

## Go Green: Reduce, Recycle, Reuse

### Reduce

Waste prevention or “source reduction” means consuming and throwing away less. Source reduction actually prevents the generation of waste in the first place, so it is the most preferred method of waste management and goes a long way toward protecting the environment.

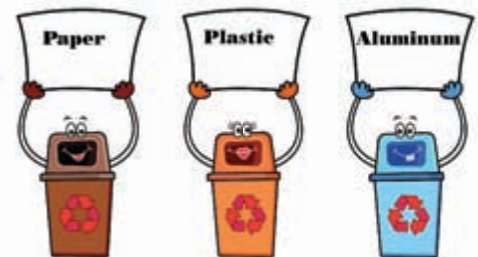
- **Reduce the amount of unnecessary packaging.** Consumers also can share in the economic benefits of source reduction. Buying products in bulk, with less packaging or that are reusable (not single-use) frequently means a cost savings. What is good for the environment can be good for the pocketbook as well.
  - Choose products with the least amount of unnecessary packaging.
  - Buy loose tomatoes, garlic, mushrooms, etc., instead of pre-packaged.
  - Choose larger or economy-size items which have less packaging per unit.
  - Use concentrated products.
  - Buy in bulk.
- **Adopt practices that reduce waste toxicity.** Products, such as paints, cleaners, oils, batteries and pesticides, that contain potentially hazardous ingredients require special care when you dispose of them. Improper disposal of household hazardous wastes can include pouring them down the drain, on the ground, into storm sewers or, in some cases, putting them out with the trash. The dangers of such disposal methods might not be immediately obvious, but improper disposal of these wastes can pollute the environment and pose a threat to human health.
  - Use the least amount necessary to do the job when using hazardous materials such as pesticides.
  - Use non-hazardous alternatives when possible.
  - Follow directions for disposing of hazardous products and containers.
  - Find a hazardous waste collection site in your area for items such as leftover paint, pesticides, solvents and batteries.

### Recycle

Make recycling easy by setting up separate bins for the different recyclable items.

#### What to Recycle

- **Paper** – office paper, newspaper, cardboard and other types of paper. Not only can you recycle paper, you can also purchase recycled paper. By weight, paper accounts for 35 percent of solid waste. Every day American businesses generate enough paper to circle the earth 20 times.
- **Glass** – bottles and jars (clear, green or amber)
- **Aluminum** – beverage containers. Recycling one aluminum can saves enough electricity to run a TV for three hours.
- **Plastic** – bottles, milk jugs, bags and detergent containers. Plastic accounts for about 11 percent of total solid waste. Americans go through 2.5 million plastic bottles every hour.



## Where to Recycle

- Curbside collection is the most convenient way to recycle. These programs offer scheduled pickups of recyclable products from the curb. Unfortunately, curbside recycling is not available in all communities.
- Drop-off centers are sites set up to leave materials for recycling. They serve as convenient central pickup locations for processors or recyclers.
- Buy-back centers pay consumers for recyclable materials.

Recycling options vary from town to town, so be sure to check with your local recycling program to see what materials are collected for recycling.

## Reuse

Reuse is using an item more than once. This includes being used again for the same function and reuse where the item is used for a different function. Reuse can have both financial and environmental benefits. Between 2 and 5 percent of what's currently in the waste stream is potentially reusable.

- **Consider reusable products.** A coffee mug can replace styrofoam cups. Washable metal forks can be used instead of plastic. Use sponges and dishcloths instead of paper towels. Use rechargeable batteries.
- **Maintain and repair durable products.** Clothing, automobile tires and large appliances last longer with proper care. When purchasing new products, look for a longer warranty. Follow directions for proper operation and maintenance. Read and follow clothing care labels. Mend and repair clothes when needed.
- **Reuse bags, containers and other items.** A reusable canvas tote bag is the best choice for shopping. Reuse scrap paper, ribbons and gift boxes. Plastic butter tubs can be washed and reused as storage containers for small items such as nails or buttons.
- **Borrow, rent or share items.** Consider renting or borrowing items that you don't use frequently. Rug cleaners and garden tillers can be rented. Before discarding, ask friends or community groups if they can use your old tools, camera equipment or other items. Share magazines with others to extend the lives of these items.
- **Sell or donate goods instead of throwing them out.** One person's trash is another person's treasure. Instead of discarding unwanted appliances, tools or clothes, try selling or donating them. Donate to a thrift store. Have a garage sale. Give hand-me-downs to family members.



## References

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