



Pest conducive condition: desk food that is not in a pest-proof container.



Pest conducive condition: clutter in classroom closet and lack of access to floor for regular cleaning.

What is “Pest-proofing”? Pest-proofing involves making your space less attractive to pests, if not outright inhospitable. All pests—be they insects, animals, or plants—are after one or more the following:

- Food
- Water
- Shelter

Pest-proofing a space reduces the amount of food, water, and shelter available to pests, and therefore discourages them from setting up shop. Pest-proofing is a good practice for staff to be in the habit of year-round as part of an integrated pest management (IPM) program. Forgotten food, water, and shelter can attract pests.

WHY DO WE PEST-PROOF?

Most pests have the ability to chew through plastic bags containing snacks, and paper boxes holding cereals and crackers. Small ants can even find their way around a twist tie. Mice and cockroaches are adept at navigating cupboards where snacks are stored. When it comes to pests in schools, “open” foods are any foods that are not stored in a hard container with a snap-tight or screw-top lid.

Pests also find food from unlikely sources. Ants, mice, and cockroaches dine on the greasy residue on floors underneath large kitchen equipment. Corrugated cardboard is often used for long-term storage in kitchens and classrooms. German cockroaches can hide inside the corrugations and eat the box glues...until the kitchen or classroom offers something tastier. Cardboard boxes are also highly accessible to ants, spiders, and mice, which use them for shelter.

PESTS NEED FOOD, WATER, AND SHELTER

FOOD can be residue left on a desk after eating a sticky snack, a week-old French-fry, or a stale piece of cereal under the microwave. Even bags of candy in a desk drawer are accessible to many pests.

WATER for a pest may be a leaky faucet or pipe underneath a sink. It might also be a leaky roof that moistens the wood and ceiling tiles, or areas of poor drainage around a building.

SHELTER sources include cluttered corners, cupboards, and closets—areas that are not often disturbed or cleaned. Well-organized spaces that are not cluttered, are accessible for cleaning, and use bins with lids will have far fewer pests.

WHAT IS INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM)?

IPM is an approach to managing pests that focuses on prevention. Pest prevention requires communication and education so that staff is aware of the pest-conducive conditions in their workspace and how to minimize them. For teachers, administrators, and kitchen staff, minimizing pest-conducive conditions often involves sanitation, proper food storage, clutter reduction, and making minor changes to habits so that their workspace is less attractive to pests. In some states, including Oregon, IPM is a law that carries with it restrictions for who can apply pesticides on school grounds. Ask your district's IPM Coordinator for more information.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Before summer, winter, or spring break, take a moment to pest-proof your workspace.

TEACHING STAFF

1. Take home the snack food in that desk drawer (you know the one!).
2. If you choose to leave food in cupboards during the break—including flour, sugar, cereals, and food-based art supplies—place them in a hard plastic container with a snap-tight lid. Many pests can chew through boxes and plastic freezer bags.
3. Custodians usually ask you to move “stuff” up off the floor to allow for cleaning during breaks. Consider keeping these items up off the floor permanently by installing shelves or bringing in rectangular tables to allow for better cleaning throughout the school year.
4. Clutter clean-out: the price for storing materials is dust and pests. Consider the tradeoff (a cleaner and healthier classroom) as you sort your classroom supplies.

KITCHEN STAFF

1. Take a look in the pantry and eliminate as much corrugated cardboard as possible. This is a great time to request hard plastic bins with snap-tight lids as part of a pest management effort.
2. Remove debris from drains and drain baskets to reduce habitat for drain flies.
3. Place all food in snap-tight containers, in refrigerators, or freezers. If storage space is limited for large bags of grain products, place them on shelves (ideally metal) several feet off the floor.
4. Request to have your floors deep-cleaned during each break using either a pressure washer or a bio-enzymatic cleaner. Drains and hard-to-reach floors under heavy equipment will accumulate layers of scum that pests may feed on and breed in.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PEST-PROOFING:

- *IPM Technical Resource Center. Pest Management Practices: Sanitation.* <http://extension.entm.purdue.edu/schoolipm/1pmp/pmpsani.htm>
- *Environmental Protection Agency. PestWise: Pest Management Issues in Schools and IPM Benefits.* <http://www.epa.gov/pest/ipminschoools/issuesandbenefits.html#where>
- *The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) provides objective, science-based information about pesticides and related topics to enable people to make informed decisions. To contact NPIC, call 1-800-858-7378 or visit <http://npic.orst.edu>.*

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Correct storage of classroom supplies.

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