

Reduce Reuse Recycle



Did you know?

- Waste is a growing problem in Australia.
- We are one of the biggest producers of waste in the world.
- As our population grows our consumption increases, and the more we consume the more we tend to 'throw away' – it is a problem that we all contribute to.

About reduce reuse and recycle

There are a number of things that we can do to help minimise the amount of waste going to landfill, and the effects of that waste on the environment. It is just a matter of remembering the 3Rs – reduce, reuse, and recycle. Changing our habits in regards to waste, no matter how small or insignificant those actions may seem, can make a big difference. Just think about the difference it would make if everyone packed their lunch in reusable containers instead of with disposable cling wrap!

There are many good reasons for minimising the amount of waste that we create:

It conserves valuable resources, including:

- minerals – copper used in many electronic goods, tantalum used in mobile phones etc.
- energy – used in mining, harvesting and manufacturing of resources
- timber (forests) – used to make paper, cardboard and wood products
- petroleum (oil) – used to make plastics and to transport goods
- water – used in large amount to extract resources from the earth and in the manufacturing of consumer goods.

It saves money:

- If you waste less, you get more out of what you have.
- Waste disposal costs are reduced, for example at school it often costs more to have your rubbish bins collected than it does for recycling to be collected.

It reduces impacts on the environment, for example:

- Fewer natural ecosystems will be affected by mining, harvesting, and landfill of waste if we can manufacture new goods from old goods.
- Fewer landfill sites will need to be built if we can extend the life of the landfill, which means that the biodiversity of a future landfill site can remain intact.
- Greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced if we were all to compost and/or worm farm our organic waste.



Being Waste Wise about the 3Rs

When trying to minimise your waste, remember that the 3Rs are in order of importance: first *reduce*, then *reuse* and finally *recycle* what's left.

Reduce

Reduce simply means to make *less* waste. You can also think of it as living more carefully so that you have less rubbish to get rid of later. There are a number of ways to reduce your waste, including the following:

- Hold a zero waste lunch day at school where all food is packed in reusable containers. This could even become a competition between classes to see who can produce the least amount of rubbish. The canteen can also look into zero waste food storage options.
- Work with the school canteen to encourage healthy eating, as healthy options often have less packaging, and to provide food options with little to no packaging. You could also suggest that the canteen make some food from scratch in bulk volumes, such as pasta bakes or lasagna that can be served in reusable containers, rather than serving individually packaged foods such as pasta in aluminium trays. Minimise the use of canteen paper by placing orders onto a white board and use in conjunction with reusable containers or plates/bowls.

Reuse

Reuse means to use the same item more than once, preferably many times, rather than throwing it out after one use. There are lots of ways you can reuse things around school and at home.

- Make paper from 'waste' paper. Homemade paper note pads or cards can be sold to parents and the school community.
- Make and distribute notebooks from used paper that is blank on one side.

Sources

Mineral Information Institute:
www.mii.org/Minerals/photoal.html

Recycling Near You (Planet Ark):
www.recyclingnearyou.com.au/education/recycling-facts-tips.cfm

- Obtain a 'reuse shed' where teachers and students can store items that can be reused at a later date, such as ice-cream containers, egg cartons, popsicle sticks etc.
- Consider having student groups collect and repair old bicycles that can be sold to the school community.
- Reuse empty glass jars for storage in your shed, classroom or kitchen.

Recycle

Recycling is basically taking something old and making it into something new. The process of recycling requires a waste product to be returned to a factory where it is remade into either the same product or something different. For example, used plastic peanut butter containers can be made into sleeping bag stuffing.

However, what you can recycle at school and at home will depend on who is collecting your recyclables. It is best to check with your local council for details about recycling in your area. Only put out for kerbside recycling or private pickup those items that are collected, putting in the wrong materials can contaminate recyclables.

It is also important to remember that almost all organic waste can be recycled right at school or at home through the use of a compost bin and/or worm farm. In this case the recycling happens right before our eyes. See the 'How to compost' fact sheet or 'Worm farming in schools' fact sheet to find out more.

Pass it along!

Another very important aspect of the 3Rs is to share your knowledge and advice with others who may not be so savvy when it comes to reducing waste. After all, if we were to all reduce, reuse, and recycle in just small ways every day, we would have a lot less waste in the world.

Websites

www.recyclingnearyou.com.au/education/recycling-facts-tips.cfm
www.olliesworld.com/planet/aus/info/info/rc_pa03.htm

The Waste Wise Schools Program

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