

Consider the three “R’s”

REUSE before you recycle

- Revamp old backpacks: Most manufacturers offer a “lifetime warranty” and will fix zippers, seams and straps for free— or give you a new one at no charge. Look for your bag’s manufacturer online and call the company.
 - Reusable totes: plastic bags and paper bags are hard on the environment. Opt for your own reusable bags for all your shopping. Most grocery stores sell bags ranging from \$1 to \$2. Our personal favorite is the mesh bags at ecobags.com or find chic options at Neelabag.com or EnviroSax.com
 - Instead of paper towels, sop up messes with a sponge or shammy. Disinfect them regularly in the dishwasher or zap them for 30 seconds in the microwave.
 - Carry a sport bottle to fill up on water, still wary of tap water use one with a filter such as Brita or select one from TheWaterGeeks.com
 - Can’t start the day without coffee? Don’t leave home without your travel mug! Most convenient stores and coffee shops offer discounts when you fill up your own with fountain soda or coffee.
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Tips to REDUCE

- Need a few sheets of fancy paper? Don’t buy a whole package, instead log on to printablepaper.net and download your choices and print out only what you need.
 - Stop unwanted catalogs and junk mail before tossing them in the recycle bin. Contact senders to be removed from their mailing list or enter them at CatalogChoice.org and they’ll cancel the mailings for you. Sign up for online banking and opt for paperless statements. You’ll also save gas
 - Photocopy on both sides and single space lines to use 75 percent less paper
 - Download GreenPrint’s free software to purge that last page that follows web print outs. PrintGreener.com
 - Reuse that daily memo as scratch paper Go paperless on all your bills. Most utilities let you pay online now. Not only will you reduce paper use but also save on postage.
 - Use a clothes line for drying clothes: Like your clothes soft? a quick 10 minute air-dry tumble will soften them up. Don’t forget to clear the lint catch to save energy efficiency.
 - Wash clothes in cold water and use 90 percent less power than if you ran a hot water washes.
 - Fine tune your refrigerator: move your refrigerator away from heat sources such as an oven or sunny window. Avoiding keeping the door open. Keep door seals clean to prevent leaking and once a year clean the coils in the back to keep it running efficiently.
 - Forgo the blow dryer and let your hair air dry. To tame frizz try John Masters Organics Dry hair Nourishment & Defrizzer made with earth friendly essential oils.
 - Replace old incandescent bulbs with CFLs. They use less energy and last longer.
 - Lights out: turn out all the lights before you go to bed, including landscaping lighting and the nightlight.
 - Don’t pre-rinse dishes before the dishwasher and you’ll save 20 gallons of water per wash load. Conserve more by running the washer only when it is full.
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Gadget that can help with REDUCING

- The GreenSwitch: a dimmer like lever installed in your home that allows you to turn off your lights, thermostat and electrical outlets simultaneously. GreenSwitch also offers split outlets so you can choose what stay on.
- The Bye Bye Standby starter kit provides the same technology for just 2 outlets. the Smart strip can detect when a primary device is off such as the computer or TV and cuts power to peripherals such the monitor or audio accessories.

- The GreenPlug aims to replace the pile of power bricks under your desk with a hub that charges multiple devices, but only when they need it. When a device's battery is full the GreenPlug cuts the juice.
 - The Watt Stopper uses infrared to detect body heat so it knows when you leave your desk and it shuts down six of its outlets for devices like the printers.
 - Pint size sealer that packs reusable bags. The Frisber- about the size of a CD player punches a small hole in the a bag to draw out air then seals the hole. The Vac-Snap bags have a zip-style reclosable top allowing you to reuse it over and over. Oliso.com.
 - Why use fresh water to flush? The Aqus system tucks under the sink and catches drain water, filters and disinfects it then sends it to the toilet tank. It's even safe for bowl slurping pets. When there is not enough waste water the Aqus pulls from plumbing. Saving you 14 gallons a day in a two person home. Watersavertech.com
 - Indoor compost without the odor. The Nature Mill pumps fresh air into a basket that rotates organic waste at evenly timed intervals while maintaining 140degrees. The heat, air and agitation destroys odor causing microbes. Unit is about the size of a small a garbage pail and can take up to 4lbs of waste per day. Naturemill.com
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Cell Phones, Recycling & Reuse

Tens of millions of cellular telephones are put in boxes every year, never to be used again. That's too bad. Phones are useful, and contain toxic materials. They should be recycled.

Now you can donate your old wireless phone. Recycled phones go overseas to people who can't get regular telephone service, or to people in abusive relationships (the phones are programmed to call 911 only). Phones or phone parts (like batteries & cords) are collected. Try to collect as many parts as possible. Drop your phone or phone parts at any Sprint PCS or Staples chain store, or see CollectiveGood or WirelessRecycling.com for mailing information.

Computer floppy disks & Video Tape, Reuse / Recycling

Several processors now recycle computer floppy disks. Unsold software is disassembled and separated into paper, plastic and disks. The disks, with are effectively brand new, are erased, formatted, tested, labeled, and reused. GreenDisk of Redmond Washington sells reclaimed disks as GreenDisk Recycled Diskettes. Individuals and companies may also send defective disks & tapes directly to the company which will shred and recycle the plastic and metal. For more information, link to GreenDisk, Inc.

Of course disks & tapes are fully reusable. Removable labels are rare, but stacking two labels is usually OK. For the top label, select the type that does not wrap over the top of the cartridge. To clear all old data and even viruses from a floppy you just need to do a "full" or "unconditional" disk format -- Macintosh: Use initialize from the finder. Windows 3.1/DOS: From a DOS prompt type "format a: /u". Microsoft Windows: Right-click on the drive icon and select format. Select "full" format. Your disk will be checked fully for errors and work as good as new.

Computers & Technology, Reuse / Recycling

Think before you put that computer in storage! Try to donate or recycle your old computers before they become totally obsolete (the EPA estimates that 75% of computers sit in storage for several years before finally getting thrown away)! For a list of places that might accept the computer, see <http://sharetechnology.org/>

If you're waited too long you'll have to recycle, not reuse. Electronics contain lead and other chemicals, so they should not be landfilled (and some jurisdictions are working on banning such material from landfills). One good option is dropping off at Office Depot (See www.officedepot.com/recycle). They'll accept most office-type electronics, and small TV's. IBM will recycle your computer for a bargain price of just \$30 including shipping! Computer boards also contain gold so many scrap metal recyclers will take them.

Eyeglasses, Reuse / Recycling

The old lenses that steer you into walls may be the perfect gift for someone in need. Chances are an optician or club in your area collects eyeglasses for reuse. Collected eyeglasses are cleaned, repaired and measured to determine the correction. Available glasses are cataloged in a computer database, and matched to people with need. Many of the glasses are sent to other countries, as laws in the USA make it difficult to re-dispense a prescription product. Another option is to have your old glasses tinted to turn them into sunglasses.

The Lions Clubs operate the largest program, collecting glasses from thousands of opticians. Of the chain stores, LensCrafters, For-Eyes and Pearle collect glasses chain-wide. Several organizations accept eyewear by mail (use a search engine to find them). One example is:

New Eyes for the Needy 549 Millburn, PO Box 332, Short Hills, NY 07078. Accepts scrap metal frames in any condition, unbroken plastic framed glasses, non-prescription sunglasses, any precious metal scrap like broken jewelry and monetary donations. In Canada send glasses to The Low Vision Clinic, 1929 Bayview Ave., Toronto, ON M4G 3E8.

Polystyrene Packing & Peanuts, Reuse

Those pesky packing peanuts don't have much recycling potential, but they can be reused, which is even better. Many packing, shipping and moving stores will take used peanuts. Just pack them up in (recycled) plastic bags, and drop them off next time you are nearby. Suitable businesses can be located under "packaging" in the yellow pages. Typical chain stores include Mail Boxes Etc. and The Postal Annex. For a partial list of local collection sites, try the Plastic Loosefill Council at 1-800-828-2214 (24 Hours).

Some peanuts are not made of plastic. If you find a peanut that looks like a cheese puff, try licking it. One type of peanut is made from vegetable starch, and dissolves almost instantly in water. These taste somewhat like rice cakes, and are just as safe in a compost bin. If you buy peanuts, strongly consider switching to this type. They're better for the environment, and much easier to get rid of.

Disposal of rigid foam blocks (such as those protecting new equipment) is problematic. The materials are very lightweight; they're made from natural gas: it is easy to end up with a net environmental loss just transporting the stuff. For most individuals recycling this material is not worth it, though future research into local small-scale reprocessing may change this. If you have large quantities of material, a list of collection sites is available from The Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers.

Compact Discs (CD's), Repair/Reuse/Recycling

Damaged CD's can be repaired, and repair or reuse is definitely a better environmental option than recycling. You have some chance of repairing small numbers of obvious scratches with a mild abrasive such as toothpaste. Work only on the non-label side, with strokes dialing out from the center. Professional refinishers such as AuralTech CD Refinishing will repair disks for about \$3 each and guarantee the results.

If you just don't like the CD's, give or trade them at a music store or donate them to charity.

Obsolete or unrepairable CD's and cases can be recycled. Recordable CD-R's have about 20mg of gold that can be recovered, and some processors can actually remove the data layer, and reuse the plastic disc. If you are worried about proprietary data, you can cut them with a pair of heavy duty tin shears, or place them in a microwave oven with a small glass of water (for one disc, 5 seconds on medium does a fantastic job, and creates a spectacular light show)

Since CD's are not very valuable, nobody will pay you for recycling. Send pre-paid by UPS Ground, third-class mail, freight or other surface transportation to NESAR Systems, 420 Ashwood Road, Darlington, PA 16115 (724)827-8172 or Digital Audio Disk Corporation, Attention: Disc Recycling Program, 1800 Fruitridge Ave., Terre Haute, IN 47804-1788, (812) 462-8323a

Smoke Detectors, Proper Disposal

The most common type of smoke detector contains a small amount of Americium 241, a radioactive material. Detector companies accept returned radioactive detectors for disposal as hazardous waste. Unfortunately the companies seem to assume you'll keep the instruction booklet on hand for the entire life of the product, and don't always put good contact information on the case.

Detectors have a limited life span, usually specified at ten years. Testing your detector with actual smoke is the only way to be sure it will work when needed. The vast majority of smoke detectors are made by First Alert Corporation. Send old detectors to First Alert, Radioactive Waste Disposal, 780 McClure Rd, Aurora, IL 60504-2495, 1-800-323-9005. Others are made by a Canadian firm called American Sensors, dial 1-800-387-4219 for information. The companies sell detectors under many different brand names, and can dispose of any of them. Send detectors by surface mail or UPS Ground so they don't end up in an airplane.

Disposable single use cameras, Recycling

Recent studies have shown that, despite the recycling claims on the boxes, less than half of disposable cameras are ever actually recycled. Enough cameras have been tossed to circle the planet, stacked end-to-end. Local film developers often have little or no incentive to return the camera bodies to the manufacturers, and not all parts of the cameras are recyclable. Kodak has started to minimally reimburse developers for the costs of sorting, storing and shipping, but processors are still faced with a bewildering variety of types, brands, and procedures for dealing with them.

Inexpensive fully-automatic 35mm cameras can be purchased for about \$20 if you look carefully. These cameras will give better results and cost less to use than the disposables. If you must use a disposable camera, be sure to take it to a developer that explicitly promises to recycle the remains.

Holiday Cards, Reuse

For the last 25 years Saint Jude's Ranch, a non-profit youth home, has operated a holiday card reuse program. The ranch provides counseling and opportunities for troubled youth. The kids operate a business taking used greeting cards, neatly cutting off the front covers, gluing on new back covers, and selling the result. The kids earn money, experience and a sense of purpose.

The St. Jude's program has been such a success that they don't need any more cards, ever! They have millions. But you can buy the cards, helping them, and helping to close the recycling loop.

Never seem to have enough cards for everyone on your list? Save this year's Christmas cards to use next year. Cut the front off then post an address and a stamp on the back side and violet you got a great Christmas post card so you can reach out to everyone on your mailing list.

Batteries (dry-cell, rechargeable, automotive, button, lead-acid)

Battery technology is becoming increasingly important with the rise of portable computing, remote data monitoring and electric vehicle research. Unfortunately batteries contain metals, acids and other compounds that can be bad when released into the environment. Here's how to recycle the most common battery types:

Alkaline & Carbon-Zinc ("Heavy Duty") batteries, Disposal

In Germany it seems that every supermarket has a collection bin for batteries. In the USA you'll need to head to the library. But check with local schools too sometimes they have a program set up to earn money for recycling batteries.

Rechargeable batteries provide an excellent alternative. Ni-Cd batteries may be recharged many times, but have much less capacity than alkaline. Rayovac sells a line of reusable alkaline batteries called "Renewal", which have a large fraction of the capacity of a regular alkaline, but, only last for 25 or so charges. Do not send any type of dry cell battery to facilities designed to recycle other rechargeable.

Nickel-Cadmium batteries, Recycling

Nicad rechargeable batteries can be recycled, and it is important to do so because of the toxic metal cadmium contained in the batteries. See the companion guide to common materials for the details on Ni-Cads.

Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMH), Recycling

Lithium Ion (Li-Ion), Recycling

Many newer laptop computers and other portable use Nickel Metal Hydride or Lithium-Ion batteries. Battery retailer Power Express will accept reasonable numbers of batteries by surface mail or UPS Ground for recycling. Package to prevent electrical short circuits and send to: Power Express Batteries, ATTN: Battery Recycling, 14388 Union Avenue, San Jose, CA 95124 (USA).

Button Cell Batteries, Recycling / Proper Disposal

Most small, round "button cell" type batteries contain mercury, silver, cadmium, lithium or other heavy metals as their main component. These materials leak in landfills, can enter the water table, and are even worse when incinerated. Button Cells are increasingly targeted for recycling because of the value of recoverable materials, the hazard to the environment, and the small size and easy handling relative to other battery types.

Many shops that replace watch and hearing aid batteries will accept your batteries for recycling at no charge. Check with a jeweler, watchmaker, or volume retailer like Pay-less, Radio Shack or K-Mart. If you have your watch batteries replaced, be sure to ask if the battery will be recycled.

Stores & repair shops can purchase plastic-lined collection/shipping containers from MEREKO. Believe it or not, the batteries are sorted by part numbers looked up in a reference guide. Obviously a better type marking system is needed, and perhaps one that allows batteries to be sorted by machine.

Automotive batteries, Recycling

Automotive batteries contain lead. Lead is both toxic and valuable; in the US over 95% of all automotive batteries are recovered and recycled. Virtually any place that sells batteries will take them back, most state laws require it. Unfortunately many batteries are sent to overseas smelters with poor environmental and worker health records (See "The Myth of Automobile Battery Recycling", by Madeleine Cobbing). Ask where your battery will be sent. Recycler EXIDE has a better than average reputation. Consumers or businesses can call 1-800-289-4627 for recycling options.

Non-automotive lead-based batteries (Gel Cells, SLA, etc), Recycling

Gel cells and sealed lead-acid batteries are commonly used in industrial equipment, emergency lighting, and alarm systems. The same recycling process applies as with automotive batteries, but not all retailers will understand this. An automotive store may accept the batteries; you can try a security dealer, The Battery Council International at (312) 664-6610, or your local waste agency.

Fluorescent light bulbs, Mercury Thermostats & Thermometers, Mercury Switches

Fluorescent bulbs contain a small amount of mercury vapor. Older wall-mounted thermostats have a ball of shiny silvery liquid metal mercury. Thermometers with a silver (not red) column probably contain mercury. Mercury has been used in a wide variety of products, even kid's flashing sneakers.

Mercury is a deadly poison. Chronic exposure leads to brain damage (and dain bramage). Mercury easily gets into water, then into fish, then back into humans. Mercury containing products of any source must be disposed/recycled as "household hazardous waste". Contact your garbage or recycling company for days & times. Do not mess around with mercury.

Unwanted Household Goods (small appliances, tableware, clothing, furniture, toys, sports equipment, children's books, white elephants, etc.)

Your unwanted household items can have a life again if you donate them to charity. Organizations such as Goodwill Industries will take your donations, sort and sometimes repair them, and resell them in thrift shops nationwide. Broken items are fixed, and scrap materials (like worn-out textiles) are sold for recycling. Goodwill provides jobs and job training for tens of thousands of people who would otherwise have trouble finding work. In 1994 alone Goodwill assisted 25,000 people finding placement in the private sector, helping many people get off public assistance. Wash the clothing, and try to include manuals or brochures on appliances (especially if broken). Surf the net, scan the white pages or look in the yellow pages under "Thrift Shops" for a charity and drop-off center near you.

Nonstick metal cookware and utensils can be refinished (See Fry Pan Man for one provider).

Another great option is the local repair shop. Don't expect to sell your old appliance, just give it to the shop for use as spare parts.

Remodeling / Building supply Recycling

Fixtures, hardwood, panels, windows, doors you name it call up your local Habitat for humanity chapter.; while some items might help in their home projects the rest they often Resale to raise funds to help with their program.

REDUCING pesticides and other chemicals usage

PEST FREE- CHEMICAL FREE

- Fool critters with Tabasco! – douse plants with a mixture of 1oz Tabasco and one gallon of water. Sprits plants with the mixture and bugs will leave it alone mistaking it for an unpleasant pepper or garlic plant.
- Attract the right insects with flowers! – Plant a variety of flowers between your rows of veggies will attract friendly predators like lady bugs and spiders that feed on garden destroying insects.
- Chase slugs with a cup of coffee! – don't toss that last bit of coffee down the drain instead pour around plants along with the grinds. Caffeine is a natural pesticide.
- Catch rose killers with milk! – powdered milk will keep aphids off roses while protecting the plant. Mix 1 half cup of powdered milk in 1 quart warm water, and spray. Then occasionally, hose down roses to rinse. Reapply as needed.

FEEDING YOUR PLANTS WITH KITCHEN LEFTOVERS

- Calcium cocktail - break up eggshells; soak overnight in water to cover, then strain.
- Milkshake – when milk sours, dilute it by half with water and feed your plants. And no it won't smell.
- Reruns – cover used teabags and coffee grounds with water, steep overnight and give plants a drink. Bonus: the caffeine will keeps bugs away from your flower beds.
- Healthy Broth! – cover the peelings from any fruits and veggies with cold water; soak overnight and strain
- Vitamin Boost! – save any unwanted juices from steaming greens, like spinach. Your plants will love it!

TEA BAG TRICKS YOU NEVER KNEW

- No more Rust! – after washing, wipe cast iron pots and pans with a used tea bag. The tannins in the tea create a rust-preventing layer.
- Dry Skin? – Bathe in green tea! Just throw a few tea bags under a running faucet – antioxidants will re-hydrate skin.
- Tidy Cats! – Open dry, used tea bags and add the contents to kitty litter. Tea's antibacterial properties neutralize odors.
- Instant Facial! – apply warm, wet tea bags to your face and under eyes. The tannins will tighten pores and reduce puffiness.

YOU GO YOGURT!

- Feed Fido! – Yogurt’s calming to dogs with digestive troubles, so treat Fido to a couple tablespoons of plain yogurt every few days.
- Soothe Sunburn! – for cooling relief, smooth plain yogurt on sunburned skin and relax for 20 minutes.
- Finger Paints! – add sugar free soft drink powder to plain yogurt for colorful finger paints that are easy to clean, safe and tasty too.
- Grow Garden Moss! – blend lawn moss with 1 cup each of plain yogurt and water. Apply the mixture to shaded rocks or brick. Mist it with water occasionally, and watch the moss grow.

NO MORE MOSQUITOES – NATURALLY!

- Leave ‘em in the dust with lemon eucalyptus! – scientists found this soothing scent to be more effective than most other mosquito repellents out there; it even beat out a 7% DEET formula. Repel Lemon Eucalyptus at www.drugstore.com
- Make Mosquitoes scam with soybean oil! – the same oil used in cooking actually stops mosquitoes from nibbling on you for up to eight hours per application, according to a USDA lab study. BiteBlocker at www.amazon.com
- Shield yourself with catnip oil! – Yes the same scent that cats love, mosquitoes hate it! That’s the news from Iowa State University scientists, who found that a single application repels mosquitoes for up to six hours and is 10 times more effective than DEET. Natural Insect Shield at www.Herbalremedies.com