



Keep Streams Clean—Scoop the Poop!

A Clean Water Education Activity

Grade Level:

Elementary

Subject Area:

Solutions to Water Pollution



Duration:

Prep time: 10 minutes

Activity time: 10 minutes +

Setting:

Open Space/Indoors or Outdoors

Objective:

In this simple and fun relay activity, participants will learn about one easy solution to water pollution. Participants will practice picking up after pets, in particular, dogs, whose waste contributes to the pollution of rivers, lakes and streams.

Materials:

- 4 trash cans (recommended with lids and labels for team names)
- Plastic “poop bags” (recommended minimum 1 bag per player)
- Playdoh (recommended minimum 50 pieces of “poop”)
- Whistle (optional)

Background:

Pet waste can contaminate our rivers, lakes and streams. It contains harmful bacteria such as E. Coli and fecal coliform. Waters that contain a high amount of these bacteria are unfit for human contact. A single gram of pet waste contains an average of 23 million fecal coliform bacteria, some of which can cause disease in humans. Pet waste also affects the health of our waters. When pet waste decays it uses up dissolved oxygen and releases compounds that are harmful to fish and other animals that rely on water. It contains nutrients that can cause excessive algae growth, upsetting the natural balance of our rivers, lakes and streams.

Why should I pick it up? Pet waste left on sidewalks, streets, yards or other open areas can be washed away and carried by rainwater directly into storm drains and then to nearby rivers, lakes and streams.

The bad news is...It’s your responsibility to “scoop the poop” but it’s a small price to pay to protect our water quality.

The good news is...Whether in your yard or while walking your dog, you can easily do the right thing! Buy a “pooper scooper” or simply use a plastic bag. Place the waste in a trash can. Everyone will be happier when you pick up after your pet!



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The Activity:

1. **Facilitators set the field.** Mark 4 relay lines using trash cans. Suggested team names include “Super Scoopers,” “Poop Pros,” “Stream Savers” and “Goodie Doodies.” Scatter the Playdoh pieces throughout the playing field.
2. **Facilitators lead an orientation for the activity.** Ask participants if they have dogs. Ask participants if they pick up after their dogs. Talk about the importance of picking up after pets (see Background).
3. **Teams form and learn the relay rules.** Players divide into 4 teams of equal numbers. Players line up behind the team trash cans. Facilitators distribute a “poop bag” to each player. A facilitator demonstrates how to “scoop the poop” using a “poop bag.”
4. **The relay begins.** On the whistle, the first players in line for each team enter the field. Players must collect 1 “poop” in their “poop bag,” then return to their team trash can, tie the bag (1 tie), deposit the bag in the can, and go to the back of their team line (instruct players who have taken their turn to kneel or sit). The next player enters the field and so on. The 1st team to finish the relay wins!
5. **Challenge players** with additional or alternative relay rules:
 - ◆ Watch your step! If any player steps in “poop,” that player’s team is automatically disqualified from winning.
 - ◆ Color matters. From a field of multi-colored “poop,” players must collect only the color of the facilitators’ choice.
 - ◆ Time matters. Run the relay for a set number of minutes. The team that collects the most bags of “poop” in its team trash can wins.
 - ◆ Speed matters. Run the relay until all “poop” is collected. The team that collects the most bags of “poop” in its team trash can wins.
 - ◆ Size matters. If the group of participants is small (less than 20), consider using 2 instead of 4 teams.
 - ◆ ...Can you think of other variations?

Wrap Up:

Facilitator congratulates the winning team and reminds participants about the importance of picking up after pets. Encourage participants to “scoop the poop” at home and to tell other family members about it.