

## The 3 Rs: Reduce Reuse Recycle

The items people throw out all take energy to make; many of them are not biodegradable and may take centuries to break down. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Americans produced 4.3 lbs. of trash per person per day in 2009. Reducing, reusing and recycling -- the three Rs -- are the ways consumers can minimize the volume of waste they generate.

### 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

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. Communities have a variety of recycling programs, such as curb side pickup of recyclables, drop-off centres, buy-back centres that pay you for valuable items and deposit-refund programs . Deposit-refund programs, which include a deposit as part of the product price, refund consumers when they recycle such items as soda cans and plastic bottles. As a consumer, you can also help recycling by purchasing products made from recycled material, such as toilet paper made from recycled pulp. Recycling facts and figures UK households produced 30.5 million tones of waste in 2003/04, of which 17% was collected for recycling . This figure is still quite low compared to some of our neighboring EU countries, some recycling over 50% of their waste. There is still a great deal of waste which could be recycled that ends up in landfill sites which is harmful to the environment. Recycling is an excellent way of saving energy and conserving the environment. Did you know that: 1 recycled tin can would save enough energy to power a television for 3 hours. 1 recycled glass bottle would save enough energy to power a computer for 25 minutes. 1 recycled plastic bottle would save enough energy to power a 60-watt light bulb for 3 hours. 70% less energy is required to recycle paper compared with making it from raw materials. Some Interesting Facts: Up to 60% of the rubbish that ends up in the dustbin could be recycled. The unreleased energy contained in the average dustbin each year could power a television for 5,000 hours. The largest lake in the Britain could be filled with rubbish from the UK in 8 months. On average, 16% of the money you spend on a product pays for

the packaging, which ultimately ends up as rubbish. As much as 50% of waste in the average dustbin could be composted. Up to 80% of a vehicle can be recycled. 9 out of 10 people would recycle more if it were made easier.

## References

<http://homeguides.sfgate.com>

<http://www.recycling-guide.org.uk>

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