

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle Ideas

Reducing

Reducing is the first and most effective of the three Rs. It means reducing your consumption or buying less. Designing items like plastic bottles in ways that use less material is another way to reduce consumption. Using steel cutlery instead of plastic utensils, buying used goods, mending clothes instead of buying new ones and consuming less electricity are all examples of ways you can reduce in your own life.

Reusing

Rather than throwing out items like clothing or food jars, consumers can find new uses for them -- and thereby reduce their consumption of new resources. Composting, using jars to store beverages or leftover food, and trading or selling used DVDs rather than throwing them out are all examples of ways people can reuse. Reusing is the second most effective of the three Rs; like reducing, it avoids creating waste rather than trying to recycle it once it's already there.

Recycling

Recycling is the third of the three Rs. Recycling extracts valuable materials from items that might otherwise be considered trash and turns them into new products. As a consumer, you can also help recycling by purchasing products made from recycled material, such as toilet paper made from recycled pulp.

Why Is It Important?

Manufacturers extract natural resources, such as bauxite or aluminum ore, and refine them to make products using energy in the process. Often, burning fossil fuels generates this energy. When people throw those items away, they send them to landfills where they may take centuries or longer to break down completely. Reducing, reusing and recycling help reduce humanity's environmental footprint, carbon dioxide emissions and energy use and limits the amount of landfill space people create. These savings can be substantial; recycling aluminum uses only 5 percent of the energy required to refine aluminum. That's why the three Rs are the basic tenets of modern environmentalism.

Tips for Reducing

* First and foremost, buy and use less! Buy only what you need and use all of what you buy. Or make sure that when you are through with something, you pass it along to other people who can continue to put it to good use. This is especially important when it comes things that can be dangerous to our environment, such as paint and chemicals.

* Start making wise "package" selections. Reduce waste by selecting products that

are not wasteful in their packaging.

- * Recycle by purchasing products in materials/packaging that can be readily recycled.

- * Avoid single-serve containers. Buy products in concentrate, bulk, and in refillable containers. They reduce packaging waste and can save you money!

- * Refuse store bags! When you buy one or two items at a store, carry them out in your hands; or take a reusable bag with you to carry the items you buy.

- * Buy and use local food and products.

- * Carpool, bike or walk.

- * Reduce food waste by using up the food you already bought and have in the house instead of buying more. You already paid for it - so use it!

- * Set your photocopiers and printers to print on both sides by default.

- * Make computer files, not paper files when possible

- * Get your address removed from junk mail lists Service, c/o Direct Marketing Assoc., P.O. Box 90008, Farmingdale, NY 11735.

- * Use cloth napkins instead of paper napkins.

- * Use a dish cloth instead of paper towels.

- * Turn off lights and home appliances when not in use. Also, make sure to unplug every appliance from its socket to avoid "phantom" energy users.

- Switch to compact fluorescent lamps (CFL). CFL bulbs use less energy than traditional light bulbs and they last longer too.

- * Your home should not be too hot or too cold. Close unused vents, clean them and change filters in the vents. Use ceiling fans instead of air conditioners to reduce cooling costs and saves electricity.

- * Tame the refrigerator energy appetite. Don't send the thermostat too high. Even one degree makes a big difference.

- Wash your clothes in cold water. Today's cleaning powders don't need hot water, anyway.

- * Clean your home appliances regularly. Dirt and dust may affect the efficiency of appliances.

- * As much as possible, avoid using appliances which are big users of energy such as water heaters, dishwasher, and washing machines with dryers.

- * Conserve water or use less as much as possible. Check your faucets for leaks and fix it if you find any leak. Water lawn sparingly or use recycled water to conserve energy.

- * Choose to walk, ride a bike or opt for public transportation, carpool, take the bus or travel by train to work. However, if you don't have these options, maintain your car properly to avoid poor combustion performance and smoke belching. Also practice driving smoothly to get better mileage for your car and conserve more energy.

- * Use laptops instead of standalone computers and monitors, as laptops consume far less energy while in use. Also, turn off your computer rather than setting it on a sleep mode when you are not using it.

- * Ensure to turn off the lights and other office appliances before leaving.

- * Cut your paper usage or recycle paper products by printing on its both sides.

- * Bring your own food. Take a packed lunch or snack to work. Use washable and

reusable containers when packing or storing your food.

- * Use reusable coffee travel mugs when drinking your favorite cup of coffee instead of using disposable paper or plastic cups. This not only helps reduce waste but also allows you to enjoy your drink for many hours, as these travel mugs help keep your favorite cup of coffee or tea hot for long periods.

- * Get paperless, shop or pay your bills online. Cancel unwanted newspapers and magazines and see if you can opt for a Wireless Reading Device such as the Amazon Kindle which delivers news, books and magazine subscription to you electronically to help save trees use in making papers.

- * Consider buying energy-efficient products that don't use much energy. Some products have models that are made especially to save energy like cars, air-conditioners, refrigerators and other home appliances.

Tips for Reusing

It makes economic and environmental sense to reuse products. Sometimes it takes creativity:

- * Reuse products for the same purpose. Save paper and plastic bags, and repair broken appliances, furniture and toys.

- * Reuse products in different ways. Use a coffee can to pack a lunch; use plastic microwave dinner trays as picnic dishes.

- * Sell old clothes, appliances, toys, and furniture in garage sales or ads, or donate them to charities.

- * Use resealable containers rather than plastic wrap.

- * Use a ceramic coffee mug instead of paper cups.

- * Reuse grocery bags or bring your own cloth bags to the store. Do not take a bag from the store unless you need one.

- * Non-perishable and unspoiled perishable food can be donated to local food banks, soup kitchens, pantries, and shelters.

- * Reuse items around the house such as rags and wipes, empty jars and mugs, party decorations, and gift wrap.

Tips for Recycling

Recycling is a series of steps that takes a used material and processes, remanufactures, and sells it as a new product. Begin recycling at home and at work:

- * Buy products made from recycled material. Look for the recycling symbol or ask store managers or salesmen. The recycling symbol means one of two things - either the product is made of recycled material, or the item can be recycled. For instance, many plastic containers have a recycling symbol with a numbered code that identifies what type of plastic resin it is made from. However, just because the container has this code does not mean it can be easily recycled locally.

- * Check collection centers and curbside pickup services to see what they accept, and begin collecting those materials. These can include metal cans, newspapers, paper products, glass, plastics and oil.

- * Consider purchasing recycled materials at work when purchasing material for office supply, office equipment or manufacturing.

- * Use recycled paper for letterhead, copier paper and newsletters.
 - * Return used car tires to retailers or wholesalers that recycle or retread them.
- Tires are banned from most landfills, and illegally dumped tires become breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other pests.