

Be the waste carrier

Teacher's notes, pupil pack and answers

The school is having a clear-out: an old sofa, three broken laptops, and some tins of paint. Pupils play a made-up waste carrier and fill in a waste transfer note (the form that records who handed what waste to whom) for each load, using real waste codes.

Two of the loads won't go on a transfer note at all. Pupils find out why, and learn that the school can be in trouble too if its waste ends up dumped in a field.

- Ages: Key stage 3 (years 7 to 9, ages 11 to 14).
- Subjects: Citizenship, Geography.
- Time: One lesson of about 50 minutes.

Learning objectives

- Explain what a waste transfer note is, and why the law asks for one.
- Use an EWC code (the six-digit European Waste Catalogue number that says what a waste is) to describe a load, and spot a hazardous code by its star.
- Explain why hazardous waste travels on a consignment note instead.
- Say who can be held responsible when waste is dumped, using the idea of a duty of care.

Shared with pupils, and printed on their checklist:

We are learning to record waste properly when it changes hands, and to spot when it is hazardous.

- I can find the right waste code for a load.
- I can tell from the code whether waste is hazardous, and choose the right form.
- I can explain who could be in trouble if waste is dumped.

Curriculum links

- Citizenship, key stage 3: rules and laws, and how they're enforced. Pupils meet a real legal duty, see who it binds, and talk about what happens when someone breaks it.
- Geography, key stage 3: how human activity affects the environment and how natural resources are used. Pupils see why some waste is burnt, some is taken apart, and some needs special treatment.

Timings

- 5 minutes. Starter. Ask: "If the school pays someone to take its rubbish and they dump it in a field, who's in trouble?" Take answers, then explain the duty of care.
- 5 minutes. Read out the scene-setter (under How to run it) and share the learning intention. Hand out the scenario card and put the class in groups of two or three: one pupil plays the school, the others the carrier.
- 25 minutes. Groups work through the three loads with the cards, the blank waste transfer note, and the checklist.
- 10 minutes. Plenary. Go through the answers, then ask the plenary questions, from recall to reasoning.
- 5 minutes. Exit task, on the back of the checklist. Pupils tick the "I can" statements they've met.

What to print

- For each group: the scenario card (page 5), the card set (pages 6-7, cut up), three copies of the blank waste transfer note (pages 8-9), and the pupil checklist (pages 10-11, printed back to back).
- For you: these notes (pages 1-4) and the answer set (pages 12-14). Don't hand out the answer set.
- Everything prints in black and white on A4.

How to run it

Read this out to start:

Our school is having a big clear-out before the summer holidays. There's an old sofa, three broken laptops, and some tins of paint to get rid of.

Today you are waste carriers. That's the job of the people who are paid to take waste away. The law says every load must be written down before it leaves the school, so you'll fill in the paperwork for each one.

Be careful, because not every load is as simple as it looks.

- Explain the duty of care before you start. Anyone who produces, carries, or handles business waste must pass it only to someone allowed to take it, with a written description. Schools are bound by it like any business.
- Give each group three blank notes, one per load. Most groups will start a note for the laptops or the paint before they find the star. That's the point of the lesson, so let them, and ask what the star means when they get there.
- If a group is stuck on the laptops, point them to the "Not sure? Be safe" card. If they're stuck on the paint, ask what the label on the tin says.
- The sofa is the only load that goes on a waste transfer note. It has a twist of its own, because sofas can contain POPs (persistent organic pollutants, chemicals that last for years in the environment), so it must be burnt in an incinerator.
- In the plenary, come back to the starter. Both the carrier and the school can be in trouble if the waste is dumped, and the note is how anyone finds out who had it.

Everything here is made up: the school, the carrier, the sites, the people, and every number.

The law behind the answers

- The duty of care is in section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The exemption for householders covers only people throwing out waste from their own homes, so it doesn't reach a school. The government's code of practice names schools as waste producers.
- A waste transfer note must give the waste's code and description, how much there is and how it's held, the time and place of the transfer, the school's SIC code, both parties' names, a waste hierarchy statement, and both signatures. Both keep it for two years.
- Hazardous waste (a code with a star) moves on a hazardous waste consignment note instead. In England the producer keeps its records for three years and the carrier for one year.
- The paint codes are a mirror pair: 20 01 27* applies when the paint holds enough hazardous substances, so it depends on what's in the tin. The electrical codes work differently. 20 01 35* applies when the equipment has a hazardous component inside, such as a battery of a hazardous

type or the mercury lamp behind an old screen. Either way, the cards give pupils a clue to decide by.

- Household-type sofas and armchairs that contain POPs must be burnt, whether they come from a home or a business. The guidance's way to rule POPs out is a scan of the foam and fabric for bromine. Nobody has scanned this sofa, so pupils treat it as containing POPs. Such seating stays non-hazardous (20 03 07), so it travels on a transfer note, which must describe it as domestic seating waste containing POPs and list the chemicals, such as DecaBDE, the most common one.
- Paper waste transfer notes are still legal, and so are electronic ones. The government is moving waste records online through a service called Digital Waste Tracking. Receiving sites in England and Wales have had to use it since October 2026, and waste carriers will have to from October 2027. Transfer notes and consignment notes carry on alongside it for now.

Answers

The answer set is at the back of this pack, after the pupil sheets: each load's code, form and site, the sofa's waste transfer note filled in, every code on the cards with its official description, and model answers to the plenary and the exit task.

Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

- Wales: waste transfer notes follow the same law as England. Hazardous waste has its own Welsh regulations, and the consignment note uses the form and code format set by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Premises that produce or store more than 500 kg of hazardous waste a year must also register with NRW, which England stopped requiring in 2016.
- Scotland: transfer notes come under the Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) (Scotland) Regulations 2014. Hazardous waste is called special waste, and it moves on a consignment note under the Special Waste Regulations 1996 instead. The regulator is SEPA.
- Northern Ireland: transfer notes come under the Controlled Waste (Duty of Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002, explained in the code of practice from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), and are kept for two years. Hazardous waste moves on a consignment note with a code issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.
- The POPs seating guidance in these notes is England's. The other nations have their own. Digital Waste Tracking reaches receiving sites in Scotland and Northern Ireland in January 2027. The waste codes are the same in all four nations.

Sources

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Scenario card: The school clear-out

Hilltop School is having a clear-out before the summer holidays. There are three loads of waste to take away: an old sofa, three broken laptops, and some tins of paint.

You work for Maketown Waste Carriers. Your job is to collect each load and take it to the right place. The law says the waste must be written down before it leaves the school, so the next person knows what they are handling.

For each load, you will find its waste code, decide which form it needs, and fill the form in. Some loads will surprise you.

Who's who

- The school: Hilltop School, 1 Pretend Lane, Maketown, ZZ1 1ZZ. Its SIC code (the number that says what kind of business it is) is 85310. The person handing the waste over is Sam Reed, the school business manager.
- The carrier (you): Maketown Waste Carriers, Unit 4, Make-Believe Business Park, Maketown, ZZ1 4ZZ. Registered waste carrier number PRETEND-042.
- Maketown Energy Plant, Furnace Road, Maketown, ZZ1 7ZZ: an incinerator that burns waste to make electricity. Permit PRETEND-SITE-07.
- Maketown Electricals Recycling, Circuit Way, Maketown, ZZ1 8ZZ: a site that takes old electrical things apart safely. Permit PRETEND-SITE-08.
- Maketown Hazardous Waste Centre, Safety Street, Maketown, ZZ1 9ZZ: a site that treats dangerous waste such as solvent paint. Permit PRETEND-SITE-09.

Everything here is made up: the school, the carrier, the sites, the people, and every number.

What to do for each load

1. Read the card for the load.
2. Find its waste code on the code cards.
3. Read the rule cards. Do they change anything?
4. If the load can go on a waste transfer note, fill one in. If not, write down what it needs instead.
5. Fill in your checklist for that load.

Cut along the dashed lines.

Load 1: the sofa

An old three-seater sofa from the staff room. It has a fabric cover and foam cushions. One cushion is badly torn, so nobody can reuse it. It weighs about 40 kg.

Load 2: the laptops

Three broken laptops from the computer room. They still have their screens and batteries inside. Nobody knows exactly what the parts are made of. They weigh about 6 kg in all.

Load 3: the paint

Six old tins of gloss paint from the caretaker's store. Some are half full. Each label shows a flame warning symbol and says the paint contains solvents. They weigh about 12 kg in all.

20 03 01

Everyday rubbish from bins, all mixed together.

20 03 07

Big, bulky things such as furniture and mattresses.

20 01 36

Old electrical things with no dangerous parts inside.

20 01 35*

Old electrical things with dangerous parts inside. Screens, circuit boards, and batteries can hold harmful chemicals.

20 01 28

Paint with no dangerous chemicals in it.

Cut along the dashed lines.

20 01 27*

Paint with dangerous chemicals in it. Look for warning symbols on the tin.

The star rule

Look at the waste code. If it has a star (*) at the end, the waste is hazardous. That means it could harm people or nature.

Waste transfer note

A waste transfer note is the form for waste that is not hazardous. The school and the carrier both sign it. Both keep a copy for two years.

Consignment note

Hazardous waste can't travel on a waste transfer note. It needs a different form called a consignment note. Stop, and write "consignment note" on your checklist.

Not sure? Be safe

If nobody can tell whether old electrical things have dangerous parts inside, the rules say treat them as hazardous, to be safe.

Sofas and POPs

Sofa foam can contain chemicals called POPs, which can last for many years without breaking down. A sofa that may have POPs in it must be burnt in an incinerator (a furnace for burning waste), never buried in the ground. Keep it away from other rubbish.

Old electricals

Old electrical things must go to a special site that takes them apart safely and saves the metals and plastics.

Before you sign

Check every part of the form is filled in. A missing box could get the school and the carrier into trouble.

Waste transfer note

Reference _____

For non-hazardous waste. Both people keep a copy for two years.

PART A WASTE HOLDER

The person or business handing the waste over.

Name

Address and postcode

SIC code

The five-digit Standard Industrial Classification code for what the business does.

Acting as

- ☐ Producer of the waste ☐ Importer of the waste ☐ Transporter of the waste ☐ Local authority
☐ Holder of an environmental permit ☐ Operating under a registered waste exemption
☐ Registered waste carrier ☐ Registered waste broker or dealer ☐ Other

Registration, permit or exemption number (if any)

Waste hierarchy

- ☐ I confirm that I have fulfilled my duty to apply the waste hierarchy as required by regulation 12 of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011.

PART B PERSON TAKING THE WASTE

Usually the waste carrier who collects it.

Name

Address and postcode

Acting as

- ☐ Producer of the waste ☐ Importer of the waste ☐ Transporter of the waste ☐ Local authority
☐ Holder of an environmental permit ☐ Operating under a registered waste exemption
☐ Registered waste carrier ☐ Registered waste broker or dealer ☐ Other

Carrier registration, permit or exemption number

If they are exempt from registering, write the reason.

PART C RECEIVING SITE

Where the waste is going.

Site name

Site address

Permit or exemption number

PART D THE WASTE

What it is, how it is held, and how much.

Description of the waste

Say what it is and where it came from. 'General waste' is not enough.

EWC code(s)

The six-digit List of Wastes code, for example 20 03 01. A hazardous code needs a consignment note instead.

Physical form

☐ Gas ☐ Liquid ☐ Powder ☐ Solid ☐ Sludge ☐ Mixed

How it is contained

☐ Loose / uncontained ☐ Skip ☐ Bags / sacks ☐ Drums / containers ☐ Bulk (tanker / tipper) ☐ Other

Quantity

A weight in kg or tonnes, or a count of containers.

PART E THE TRANSFER

Where and when the waste changes hands, and who signs.

Place of transfer

Date

Time

Recovery or disposal code (if known)

An R or D code, for example R13 (storage before recovery).

Broker or dealer (if any): name, address and registration number

Waste holder: signature, printed name and date

We confirm the transfer of the waste described above. The person handing it over confirms the description is full and accurate.

Person taking the waste: signature, printed name and date

Pupil checklist

Names: _____

We are learning to record waste properly when it changes hands, and to spot when it is hazardous.

- ☐ I can find the right waste code for a load.
- ☐ I can tell from the code whether waste is hazardous, and choose the right form.
- ☐ I can explain who could be in trouble if waste is dumped.

Load 1: the sofa

Waste code: _____

Does the code have a star? Yes or no: _____

Which form does it need? _____

Where does it go? _____

Load 2: the laptops

Waste code: _____

Does the code have a star? Yes or no: _____

Which form does it need? _____

Where does it go? _____

Load 3: the paint

Waste code: _____

Does the code have a star? Yes or no: _____

Which form does it need? _____

Where does it go? _____

Before you sign a waste transfer note, check

- ☐ Part A: the school's name, address, and SIC code are filled in.
- ☐ Part A: the school has ticked the waste hierarchy box (it checked whether the waste could be reused or recycled first).
- ☐ Part B: the carrier's name, address, and registration number are filled in.
- ☐ Part C: the receiving site's name, address, and permit number are filled in.
- ☐ Part D: the waste has a clear description and a code with no star.
- ☐ Part D: it says how much waste there is and how it is held.
- ☐ Part E: the place, date, and time are filled in.
- ☐ Part E: both people have signed and printed their names.

Think about it

1. Why can't the paint go on a waste transfer note?

2. The carrier dumps the sofa in a field instead of taking it to the energy plant. Who could be in trouble, and why?

3. Why do you think both people keep a copy of the note for two years?

Exit task

Exit task: a carrier is collecting an old fridge from the staff room. Write down one thing you would check before you take it, and why.

Answer set (for the teacher)

Keep this page back until the groups have finished.

Load 1: the sofa

Code 20 03 07. Waste transfer note. Goes to Maketown Energy Plant.

Bulky waste, 20 03 07, which has no star, so it goes on a waste transfer note. A sofa is household-type seating, so the rules for seating that contains POPs (persistent organic pollutants, chemicals that last for years in the environment) apply even though it came from a school: it must be burnt, kept apart from other waste, and described on the note as domestic seating waste containing POPs. 20 03 01 (mixed bin waste) is the decoy.

Load 2: the laptops

Code 20 01 35*. Consignment note. Goes to Maketown Electricals Recycling.

Nobody knows what is in the screens, boards, and batteries. An old screen may be lit by a small mercury lamp, which the Environment Agency's guidance counts as a hazardous component, and GOV.UK's advice is to treat electrical waste as hazardous when you're still unsure. So it's 20 01 35*, and the star means it needs a consignment note. A group that picks 20 01 36 has missed the "Not sure? Be safe" card.

Load 3: the paint

Code 20 01 27*. Consignment note. Goes to Maketown Hazardous Waste Centre.

The flame symbol and the word solvents on the label are the clue, so the code is 20 01 27*, and the star means a consignment note. Paint with no hazardous substances in it would be 20 01 28 and could go on a waste transfer note. The label and the maker's safety data sheet tell you which.

The laptops and the paint

- The laptops and the paint can't go on a waste transfer note, because their codes have a star.
- Each load travels on a hazardous waste consignment note. It records much the same as a transfer note, plus what makes the waste dangerous (for the paint, that it's flammable) and a code that identifies that one movement.
- The school keeps its records for three years. The carrier keeps its records for one year.
- The two loads go to different sites: the laptops to a site that treats old electricals, the paint to a hazardous waste site.

The sofa's waste transfer note, filled in

Part A: Waste holder

Name

Hilltop School

Address and postcode

1 Pretend Lane, Maketown, ZZ1 1ZZ

SIC code

85310

Acting as

Producer of the waste

Registration, permit or exemption number (if any)

None needed: the school is the producer

Waste hierarchy

Ticked. The torn sofa can't be reused, and the rules say it must be burnt

Part B: Person taking the waste

Name

Maketown Waste Carriers

Address and postcode

Unit 4, Make-Believe Business Park, Maketown, ZZ1 4ZZ

Acting as

Registered waste carrier

Carrier registration, permit or exemption number

PRETEND-042

Part C: Receiving site

Site name

Maketown Energy Plant

Site address

Furnace Road, Maketown, ZZ1 7ZZ

Permit or exemption number

PRETEND-SITE-07

Part D: The waste

Description of the waste

Domestic seating waste containing POPs: one fabric three-seater sofa with foam cushions, from the staff room.
May contain brominated flame retardants such as DecaBDE

EWC code(s)

20 03 07

Physical form

Solid

How it is contained

Loose / uncontained

Quantity

1 sofa, about 40 kg

Part E: The transfer

Place of transfer

Hilltop School car park, 1 Pretend Lane, Maketown, ZZ1 1ZZ

Date

The date of the lesson

Time

The time it is collected, such as 10:15

Recovery or disposal code (if known)

Can be left blank, as it's marked "if known"

Broker or dealer (if any): name, address and registration number

None

Waste holder: signature, printed name and date

Signed and printed: Sam Reed, the school business manager

Person taking the waste: signature, printed name and date

Signed and printed: Alex Brown, the driver

The codes on the cards

20 03 01

Mixed municipal waste

20 03 07

Bulky waste

20 01 36

Discarded electrical and electronic equipment other than those mentioned in 20 01 21, 20 01 23 and 20 01 35

20 01 35*

Discarded electrical and electronic equipment other than those mentioned in 20 01 21 and 20 01 23 containing hazardous components

20 01 28

Paint, inks, adhesives and resins other than those mentioned in 20 01 27

20 01 27*

Paint, inks, adhesives and resins containing hazardous substances

Plenary questions: model answers

Ask them in this order, from recall to reasoning. Questions 4 to 6 are the ones pupils wrote about on their checklist.

1. What does a star at the end of a waste code tell you?

That the waste is hazardous: it could harm people or nature. It needs a consignment note.

2. Which load went on a waste transfer note, and how long do the school and the carrier keep their copies?

The sofa. Both keep a copy for two years.

3. The sofa's code has no star. Why can't the carrier take it to landfill?

Sofa foam may contain POPs, chemicals that last for years in the environment. Seating that may contain them must be burnt in an incinerator.

4. Why can't the paint go on a waste transfer note?

Its code, 20 01 27*, has a star, so it's hazardous. Hazardous waste needs a consignment note instead.

5. The carrier dumps the sofa in a field instead of taking it to the energy plant. Who could be in trouble, and why?

The carrier, for dumping waste (fly-tipping). The school could be too, if it didn't check the carrier was registered or didn't fill in the note properly. Everyone who handles waste has a duty of care.

6. Why do you think both people keep a copy of the note for two years?

So that if the waste turns up in the wrong place, the note shows who had it, what it was, and where it was meant to go.

Exit task: what to look for

Any sensible check, with a reason. For example: look up its waste code to see if it has a star, because a hazardous code needs a consignment note; or check the carrier is registered, because the school must only hand waste to someone allowed to take it. (Many old fridges contain gases that make them hazardous, which the class can't know yet, so the reasoning matters more than the answer.)