

# Reduce-Reuse-Recycle

This activity is part of the **Water Attitudes** theme

## Purpose of this activity:

To introduce students to recycling programs that are becoming compulsory in our districts. This activity identifies the various symbols that are commonly used to label recyclable, recycled and non-recyclable materials.

## Key Messages:

- Landfills around Ontario are becoming overburdened.
- We can reduce our water consumption by recycling products, reducing our use of products and reusing various items in our daily routine.
- Identify commonly used recycling symbols

## Materials

- 1 set of laminated recycling symbols
- 1 blue recycling box
- 1 grey recycling box
- 1 green recycling box
- 1 garbage bin
- Assortment of recyclable and non-recyclable items

## What will I be doing?

You will identify and explain the variety of recycling symbols used for products using the laminated cards and variety of laminated cards, which have pictures of recyclable products on them. Once the students can identify the symbols, you can discuss the benefits of reusing items and reducing use of items. Use simple household or daily articles. Finally explain the difference between the recycling boxes colours and which items should be put into each box as opposed to the garbage bin.

## Procedure

1. Organize the children into two teams, and set up:
  - 1 Blue bin

- 1 Grey bin
- 1 Green bin
- 1 Garbage bin

2. Prepare two piles of various laminated cards, each with a picture of waste material
3. Have the two teams race, by setting up a relay race, seeing who can sort the garbage the quickest.
4. When the race is complete, go over why they put the material they put a specific material in a specific bin.

## Background Information

Waste, and how we choose to handle it, affects our world's environment -- that's YOUR environment, everything that surrounds you including the air, water, land, plants, and man-made things. And since by now you probably know that you need a healthy environment for your own health and happiness, you can understand why effective waste management is so important to YOU and everyone else. The waste we create has to be carefully controlled to be sure that it does not harm your environment and your health.

### Q: What exactly is "waste"?

**A:** Simply speaking, waste is anything discarded, rejected, surplused, abandoned, or otherwise released into the environment in a manner (or quantity) that could have an impact on that environment.

### Q: How can you help?

**A:** You can help by learning about and PRACTICING the three R's of waste management: [Reduce](#), [reuse](#), and [recycle](#)! Practicing all three of these activities every day is not only important for a healthy environment, but it can also be fun too. So let's take a minute right now to learn more about waste and waste management, so you can become a key player in making our world a safe and healthy place.

### Reduce

Reduce/Reduction: to make something smaller or use less, resulting in a smaller amount of waste. "Source reduction" is reducing waste before you purchase it, or

by purchasing products that are not wasteful in their packaging or use. A key part of waste "reduction" is "conservation" - using natural resources wisely, and using less than usual in order avoid waste.

You can practice reduction by selecting products that do not have to be added to landfills or the waste stream in general. This is really easy to do...

- First and foremost, urge your parents to buy and use less! If all the other people on the Earth used as much "stuff" as we do in the United States, there would need to be three to five times more space just to hold and sustain everybody ... WOW! So 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 to items where disposal is difficult or could be particularly dangerous to our environment, such as paint and chemicals (cleaners, pesticides, etc.).
- Start making wise "package" selections. Why is it important to consider how something is "packaged" when you consider what to buy? You can reduce waste by selecting products that are not wasteful in their "packaging". The package surrounding the product really only needs to be designed to protect the product from damage, keep it clean and sanitary, and present product information. Yet many manufacturers make the packaging far more elaborate (and expensive!) than necessary with the hope that it will attract your attention or give the appearance that the product inside is better than it's competitors. So keep the following package-related tips in mind no matter what you are buying.
- *Precycle* by purchasing products in materials/packaging that can be readily [recycled](#). Flashy and fun packaging costs more, usually adds little or no value to the product, and (worst of all!) can do considerable harm to our environment by creating more waste or making waste disposal harder. So whenever you have a choice, put plain and recyclable packages high on your list to reduce packaging waste in our environment.
- Avoid single-serve containers whenever possible. You can buy juice or water in large recyclable bottles or cans and then divide it up into smaller portions in reusable, washable containers as you need it at home or to take with you. And if you want to take juice or water with you on your [bike rides](#) or to the gym, just take it along in your own reusable sports bottle. When buying bottled water, first determine if

you really even need to buy bottled (packaged) water. City water (and clean well water) is usually just as healthy, much cheaper, and may even be safer than bottled water products.

- Think BIG! Buying in "bulk" (*a large amount that is not divided into separate containers*) gives you the best "product to package" ratio. Many stores allow shoppers to scoop out the amount they need of bulk goods like nuts or coffee. This considerably reduces waste and packaging materials. Or you can buy in bulk by selecting bigger quantities in a single box or package -- for example, buy the largest box of toothpaste, dishwasher detergent, or cereal, rather than a lot of small boxes. This not only reduces the waste (from having to throw out the old containers) but it will also save you money. Packaging is expensive, so buying in larger volumes reduces the unit cost.
- Buy concentrates rather than diluted products- the result is less waste for disposal when it is empty.
- 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. And don't forget to take your old plastic and paper bags back to the grocery store for reuse or recycling. Most grocery stores have convenient paper and plastic recycling bins located near the entrance.
- Use durable goods longer. Durable goods are sturdy things like furniture or household appliances that can (and should) be used for many years. You can save money and reduce waste by keeping these items longer and repairing them when they break, rather than buying new ones.
- Start a garden. Food that you grow yourself does not have to be "processed" or "packaged", and no fossil fuels are needed to get it to the store and then to your house.
- Start a compost or [vermiculture](#) to transform your household garbage (food wastes, coffee grounds, etc), into a rich earth-like material that can be added to a garden to help plants grow. Grass, leaves, paper, and some other types of food can naturally decay and turn into compost, and that compost can then be put to good use in your garden. You can also help your family replace lawns with mulched gardens that are just as pretty, but are better for our environment.

### Reuse

You can "reuse" materials in their original form instead of throwing them away, or pass those materials on to others who could use them too! Remember, one man's trash is another man's treasure! Here are some examples of reuse ...

- Take along washable cups or travel mugs instead of disposables; a lot of restaurants and convenient stores will be glad to fill or refill your own mug.
- When you do use disposables like plastic cups, plates, utensils, and plastic food storage bags, don't throw them away! Wash and reuse them -- most of them will last for a long time with many uses. They may not cost much to replace, but it doesn't make any more sense to throw away those things than it does to throw away your bicycle after one use.
- And speaking of bicycles (or other durable goods like washers, dryers, etc.) -- why not repair them rather than replace them when they break? This is another form of "reuse". New is not always better, nor is it always necessary. You'll be helping your environment, but your wallet will thank you too!
- When you do decide to replace something large and "reusable", be sure to donate the old one to charitable outlets like Goodwill, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Vietnam Veterans, and the many others that are probably in your area. Most of the time the item can be repaired by those groups, and then redistributed into other homes rather than landfills.
- Hold a yard sale or give-away. And ask your neighbors to join in too -- this shares the work and increases the number of unused things that can find new homes and new uses. And your local recycling/solid waste office may run a "swap shop" at a recycling centers --
- When you do need to purchase something, check those yard sales and charitable outlets first to see if they have what you need before selecting something new.
- Use cloth gift bags and stop ripping the paper off gifts! If you remove the wrapping paper carefully, you can use it again, and there's nothing wrong with doing just that! And don't forget to use canvas or cloth bags when shopping so you don't need to make the choice between "paper or plastic."
- Use washable table napkins instead of paper napkins -- cloth napkins are usually much larger and more absorbent than paper products, and they can dress up your dinner table too!
- If you have a new little brother or sister, tell your mom or dad to use reusable cotton diapers rather

than velcro-strapped disposable ones. Check the phone book and look for a diaper service that sells them. You might be able to save a lot of money by using reuseable diapers.

## Recycle

Recycling occurs when you save and take reusable materials to places where they can be remade into either the same product or new products, rather than to just toss them in the trash. Making new items from recycled ones also takes fewer energy and other resources than making products from brand new materials.

Just about anything in your home (or office or school, etc.) that cannot be reused CAN be recycled into something else. You'd be amazed what can be done with a recycled product ...a recycled soda bottle, for example, can be made into T-shirts, combs, or hundreds of other plastic goods that can be used for many years. Even your brand new computer case might be made from ordinary recycled plastics. And paper products can take on different forms as well -- an old phone book or coloring book might become one of your school books or a composition notebook.

Your recycling mission is not impossible! In fact, it is very simple:

Don't throw away anything that can be recycled!

Here is a list of things you should always recycle (or reuse!) ...

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| • Acid Batteries                        | • Oil                      |
| • Aluminum Cans                         | • Paint                    |
| • Building Materials                    | • Paper                    |
| • Cardboard                             | • Plastic Bags             |
| • Chemicals                             | • Plastic Bottles          |
| • Electronic equipment                  | • Steel Cans               |
| • Glass (particularly bottles and jars) | • Tires                    |
| • Lead                                  | • White Goods (Appliances) |
| • Magazines                             | • Wood                     |
| • Metal                                 | • Writing/Copy Paper       |
| • Newspaper                             | • Yard Waste               |
|   | • Pop Can Tabs             |

## Review Questions

Q: What does it mean to "Reduce"? Give an example.

A: To reduce means to make something smaller or use less, resulting in a smaller amount of waste. An example could be anything (not buying bottled water, etc.)

Q: What does it mean to "Reuse"? Give an example.

A: To reuse something means to elect reusing an old item rather than buying a new one. An example could be fixing a bike, rather than buying a new one.

Q: What does it mean to "Recycle"? What new things can you make by recycling plastic bottles?

A: To recycle means to save and take reusable materials to places where they can be remade into either the same product or new products. You can make things like t-shirts, computer tower shells, toys and other things by recycling plastic bottles

Q: How does NOT recycling effect the environment?

A: Lack of recycling could lead to a series of things like: build up of trash in dumpsites and forcing the exploitation of raw materials to make new products.

Q: What are ways YOU can help practice the 3 R's in your very own home?

A: You can help practice the 3 R's at home by doing things like: sorting the right waste into the right bins, start a compost pile, tell your parents to hold yard sales to get rid of the things you don't want, use reusable diapers if you a have a little brother or sister, etc.

### Clean Up procedures

- Count all the laminated recycling symbols
- Empty the recycling and garbage bins and place them all in the same place to prevent losing them
- Count all the laminated picture cards and put them in a pile and put an elastic band around them to prevent losing any
- Put the cards with the bins, so that everything can be neat and organized for the next group

