

Case 13: Can the crew cut waste before it reaches the bin?

Overview

Students read a story in which Dec’s box of replacement parts arrives half full of packaging. The crew’s “recyclable” cups turn out to be on the city’s not-accepted list. They place items from the supply list on EPA’s waste hierarchy and check them against the city’s accepted-materials list. They then fill in an event materials sheet and propose one change with a way to measure it.

Before this case

Students should already be able to:

- read a supply list and pull out counts
- state what a comparison counts and leaves out
- write a memo for a committee

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- propose one purchasing change for campus or club events
- use the supply-list counts accurately as a model
- state a measurement boundary before any claim of savings
- check disposal against a local list and keep an option for people who need disposable items

Materials

- This chapter, one copy per student
- Evidence A, B and C
- The EPA hierarchy page, the FTC Green Guides section on recyclable claims and NPR’s July 11, 2018 report
- A materials sheet and a boundary checklist

The task in this edition

Task: Write a memo to a student government events committee proposing one purchasing change for campus or club events. Use the Common Room supply list as the model, and include a measurement plan that states its boundary.

Students make: Memo, 300—400 words, with a materials table

Pacing

Opener (page 253): 5 min. Short on time: 5 min.

Key terms (pages 254 and 255): 5 min. Short on time: skip.

Look at the evidence (page 260): 8 min. Short on time: 8 min.

Look at the evidence (page 261): 4 min. Short on time: 4 min.

Key idea (pages 262 and 263): 10 min. Short on time: 8 min. Skip In the news.

Pacing, continued

Sort the evidence (pages 264 and 265): 6 min. Short on time: skip. The materials sheet covers the same ground.

Practice (page 266): 5 min. Short on time: skip.

Your task (pages 267 and 268): 12 min. Short on time: 12 min.

Your draft (page 269): 25 min. Short on time: 25 min.

Check your work (pages 270 and 271): 6 min. Short on time: 5 min. Students answer the Check your work questions only.

Questions to discuss (pages 272 and 273): 8 min. Short on time: 8 min.

Talk about this case at home (page 274): at home.

Periods: full chapter 94 minutes; one period 75 minutes.

Standards

Quantitative Literacy VALUE Rubric AAC&U’s rubric for calculating, interpreting and explaining numbers in everyday situations. In this case: Students use counts from the supply list and set a measurement boundary before they claim any savings (Assumptions; Application/Analysis).

Case 13 plan, continued

Standards, continued

Problem Solving VALUE Rubric AAC&U's rubric for defining a problem, proposing and weighing solutions and checking the results. In this case: Students define the waste problem before the bin and propose one change with a way to check its results (Define Problem; Evaluate Outcomes).

Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric AAC&U's rubric for taking part in community life, including civic communication and working within community structures toward a civic aim. In this case: Students bring a proposal to the committee that decides event purchasing (Civic Contexts/Structures).

Authority Is Constructed and Contextual A source's authority depends on its creator's expertise and on the question it is being used to answer. In this case: Students weigh a "recyclable" label against the city's accepted-materials list.

Codes of ethics

- **FTC Green Guides (16 CFR Part 260):** § 260.12 Recyclable claims
- **AIHA Standards of Professional Practice:** The designer's responsibility to society and the environment
- **IABC Code of Ethics for Professional Communicators:** "I do not guarantee results"

Heat map

- **Opener (page 253):** Low
- **Key terms (pages 254 and 255):** Low
- **Look at the evidence (page 260):** Low
- **Look at the evidence (page 261):** Low
- **Key idea (pages 262 and 263):** Medium
- **Sort the evidence (pages 264 and 265):** Low
- **Practice (page 266):** Medium
- **Your task (pages 267 and 268):** Low
- **Check your work (pages 270 and 271):** Low

Try it at your school

Change one thing before the next event.

- Pick one repeated item at a school event: cups, flyers, plates
- Count how many were used last time
- Check your city's recycling list and propose one reduction or reuse option
- Count again after the event and share results with the organizers

Who to ask: Student council, custodial or facilities staff, a science teacher, your city's sanitation or recycling office

Safety: Don't sort through trash with your hands; unsafe items can be hidden. Make sure changes don't leave out people who need disposable items.

Sources

- NPR, "Starbucks To Eliminate Plastic Straws In Its Stores By 2020," July 9, 2018
- NPR, "Why People With Disabilities Want Bans On Plastic Straws To Be More Flexible," July 11, 2018
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "Sustainable Materials Management: Non-Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Hierarchy," No date listed

Case 13: Can the crew cut waste before it reaches the bin?

The last Common Room screening used about 120 cups the city won't recycle, and a box of parts arrived half full of packaging.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the number of cups and what the city list says about them. About 5 minutes.



Anika, Dec and Sami react to a round of their tabletop game.

Your role: You're the one who counts the cups before and after the change. **New skill:** Count a starting point before you claim a change works.

What happened

It is Tuesday in the theater shop. Dec opens a box of replacement parts. Three separate orders of small LED connectors and switches, placed over one week, arrived together. About half of the box is plastic air pillows and foam.

The supply list from last Friday's screening at the Common Room shows a second problem. The crew used about 120 single-use cups. The cups are plastic-lined paper and labeled "recyclable." But the city's recycling list does not take plastic-lined paper cups.

Your question: What could the crew change before the next screening, and how would they know it worked?

Dec wants to fix how they order parts before anyone redoes the recycling sign. Anika tracks the parts and the budget. She agrees with Dec, but she wants numbers before anyone says a change saves money. Some people need a disposable cup or a straw, so any plan has to work for them too.

Case 13 | Opener | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: 5 min.

💬 Say this

"The cups say 'recyclable.' Where do you think they went after the screening?" — Hear guesses. Do not reveal the city list yet.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students think the label decides where the cups go. **Listen for:** "They said recyclable, so they got recycled." **Then:** Ask who decides what a city recycles. Promise to check the city list in the evidence.

📖 Support

- Read What happened aloud. Show a paper cup if you have one.

🌡 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Source reduction Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging.

En español: reducción en la fuente

In this case: Dec wants to combine the parts orders so less packaging arrives in the first place.

Reuse Reuse is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use.

En español: reutilización

In this case: Borrowing washable cups from the bookshop is reuse. Washing uses water and someone's time.

Local acceptance Local acceptance is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes.

En español: materiales aceptados en tu ciudad

In this case: The cups say "recyclable," but the crew's city does not accept plastic-lined paper cups.

Who is involved



Dec

Opened the parts order

"Three orders of tiny connectors in one week. One big box, and half of it's packaging."



Anika

Tracks the parts and the budget

"I'm in. But if anyone says it saves money, I want the numbers. Right now we have one box and a guess."

Case 13 | Key terms | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

💬 Say this

"Source reduction happens before the waste exists. Which item in the story could the crew stop buying?" — Listen for the packaging and the cups.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students treat reuse and recycling as the same. **Listen for:** "Reusing is recycling." **Then:** Reuse means using the same item again, like a washable cup. Recycling depends on what the city list accepts.

📖 Support

- Use picture cards: a washable cup, a paper cup and a recycling bin.
- **Cognates:** reduction (reducción), recycle (reciclar), plastic (plástico), material (material), accessible (accesible), alternative (alternativa), container (contenedor), quantity (cantidad).

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

🔑 Answer key

Any first guess is fine. Students return to it on the My take page.

Your first guess

Before you look at the evidence, what is the best way for the crew to cut waste?

My first guess is ___, because ___.

➤ My first guess is to combine the parts orders, because one box of three small orders was about half packaging.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 254. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 254.

Reading passage

Measuring waste reduction without overclaiming

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Source reduction:** Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging.
- **Reuse:** Reuse is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use.
- **Local acceptance:** Local acceptance is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes.
- **Proposal:** A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Trade-off:** A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.

The story: Two data points and a guess

A box of replacement parts arrives at the theater shop half full of air pillows and foam. Three small orders placed over one week have shipped together. Separately, the supply list from the crew's last screening shows about 120 single-use cups, plastic-lined and labeled "recyclable," plus 80 paper plates, 150 flyers and 40 paper straws given out on request.

Dec, 17, a theater tech weighing an electrical apprenticeship, traces the waste upstream to purchasing decisions. Combine orders, and ask the supplier about packaging. Anika, 16, who tracks parts and budget, accepts the diagnosis but refuses to let it become a claim. Nobody should say a change saves money on the basis of one box and a guess. She also insists that any plan preserve disposable cups and straws for people who need them.

The case turns an environmental question into a method question. What would it take to know that a change worked, and how large a claim would that evidence support?

Your role is to count the cups before and after the change.

? Stop and think. What is the largest claim the crew could honestly make after one test screening?

⌚ Pacing

Reading: about 5 min (723 words). Short on time: read it aloud together, pausing at each Stop and think.

? Stop and think

1. **After “The story: Two data points and a guess”:** What is the largest claim the crew could honestly make after one test screening?
2. **After “Designing a small, honest test”:** How should an organization weigh environmental goals against access needs when they conflict?
3. **After “Hierarchies, labels and the limits of bans”:** Why might a city's acceptance list matter more than a federal label standard for the crew's decision?

Designing a small, honest test

Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging. **Reuse** is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use. Both address waste upstream of disposal, which is where Dec wants to intervene.

The cups expose the gap between a label and a system. The city's list accepts metal cans, glass, rigid plastic containers and flattened cardboard. It excludes plastic-lined paper cups, plastic film, foam and items labeled compostable. **Local acceptance** is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes. Case 9's skill, consulting the official source for your own jurisdiction, applies directly. A package's claim is not the city's rule. Anika's observation that compostable cups are also excluded prevents a substitution that would only look like progress.

The new skill is establishing a baseline before claiming an effect. The baseline is roughly 120 cups at one screening. The intervention is borrowed washable cups at the next. The measure includes cups used and unused, plus the resources reuse consumes, water and labor. Case 4 provides the terms for presenting it. The plan is a **proposal**, a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet, and it is a **trade-off**, a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up. The resulting claim should be scoped to one counted screening. That is modest by design, because a single comparison cannot establish a trend or a cost saving.

 **Stop and think.** How should an organization weigh environmental goals against access needs when they conflict?

Hierarchies, labels and the limits of bans

The EPA's hierarchy places source reduction and reuse above recycling and composting, which rank above energy recovery and disposal. It explicitly notes that no single approach suits every material or situation (EPA, updated December 19, 2025). An NPR investigation reported that less than 10 percent of plastic has ever been recycled, which helps explain why reduction ranks first (NPR, September 11, 2020). FRONTLINE and NPR's documentary examined why recycling alone has not solved plastic waste (FRONTLINE PBS, March 31, 2020).

Environmental marketing is regulated. The FTC's Green Guides state that a product or package "should not be marketed as recyclable unless it can be collected, separated, or otherwise recovered from the waste stream through an established recycling program" (16 CFR Part 260, 2012). The crew's cups, marketed as recyclable in a city that does not accept them, illustrate the problem the rule addresses.

The 2018 straw debate shows why access must be designed in. Starbucks projected that its lid could mean a billion fewer straws a year (NPR, July 9, 2018).

This page continues page 256. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 256.

Hierarchies, labels and the limits of bans, continued

Disability advocates responded that some people need flexible plastic straws and that awareness of Seattle's exemption appeared low (NPR, July 11, 2018). Public institutions are adopting measurement. New York City's comptroller audited schools' food donation and composting efforts, showing how measurement changes what counts as success (Office of the New York City Comptroller, April 21, 2026). California schools use share tables so unopened food is shared instead of thrown away (California School Boards Association, October 13, 2023). Researchers have also studied which school and meal choices lead to more plate waste in K-12 cafeterias (Adjapong et al., PLOS ONE, December 27, 2024).

Professional ethics supports Anika's caution. The IABC code states, "I do not guarantee results that are beyond my power to deliver" (IABC Code of Ethics, no date listed).

? **Stop and think.** Why might a city's acceptance list matter more than a federal label standard for the crew's decision?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) | December 19, 2025

Sustainable Materials Management: Non-Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Hierarchy

Real source | NPR | September 11, 2020

How Big Oil Misled The Public Into Believing Plastic Would Be Recycled

Real source | FRONTLINE PBS (YouTube) | March 31, 2020

Plastic Wars (full documentary) | FRONTLINE

Real source | Federal Trade Commission (FTC) | 2012

FTC Green Guides (16 CFR Part 260)

Real source | NPR | July 9, 2018

Starbucks To Eliminate Plastic Straws In Its Stores By 2020

Real source | NPR | July 11, 2018

Why People With Disabilities Want Bans On Plastic Straws To Be More Flexible

Real source | Office of the New York City Comptroller | April 21, 2026

Review of Schools' Food Donation and Composting Efforts (MH25-077S)

Real source | California School Boards Association | October 13, 2023

Share tables reduce food waste

Real source | PLOS ONE (Adjapong et al.) | December 27, 2024

School and meal characteristics associated with plate waste in K-12 cafeterias in the United States

This page continues page 256. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 256.

Real source | International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) | No date listed
IABC Code of Ethics for Professional Communicators

[illegible]

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, fill in both boxes. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Supply list

Screening supply list, last Friday

Single-use cups (plastic-lined paper, labeled “recyclable”): about 120. Paper plates: 80. Printed flyers: 150. Paper straws, on request: 40. Folding chairs: borrowed from the bookshop.

Look closely: Which item did the crew use the most? Could it be reused?

What it shows

➤ A baseline: about 120 “recyclable” cups, 80 plates, 150 flyers and 40 straws.

What it leaves out

➤ Where each item went after the event, and what each item cost.

Evidence B | Delivery

The parts order

Delivered Tuesday to the theater shop. Three separate orders of small LED connectors and switches, placed over one week, arrived together. They came in one full box, about half of it plastic air pillows and foam around tiny parts.

Look closely: How many orders came in this one box? Why does that matter?

What it shows

➤ Three small orders placed over one week shipped in one box, about half packaging.

What it leaves out

➤ Whether one combined order, or a request to the supplier, would cut packaging.

Case 13 | Look at the evidence | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 8 min.

💬 Say this

“Put the supply list next to the city list. Which item appears on both?” — Wait for the plastic-lined paper cups.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students say the cup label is a lie. **Listen for:** “The label is fake.” **Then:** Ask what the city list tells us: this city does not accept them. Other places are not in the evidence.

📄 Support

- Give each document on its own half-page.
- Read the city list aloud, pausing after “Not accepted.”
- **Cognates:** reduction (reducción), recycle (reciclar), plastic (plástico), material (material), accessible (accesible), alternative (alternativa), container (contenedor), quantity (cantidad).

🔗 Stretch

- Ask which document shows waste made before the event and which shows what happens after it.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Sanitation guide

City recycling list

Accepted in recycling: metal cans, glass bottles and jars, rigid plastic bottles and containers, flattened cardboard. Not accepted: plastic-lined paper cups, plastic bags and film, foam, items labeled compostable.

Look closely: Find the plastic-lined paper cups. Which list are they on?

What it shows

☞ The city rejects plastic-lined paper cups, foam and items labeled compostable.

What it leaves out

☞ Where rejected items end up after pickup.

What is still missing from the evidence?

☞ We don't know how many cups washable reuse would replace, or what washing costs in water and volunteer time. We also don't know whether the bookshop can lend cups every time, or where the city's trash goes after pickup.

Notes

Case 13 | Look at the evidence | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 4 min.

✂ Short on time: 4 min.

💬 Say this

“Put the supply list next to the city list. Which item appears on both?” — Wait for the plastic-lined paper cups.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students say the cup label is a lie. **Listen for:** “The label is fake.” **Then:** Ask what the city list tells us: this city does not accept them. Other places are not in the evidence.

📄 Support

- Give each document on its own half-page.
- Read the city list aloud, pausing after “Not accepted.”
- **Cognates:** reduction (reducción), recycle (reciclar), plastic (plástico), material (material), accessible (accesible), alternative (alternativa), container (contenedor), quantity (cantidad).

🔗 Stretch

- Ask which document shows waste made before the event and which shows what happens after it.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Key idea: source reduction

On your own Read the key idea and the Professional standards card. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

Source reduction is preventing waste before it is created, for example by buying less packaging. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ranks ways to handle waste. Source reduction and reuse come first. Recycling and composting come next, then energy recovery, then treatment and disposal. The EPA also notes that no single approach fits every item or situation.

Reuse is using an item again instead of throwing it away after one use. Borrowing washable cups from the bookshop is one example. Reuse has costs too. Washing takes water and someone's time, so a fair comparison counts those costs along with the cups.

A “recyclable” label does not tell you where an item will go. **Local acceptance** is the list of materials that your own city's recycling or compost program actually takes. The crew's cups say “recyclable,” but their city's list does not take plastic-lined paper cups. The list does not take items labeled compostable either. So the crew has to check the list before choosing any new cup.

Professional standards

Real source | Law or regulation | Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

FTC Green Guides (16 CFR Part 260): § 260.12 Recyclable claims

“A product or package should not be marketed as recyclable unless it can be collected, separated, or otherwise recovered from the waste stream through an established recycling program”

In plain words: FTC guidance says a company should call a product recyclable only when recycling programs can collect and process it.

Question: The crew's city rejects plastic-lined paper cups. What else must you know before saying the “recyclable” label breaks the guide?

Your answer

Before saying the label breaks the guide, I would need to know ____.

➞ Before saying the label breaks the guide, I would need to know whether established programs collect these cups. The guide asks about programs, not one city.

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 10 min.

✂ Short on time: 8 min. Skip In the news.

💬 Say this

“The EPA ranks source reduction and reuse first. Where on that list is Dec trying to act?” — Wait for “source reduction.”

“This card is FTC guidance, not an ethics code. Who does it apply to?” — Marketers who call a product recyclable.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students treat the EPA ranking as a rule for every item. **Listen for:** “Reuse is always better.” **Then:** Reread the key idea: no single approach fits every item. Washing has costs too.

📎 Support

- Draw the ranking as a staircase, with source reduction and reuse on the top step.

🔗 Stretch

- Use the AIGA card: what could the next parts order change before anything reaches the shop?

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Medium.** The straw story raises disability access, and students may describe their own needs or others'.

Cool-down: Keep the talk to the NPR report. No one needs to say what they or anyone they know needs.

 Real source | NPR | July 9, 2018
Starbucks To Eliminate Plastic Straws In Its Stores By 2020
A throwback to a company cutting waste at the counter, before anything reached a bin.



A throwback to a company cutting waste at the counter, before anything reached a bin.



Investigation finding less than 10% of plastic has ever been recycled, which is why reduction comes first.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 262. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 262.

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow each choice to its consequences in the diagram. Then name one view that is missing. About 6 minutes.

Follow each choice to its consequences, including new costs. Which consequence would you measure first, and what would count as success?

Keep buying “recyclable” single-use cups

About 120 cups go to the trash because the city does not accept them

Who is affected

→ The city collection
service and the
neighborhoods near
where waste ends up

Borrow washable cups and run a wash station

Fewer cups in the trash, if people use the washable ones

Who is affected

Check: Count cups and bags after the next event and compare with last time

New costs: water, washing time and volunteers

Who is affected

Check: Count cups and bags after the next event and compare with last time

Combine parts orders into one shipment

Less packaging arrives before anything reaches a bin

Who is affected

Notes

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 6 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page. Skip this page. The materials sheet covers the same ground.

💬 Say this

“Follow the washable-cup choice. What new costs appear?” — Model the first chain together.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students list only benefits for the washable cups. **Listen for:** “Washable cups are just better.” **Then:** Point to the new-costs box: water, washing time and volunteers.

📄 Support

- Let students draw arrows before writing labels.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

➤ The supplier's view is missing. I would ask whether a combined order would ship with less foam and fewer air pillows.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is a vertical margin line on the left side, creating a narrow left margin. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard ruled sheet.

This page continues page 264. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 264.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the plan the crew should try and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 5 minutes.

The last screening used about 120 single-use cups, and the city's recycling list does not take that type. Which plan should the crew try for the next screening?

☒ **A** Compare a washable-cup option, washing time, cost, access and the city list, then test one change.

☐ **B** Buy a different cup labeled "recyclable" and put up a clearer recycling sign.

☐ **C** Stop offering disposable cups and straws, and ask everyone to bring their own.

Why I chose it

➤ **A. It weighs washing time, cost, access and the city list before choosing. B repeats the label mistake, and C makes a rule that could shut out guests who need a cup.**

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

We should make the screening zero waste. Everyone should bring their own cup and we'll **1** ban all plastic. We can also put up posters that say "save the planet" so people remember to recycle. Recycling is the best thing you can do for the environment. This will be easy and **2** it will save money too. Last screening there were cups everywhere and the bins were overflowing by the end of the night. People will love it once they get used to it. Let's start next week!

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

➤ **We will test washable cups and keep disposable cups and straws on request.**

Rewrite phrase 2

➤ **We will count cups and washing costs before we claim it saves money.**

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

💬 Say this

"You are planning the next screening. Which plan would you try first?" — Vote before any discussion.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students choose C because a ban cuts the most waste. **Listen for:** "Just ban them all." **Then:** Ask who at the screening might need a disposable cup or a straw. Point to the straw story.

📖 Support

- Read the three options aloud before students choose.

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Medium.** Talk about bans can turn to who "really" needs a straw.

Cool-down: Say: "Nobody has to prove a need." Keep the focus on how the plan offers items on request.

➤ Answer key

A revised version: For the next screening, we propose one change: cups. Last time we used about 120 single-use cups, and our city's recycling list doesn't accept that type. We'll borrow 60 washable cups from the bookshop, keep 40 compostable cups for anyone who needs one, and ask Rafa and Jordy to run a quick wash station. Flexible straws and single-use cups stay available on request. We'll count cups used and leftover supplies after the event and compare with last time before deciding whether to keep the change. We're not claiming it saves money yet.

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a memo to a student government events committee proposing one purchasing change for campus or club events. Use the Common Room supply list as the model, and include a measurement plan that states its boundary.

Use: Case documents: the screening supply list, the parts order, the city's accepted-materials list and Dec's and Anika's statements. Real sources: EPA's waste management hierarchy, the FTC Green Guides section on recyclable claims and NPR's report on disability and straw bans (July 11, 2018).

You'll make: Memo, 300—400 words, with a materials table

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Fill in the materials sheet from Evidence A: item, number used, reduction option, disposal rule, trade-off.
- 2 Choose one purchasing change high on the EPA hierarchy.
- 3 Write your boundary: what your comparison counts and what it leaves out.
- 4 Draft your memo of 300 to 400 words. Start on the Your draft page.
- 5 Add a line that keeps disposable items available for people who need them.
- 6 Check your memo with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Materials table, using the screening as a model

🔗 **Cups, about 120, reuse, not accepted. Plates, 80, reduce, not listed. Flyers, 150, reduce, not listed. Straws, 40, on request, not listed.**

Case 13 | Your task | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 12 min.

✂ Short on time: 12 min.

💬 Say this

“The case gives you counts for one screening. What would you need to count on your own campus?” — Students who apply the memo to their campus check that campus's recycling list.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students claim the “recyclable” label breaks the law. **Listen for:** “The cup company is breaking the FTC rules.” **Then:** Ask what else they would need to know. The guide asks about established recycling programs, not one city.

📄 Support

- Materials sheet: item, number used, reduction option, disposal rule, trade-off
- Boundary checklist: what the comparison counts and what it leaves out
- Plain paraphrase of the Green Guides row on recyclable claims
- Plain paraphrase of the Green Guides row: call a product recyclable only when recycling programs can collect and process it.

🔗 Stretch

- Explain why cups labeled “recyclable” can still be on the city's not-accepted list. Say what else you would need to know before claiming the label breaks the FTC guide.

Your task, continued

My purchasing change

- Borrow washable cups instead of buying about 120 single-use cups.

Boundary: counted and left out

Counted: cups used and left over, water and time for washing. Left out: transport and where the trash goes.

Notes

[illegible]

This page continues page 267.

Heat check

Low.

Standards

AAC&U VALUE rubric: Quantitative Literacy VALUE Rubric; Problem Solving VALUE Rubric; Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric.

ACRL Framework: Authority Is Constructed and Contextual.

The Case plan sheet gives each code in plain words.

Key Answer key

A strong response:

- Uses the supply list counts accurately: about 120 cups, 80 plates, 150 flyers and 40 straws on request
- Proposes a change high on the EPA hierarchy, such as reducing or reusing, and not only better sorting
- States the measurement boundary and what it leaves out, such as water and time for washing
- Checks disposal against the city's accepted-materials list
- Keeps an option for people who need disposable items, such as straws on request

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 25 minutes.

Your memo, first part, about 150 words

To: Events committee.

🔗 **To: Events committee. Subject: One change for club events. We propose replacing single-use cups with borrowed washable cups at our next event. We used the Common Room screening as a model. It went through about 120 plastic-lined paper cups labeled “recyclable,” and the local list did not accept them. The EPA ranks source reduction and reuse above recycling, so cutting cups before they reach a bin is the stronger option. Our comparison counts cups used and left over, plus the water and time for washing. It leaves out transport and where the trash goes. Flexible straws and some disposable cups will stay available on request for anyone who needs them. We will report the counts after the event and make no claim about savings until then. Before our campus buys any new cup, we will check its own recycling list.**

Case 13 | Your draft | College educator edition

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 25 min.

✂ Short on time: 25 min.

💬 Say this

“Your committee will ask what this costs. Where does your memo answer that?” — Look for the boundary and the washing costs.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Memos promise savings. **Listen for:** “This will save the club money.” **Then:** Replace the promise with the count you will report after the event.

📄 Support

- The overprinted sample holds the first part of the memo. Full memos run 300 to 400 words.

🔗 Answer key

What to notice in the sample:

- Checks disposal against the local list, not the label.
- States the boundary before any claim.
- Keeps the access option.
- Applies the model to a campus without assuming its rules.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

- Do your counts match the supply list? ☒ Yes ☐ No
- Does your change sit high on the EPA hierarchy, not only better sorting? ☒ Yes ☐ No
- Do you state your boundary before any claim of savings? ☒ Yes ☐ No
- Do you keep an option for people who need disposable items? ☒ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No data.	☐ General claims about recycling.	☐ Uses quantities and local rules.	☐ Uses quantities, local rules and a before/after plan.
Reasoning	☐ Treats one fix as solving everything.	☐ Ignores trade-offs.	☐ Applies the hierarchy and names a trade-off.	☐ Weighs trade-offs including access and cost with a measurement boundary.
Audience & purpose	☐ Commands people.	☐ Relies on slogans.	☐ Specific change organizers can do.	☐ Specific, inclusive change with roles assigned.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Wording only.	☐ Narrows to a measurable change.	☐ Explains how narrowing makes success testable.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 6 min.

✂ Short on time: 5 min. Students answer the Check your work questions only.

💬 Say this

“Find the sentence that says what you will count. Is there a number in it?” — If not, that is the revision.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Proposals still promise savings. **Listen for:** “It will definitely save money.” **Then:** Ask what the crew has counted so far. Replace the promise with the count.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

🔑 Answer key

How to assess: Score with the case rubric. Add checks that the counts match the supply list and that the boundary is stated before any claim of savings.

Proficient looks like:

- **Evidence:** Uses quantities and local rules.
- **Reasoning:** Applies the hierarchy and names a trade-off.
- **Audience & purpose:** Specific change organizers can do.
- **Revision:** Narrows to a measurable change.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 270. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 270.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then complete each sentence frame below the questions. About 8 minutes.

- 1 Could a change that reduces waste create an access problem for someone, and how would you find out?

➤ Yes. A ban on disposable cups or straws could shut out guests with disabilities, as the NPR straw reporting shows. The crew can offer items on request, say so clearly and ask guests privately what works.

- 2 How does “add more bins” define the problem differently from “order less packaging”?

➤ The phrase “add more bins” treats waste as a sorting problem at the end, though the city would still reject the cups. The phrase “order less packaging” treats it as a buying problem, where source reduction, the EPA’s first choice, applies.

- 3 What would the crew need to count before saying a change saves money?

➤ They would count cups used and left over against about 120. They would also count the cost of borrowing and washing, including water and volunteer time, and state what the count leaves out.

My take

My claim: ____.

➤ The crew should test washable cups at one screening, keep disposables on request and report only what it counted.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 8 min.

💬 Say this

“Use a number or a document in every answer.” — Hear one answer per question, then ask for a different view.

🔗 Stretch

- Design the count sheet for the next screening: items, numbers before and after, and new costs.
- Going further: Compare two plans for the theater shop: order all the parts at once, or keep ordering when a part breaks. What problem does each plan solve? What new problem could each one create?
- Going further: List who would have to change a routine if the crew switched to washable cups. Write a two-sentence note to them. Say what the crew will count to show whether the change worked.
- Going further: Write two event plans for the next screening and a small test for each. After the tests, explain which plan you would improve and which you would drop.
- Going further: Pick one item that appears at many school events, such as cups, flyers or plates. Count how many were used last time, and check your city’s recycling list. Do not sort through trash with your hands.
- Find your city’s recycling rules and compare with a neighboring city
- Research where your area’s trash goes after pickup

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

👉 The city list, because it shows the “recyclable” cups are not accepted where the crew lives.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

👉 Combining the parts orders would cut more packaging than any change to the cups.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

👉 We have one supply list and one box, and no count of washing costs or where the trash goes.

I would change my mind if ____.

👉 A count showed washing cost more than the cups it replaced, or guests could not use them.

Notes

This page continues page 272.

Heat check

■ ■ □ **Question 1: Medium.** Students may describe their own disabilities or those of people they know.

Cool-down: Keep the talk to the case and the straw story. No one needs to say what they or anyone they know needs.

Talk about this case at home

Case 13: Can the crew cut waste before it reaches the bin?

In this case, a group of friends learns that the cups from their movie night can't be recycled in their city. Your student planned one change to cut waste before the next event and a way to count whether it worked.

Questions to talk about

- 1 How could someone find out what their city or town recycles?
- 2 What is one item people often throw away after a party or event?
- 3 Why might a rule to cut waste need an exception for some people?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 13 | Talk about this case at home | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

At home: this page takes no class time.

💬 Say this

“Bring this page home or read it with someone you trust.” — Nobody needs to share personal needs or health information.