



GSP Online Session: Introducing SWM in the Classroom, August 25, 2021
Questions from Participants

1. Please tell us more about electronic waste and how we can manage it better.

Electronic waste (e-waste) generates from any device that runs on batteries/electricity or needs to be charged regularly and has reached the end of its life. It ranges from batteries, headphones, chargers to consumer equipment like refrigerators, washing machines etc. E-waste has been referred to as the fastest growing stream of waste globally. While it contains precious metals, it also houses hazardous components that are harmful for human health. Therefore, it is important to manage and recycle e-waste through the right channels, such as producer responsibility organisations (PROs). There are close to 50 PROs across India that hand over the e-waste to over 400 different authorized recyclers that manage it in an environmentally sound manner.

2. Which agencies can we reach out to for e-waste management?

Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs) can be used to channelise e-waste sustainably. A few of the PROs working in this sector are *Karo Sambhav* and *Reverse Logistics Group, India*.

3. Can multi-layered packaging be recycled? If so, how?

Multilayered plastics (MLPs) cannot be recycled in practice. In India, practices such as using MLPs to make wrapping paper or burning to harvest energy (waste-to-energy/ incineration/ co-processing in cement kilns) are conveniently put under the basket of recycling. However, this is fundamentally flawed. The production of MLPs by FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) industry will not stop due to several reasons linked to its utility. However, as consumers, we always have the option of refusing to use any product that comes in a multi-layered packaging.

4. What are the initiatives that CSE has been taking to curb the use of single-use plastics (SUPs)?

CSE is filled with environmental enthusiasts, who try to practise what they preach. Several steps have been taken to make CSE a waste wise organisation, which goes beyond just curbing SUPs. Items such as soft drinks and selected packaged foods are not allowed within the campus. The canteen provides freshly-cooked food instead of packaged food,



which helps in reducing the amount of plastic waste produced. Waste is segregated into 4 different streams—cooked food, raw vegetables, plastics and others—which helps us channelise the waste to relevant facilities. We also have an in-house composting unit to manage our wet waste by ourselves.

To ensure participation from the stakeholders, CSE rolls out online courses regularly that educators, students and professionals can join to enhance their knowledge on the subject and understand what needs to be done. CSE's Green Schools Programme organises online workshops and activities for schools, teachers and students—[workshops on solid waste management](#) and [Audit@Home: Waste Warriors](#)—to build environmental consciousness and suggest ways to curb plastic pollution at personal and community levels.

5. What strategies can be used to teach senior grade students more about solid waste management?

Senior grade students should be taken out for field visits to provide them a first-hand experience of the problems that we are dealing with, for instance a nearby dumpsite. This should be followed by visits to facilities that are a part of the solution, such as composting units, recycling plants etc. Organise community visits to demonstrate sustainable waste management practices. This will help students understand the issues and challenges around solid waste management as well as solutions to these problems. They must be made aware of how they can be part of the solution and reach out to the right agencies or organisations.

6. How can we as teachers stop students from using plastic wrappers or guide them to dispose of the waste responsibly until it is completely banned by the government?

The government may never ban plastic completely. This is because plastic is not just a problem. It is a crucial part of the healthcare sectors and is used for transplants, medicinal aides and much more. Our job as educators is to make students understand where plastic is a necessity and where it is a problem. This enables students to make informed choices about where and how plastic can be used.

7. We give plastic wrappers and other packaging material for recycling. Is this the most appropriate way to manage the waste?

The most appropriate way to manage this type of plastic is to refuse the product packaged in 'non-recyclable plastic'. As consumers, we have the power to refuse. Most of the FMCGs state that they sell their products in such packaging material because the



consumer demands it. The second preferred option is to reuse the material, followed by channelising it for recycling. The product must be used to its full potential before recycling because it is an energy intensive process that involves a lot of resources.

8. We cannot ignore textbooks as syllabus completion is the most important requirement. What can be done about this?

Textbooks and syllabus completion must never be ignored as these are an inevitable part of classroom learning. However, our annual calendar should include exposure visits and other activities which help students understand the concepts better, using real-life experiences and situations.