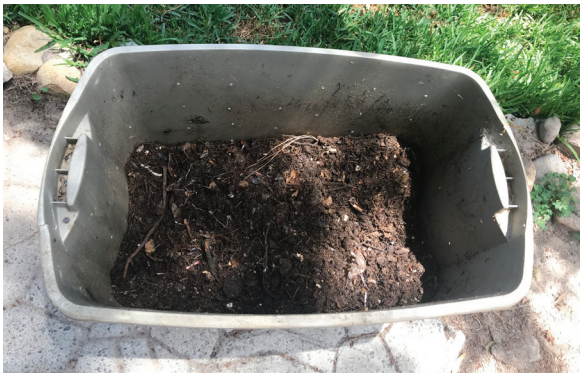
QUESTIONS

- What did you observe about your compost?
- Why is it important to pay attention to how much of each material you are adding to the compost?
- Does nature do its own composting? Where and what time of year have you seen this?
- What other materials could replace the newspaper and the leaves?

EXTENSION

Are you ready to take your composting to the next level? Try composting in a larger container, like a plastic storage bin. Drill some holes in the side of the bin and use your results from above to find the right mixture.





RESOURCES

Here are some resources to help you start composting:

- Composting for Kids - Video
- Perfect Composting Recipe - Video
- Make the Most of Compost - Video
- How Compost is Made - Animated Film
- All About Composting - Website
- Decomposition Column - Website