



Make a Waste timeline



Cut up the strips, mix them up and encourage your group to put them in the correct chronological order.



Even the earliest humans created waste. They threw away bones, leather and broken pots.



The earliest organised landfill was in Crete, Greece in 3000 BC. Waste was put into large pits and covered with earth.



The Maya civilisation of Central America (2000 BC) had a monthly ritual, in which the people of the village would gather and burn their waste in large dumps.



In London in 1354, people called "Rakers" were employed who would rake the waste off the streets and load it into carts. By 1407, it was ruled that the people had to keep their own waste at their houses until the Rakers could remove the waste.



Laws were passed to stop people from dumping waste in the street. In 1515, court records show that Shakespeare's father was fined for 'depositing filth in a public street'.





In the early 1800's people were making a living from waste; "Toshers" searched the sewers for coins, metal, rope and jewellery. "Mud-larks" scavenged the riverbanks looking for waste items. "Dustmen" collected ash from coal fires. The dust was sieved to remove hard bits and then used in brick making or to improve soil.

The first factory to burn waste (incinerate) was designed and built in Nottingham in 1874. The "destructor" aimed to generate energy from waste. During the next 30 years a further 250 destructors were built across Britain.

The Public Health Act 1875 made it the local council's duty to remove and dispose of waste. People had to keep their waste in a container that could be moved. This was the first "dustbin" which would later become a wheelie bin that the council would collect once a week.

By the late 1800's all household waste was collected in moveable containers and sorted by hand, usually by women or girls. A large amount of the waste was reused, such as glass and metals.

The British Paper Company was made in 1890 to make paper and cardboard from recycled materials.





During and after the Second World War (1945) there was not much waste as everything was saved, mended and reused as much as possible. The "Rag and Bone" man was a common sight walking up and down streets and shouting for people to bring out unwanted items that could be salvaged and reclaimed.



In 1956, the Government were worried about the pollution in the air so they made new laws about burning. People were told not to burn waste on their home fires. The amount of waste that to be removed from houses increased and large landfill sites began to be made.



In the 1970's, people became more concerned about the environment. The first bottle banks, where glass bottles could be deposited for recycling, started to be appear in public places.



In the 1980's and 1990's, regulations were introduced to make businesses take responsibility for the waste that they produced and how they disposed of it.



In the year 2000, the Government set targets for recycling and composting. Households were given wheelie bins so that they could sort and separate their waste at home.



In 2025, the government introduced 'Simpler recycling' rules allowing us to recycle the same materials, whether at home, work or school.

