

## **Waste not, want not**

**Time:** A homework and one follow up lesson

### **Purpose**

To get students to understand the scale of packaging waste and to learn how we all contribute to the issue.

To understand how designers can make positive contributions to the reduction of waste.

### **Background to the task**

Packaging is important because it protects, helps to sell and provides information about products. Yet from an environmental point of view, packaging poses huge problems. In the UK, we throw away 30 million tonnes of household waste each year, a large proportion of which is packaging from supermarkets and convenience stores.

### **Carrying out the task**

Look at examples of essential and non-essential packaging.  
Carry out a waste analysis at home.

### **Homework**

After a weekly shop at a local supermarket students should look at the packaging waste that is produced in their household. They should look for the material types that have been used and whether they are clearly identified to help them to be recycled. They could rate them in the form of essential packaging to non-essential packaging. Not all packaging is to protect the product – much is to enhance its appearance and increase sales. They could also analyse the amount of packaging that their family's produce compared to the amount they recycle.

### **Class follow up**

- Students should then compare results to the rest of the group and could then do simple predictions to work out what the yearly problem for the class would be.
- Through discussion and comparison essential and non-essential packaging could then be identified and possible solutions could then be brainstormed. This could then be used as a starting point to many design tasks.

### **Extension activity**

Carry out a detailed analysis of the packaging used in a fast food retail outlet such as McDonalds and get students to understand the vast amount of waste that comes from fast food packaging, You will need existing fast food packaging products and approximately one lesson.

The task is to carry out a detailed analysis of fast food packaging and to draw conclusions from this about the amount of material used, the type of material and the scale of the environmental problem. Using the ideas in the 'research' section of this unit, introduce the students to positive design and ask students to suggest ways in which fast food packaging can be reduced.