

Glossary of Terms

W denotes Science WASL vocabulary support

Archeology - the study of ancient cultures through the examination of their material remains and other artifacts usually dug up from the ground

Biodegradable – able to decompose naturally, made of substances that will decay relatively quickly as a result of the action of bacteria and break down into elements such as carbon that are recycled naturally

Cells (landfill) – *W* a small contained unit, like a compartment in a honeycomb, used to store solid waste in a landfill

Climate - the general weather conditions of a region (It's generally hot and humid in Florida in the summer, and generally rainy in the winter in Washington)

Conserve - *W* to use something sparingly so as not to exhaust supplies

Consumer – *W* a buyer of goods or services; somebody or something that consumes something by eating it, drinking it, or using it up

Composting - *W* recycling food *scraps* and yard trimmings into a type of *soil*

Home composting: A backyard pile of food scraps (only fruits and veggies) mixed with yard waste. It all *decomposes* into a soil-like material.

School composting: when ALL of your food and paper *scraps* from the cafeteria are transported to a factory where they *decompose* and turn into *compost*.

Cycle - *W* a sequence of events that is repeated again and again

Decompose - rot, to break down organic matter from a complex to a simpler form, mainly through the action of fungi and bacteria (decomposer *W*)

Dirt: A filthy or soiling substance, such as mud or dust. Dirt might look like *soil*, but there is no life in dirt.

Ecosystem – *W* a group of organisms together with the environment that they live in and depend on

Environment – external factors influencing the life and activities of people, plants, and animals; a set of external conditions, especially those affecting a particular activity



Erosion – *W* the gradual wearing away of rock or soil by physical breakdown, chemical solution, and transportation of material, as caused, e.g. by water, wind, or ice

Food chain – *W* a hierarchy of different living things, each of which feeds on the one below

Ground water – water held underground in soil or permeable rock, feeding springs and wells and often used as drinking water

Landfill: an area of land where trash and garbage is buried. (correct to sanitary landfill/modern landfill as to not confuse with open dumping concept)

Leachate - the liquid produced in a landfill from the decomposition of waste

(mineral) nutrient – *W* a substance that provides nourishment, such as the minerals that a plant takes from the soil

Natural resources - a naturally occurring material, such as coal, wood or leftover food scraps

Organic: Anything that is alive or was once alive. For example, anything that comes from trees, plants, or animals.

Organism – *W* a living thing, such as a plant, animal, bacteria or fungi (also, microorganism -)

Pollution - *W* introduction of substances (like chemicals) into the environment which can damage human health, living resources and ecosystems

Problem – *W* a difficult situation or matter; a question or puzzle that needs to be solved

Procedure – *W* any means of doing or accomplishing something; a series of steps taken to accomplish an end

Process – *W* a series of natural occurrences that produce change or development

Reduce - *W* to prevent waste by consuming less and throwing away less

Reuse - *W* using an object or material again, either for its original purpose or for a similar purpose, *without significantly changing its form*

Recycle - *W* using an object to create a new product *by physically changing its original form*



Rot: *Decomposition of anything organic*

SOS: Save Organic Scraps food waste composting program. Any leftover food and paper products from breakfast/lunch are collected and taken to a facility where they are turned into *compost!*

Soil: The top layer of the earth's surface consisting of rock and mineral particles mixed with organic matter. Soil is full of living organisms, nutrients, and vitamins.

Solution – *W* a method of successfully dealing with a problem or difficulty

Solid Waste - unwanted or unusable items, remains, or byproducts, or household garbage

Scraps: Leftover food from breakfast or lunch

System – *W* a combination of related parts organized into a complex whole

Waste stream – *W* The total flow of solid waste from homes, businesses, institutions, and manufacturing plants that is recycled, burned, or disposed of in landfills

Water table – *W* the upper surface of the groundwater

Volume – *W* the amount of 3-dimensional space occupied by an object, expressed in cubic units

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Greenhouse gases: Any of the atmospheric gases that contribute to the greenhouse effect. Some greenhouse gases occur naturally in the atmosphere, while others result from human activities such as burning fossil fuels like coal.

Methane Gas: An odorless, colorless, flammable gas. Methane is a type of greenhouse gas.

