

Name: _____

Canteen Waste and What Can Be Done About It

It's lunchtime. You rush into the school canteen. You've only got 20 minutes to eat, but you also want time to relax with your friends before afternoon lessons. So, you quickly get some food, eat half of it, and then the bell rings. What happens to the rest of the food on your tray? Chances are, it goes straight in the bin.

Does this sound familiar? Even if you don't do this, you probably know someone who does. In fact, in the United States, nearly a third of the food served in school canteens goes into the bin. All that wasted food is worth nearly one billion US dollars every year.

Although food waste is a problem, many schools are finding ways to decrease the amount of food that gets thrown away. Some have simply changed when lunch is served. Students often rush to finish their food so that they can go to break. But when break is before lunch, students get the chance to burn off some energy first. Then they're hungry and ready to eat.

Do you have much time for lunch? If you're like many students, you probably don't. Short lunch breaks make many students rush. When students haven't got time to eat, they are more likely to throw food away. Schools with longer lunch hours have less waste.

Some schools are trying to involve students more and get them to make decisions about the food in their school. For example, some US schools reduced canteen waste by 36 per cent when students could choose what food the canteen served. In many schools, students can make suggestions about the menu and then give their feedback later. It's also helpful to let students serve themselves. This way, they only take what they think they'll eat. Getting students involved can make a big difference.

Even with all these great ideas, there will always be some food waste. However, all unwanted food doesn't have to go to landfill. Some charities collect unwanted food from schools and use it to feed hungry people. One UK school came up with a great idea - Fruity Friday. Each Friday, students chop up all the leftover fruit from the canteen and use it to make special desserts for the whole school. And of course, fruit and vegetables can be composted or left to breakdown. Compost can then be used to make soil healthier and grow more produce.

How much food is wasted at your school? What can you do to change the situation?

After reading the paragraph, answer the following questions:

1. How long do students have to eat lunch in the example at the beginning?

2. About how much school canteen food is wasted in the United States?

3. How much did food waste reduce when students could choose the food served?

4. What special activity did one UK school start on Fridays?
