



Trashercise: Trash Heroes in Action

Cleanup + Movement for a Cleaner Sevier (K–2)

Grade: K–2

Time: 30–40 minutes

Subjects: Science, Physical Education, Environmental Education

Overview

Students learn what litter is, how it harms Smoky Mountains wildlife and local rivers, and how they can help keep Sevier County beautiful. Through discussion, wildlife examples, and an active cleanup game called *Trashercise*, students combine environmental responsibility with movement and teamwork.

Local Connection

In Sevier County, litter doesn't just stay on the ground. Rain can wash trash into the Little Pigeon River and local creeks. Wildlife like black bears, deer, birds, turtles, and fish can mistake litter for food or become tangled in it

Keep Sevier Beautiful works to prevent litter and protect our parks, rivers, and the Smoky Mountains. Students learn that they can be “Trash Heroes” by picking up litter and making smart choices every day.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. Define litter.
2. Identify one way litter harms animals or waterways.
3. Name two ways they can prevent litter.
4. Safely participate in a supervised cleanup.
5. Engage in movement activities connected to environmental action.

Tennessee Standards

Kindergarten:

K.ESS3.1, K.ETS1.1

1st Grade:

1.ESS1.2, 1.LS1.1

2nd Grade:

2.ESS2.2, 2.ESS3.1, 2.ETS1.1

(Standards align to understanding human impact on the environment and observing how water moves litter into streams)

Vocabulary

Litter – Trash left on the ground

Recycle – Turn used materials into something new

Pollution – Something harmful added to the environment

Wildlife – Animals that live in nature

Conserve – Protect and use carefully

Materials

- Child-sized gloves
- Buckets or bags labeled:  Trash /  Recycling
- Trash grabbers (optional)
- Cones or boundary markers
- Stuffed animal (for demonstration and is optional)
- Water
- First-aid kit

Background for Instructor

Litter can harm local wildlife in the Smoky Mountains. Bears may eat plastic if it smells like food. Deer can accidentally chew wrappers. Birds can become tangled in string or fishing line. Rain can carry trash into the Little Pigeon River and local streams

This lesson introduces environmental responsibility in a developmentally appropriate, active format for primary grades.

Lesson Procedure

1. Introduction & Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Ask:

- What is litter?
 - Is trash good or bad for animals?
 - Have you seen trash on the ground before?
- Show a stuffed animal and ask: “Would this animal want to eat plastic?”

Mini Movement Warm-Up

- Stand up if you love the Smoky Mountains!
- Jump if animals are important!
- Spin if you want to help Keep Sevier Beautiful!

2. What Happens to Litter? (5–10 minutes)

Explain simply:

- Litter is trash left on the ground.
- Rain can wash litter into rivers.
- Animals may try to eat trash.
- Some trash lasts for a VERY long time

Smoky Mountains Wildlife Examples

Discuss in kid-friendly language:

Black Bears – May eat plastic if it smells like food.

Deer – Can chew food wrappers by mistake.

Birds – Can get tangled in string or feed trash to babies.

River Wildlife – Turtles and fish may mistake plastic for food.

Say: In Sevier County, trash on the ground can travel all the way to our rivers!”

Ask: Should bears eat berries or plastic? Where does trash belong?

3. What is Trashercise? (5 minutes)

Trashercise is a fun program inspired by **Keep America Beautiful** that combines litter cleanup with physical activity. The idea is simple: every time you pick up a piece of litter, you add a movement — like jumping jacks, frog hops, or marching in place.

It turns cleaning up into an active game while teaching kids that they can protect animals, rivers, and parks through small actions.

The big message: **Healthy bodies + Healthy communities = Beautiful places.**

Every time students pick up 1–2 pieces of litter, they complete a movement.

Movement Options

- 3 jumping jacks
- 2 frog jumps
- 1 silly dance
- 3 claps and a cheer
- March in place for 5 seconds
- Pretend to walk like a bear

Safety Rules

- Walk — do not run.
- Put trash in the bucket FIRST.
- Tell an adult if you see something sharp.

4. Cleanup + Trashercise Activity (10–15 minutes)

Setup

- Mark a small, safe boundary area.
- Divide into small groups with adult helpers.
- Provide labeled Trash and Recycling buckets .

Instructions

1. Walk and look for litter.
2. Pick it up safely.
3. Put it in the correct bucket.
4. Do a Trashercise move.
5. Repeat!

Cheer often:

“Way to go, Trash Heroes!”

5. Reflection Circle (5–10 minutes)

Ask:

- What kind of trash did we find?
- How did cleaning up make you feel?
- How can we stop litter before it starts?

Creative Option:

Finish the sentence:

“I can keep Sevier Beautiful by _____.”

Wrap-Up

Reinforce the Big Idea:

Clean parks = Happy animals, Healthy rivers, lakes, streams, and Beautiful Smoky Mountains

Small actions make a big impact.

Student Understanding Page

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is Litter?

Litter is:

- Trash left on the ground
- A mountain
- A type of animal

2. Helps or Hurts?

Write H (Helps) or U (Hurts).

- ___ Picking up trash
- ___ Throwing wrappers outside
- ___ Recycling bottles
- ___ Feeding animal's trash

3. Cause & Effect

If trash is on the ground when it rains:

- It can wash into rivers
- Nothing happens

If a bear eats plastic:

- It can get sick
- It becomes stronger

4. Draw & Write

Draw yourself as a **Trash Hero** helping Keep Sevier Beautiful.

Trash Hero Pledge

I promise to help Keep Sevier Beautiful by putting trash in the right place and protecting wildlife.

Signature: _____