

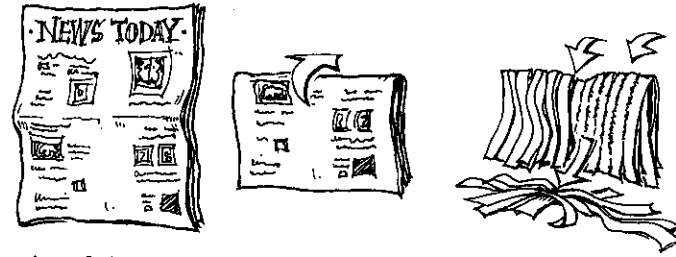
# Setting Up the Compost Bin

## Location

Find a spot for your compost bin where the temperature range is 40°–85°F. Red wiggler worms thrive in temperatures that range from 55°–77°F. Be sure to keep the compost bin away from any heating unit. The worms will die if the compost gets too hot. If possible, keep a thermometer in the bin to monitor the temperature. The process of decomposition generates heat, so the compost will be warmer than the classroom.

## Compost Bin "Habitat"

Place lots of moist shredded paper in your compost bin to mimic a red wiggler's natural habitat of leaves, manure, or old compost piles. To shred the paper, fold two large sheets in quarters and tear lengthwise (with the grain of the paper) into 1/2", or thinner, strips. Have students help you shred enough newspaper to fill the entire compost bin. Shredded newspaper holds water well and is easy to keep fluffy so air can circulate. Air movement decreases the chance of odor. For best results add some dried, fallen leaves or garden mulch that has been in contact with soil.



## Red Wiggler Worms

These worms are the primary decomposer in the compost bin. Bacteria and other microscopic organisms will live there as well, but they can't be seen with the naked eye. These worms are pretty resilient, which makes them ideal for classroom composting. If a little too much water is added or the bin attracts fruit flies, these worms most likely will be fine.

## Food

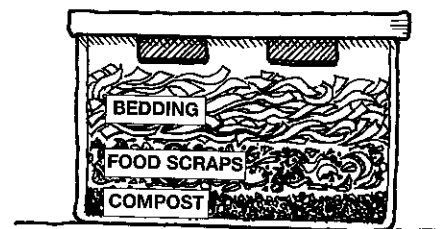
Decomposers need food to live. Feed the worms your leftovers. You can add all the food at one time during the week, or you can add some every day or so. Either way is fine. Do what works best for you and your class. Remember to put the food scraps on top of the compost and below the bedding. If you saved the food scraps from Lesson 6 (*Celebrating Plant Parts*), plan to use these in the compost bin. See *LiFE Tips for Classroom Composting* on the next page for tips on what food to put in your compost bin.

## Moisture

Water provides the moisture that worms need to survive. Monitor the moisture very carefully. If the compost bin gets too wet, the worms will crawl up the side to escape from the water. If it's too dry, they will die. Consider using a tray underneath the bin just in case any moisture leaks out.

## Caring for Your Compost Bin during School Vacations

Add food and newspaper and give a healthy spray of water just before vacation and your bin will be fine for two to three weeks. Be sure to leave the bin in a place where it will not get too hot or too cold.



Growing Food

# LiFE Tips for Classroom Composting

## Yes

- Raw vegetable trimmings
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Tea bags
- Finely crushed eggshells
- Used paper towels and napkins
- Trimmings from healthy houseplants and flowers
- Dried leaves or mulch that have some soil on them

If you are new to composting and want to make sure your compost bin does not develop odors or attract bugs, only add items from this list.



## Maybe

- Raw fruit scraps
- Cooked vegetables and fruit

These foods can cause odors, create conditions where mold will grow, or attract bugs. If you microwave these foods for one minute on high, or freeze them, it will reduce the possibility of attracting bugs. Thaw before using.



## No

- Animal products
- Anything greasy
- Grains, beans, or breads
- Feces from dogs, cats, or birds
- Wood prunings

These items can cause odors and attract bugs and rodents.



Growing Food

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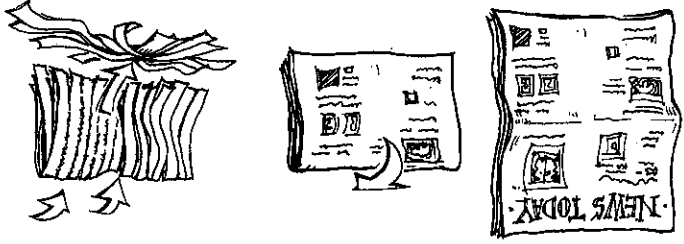
LESSON RESOURCE

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## LIFE Tips for Classroom Composting

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