



Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.

Practice the 3 Rs Inside and Out






Every day, you have the power to help your community, now and for years to come.

Join your friends and neighbors in practicing the 3 Rs—reduce, reuse, and recycle. You will conserve natural resources and prevent climate change. Most important, you ensure that future generations have clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, as well as forests, fields, and beaches to enjoy.

Where do you start? Reduce the amount of waste you produce. Buy only what you need and use. Then, instead of throwing something away, reuse or recycle it. You probably already reuse your children's clothes and shoes when they outgrow them. You pass them along to family or friends, sell them at a yard or garage sale, or donate them to charity.

What about things you cannot reuse? That's where recycling comes in. Recyclable items are collected, reprocessed, and used again to make new products. Make throwing an item away a last resort—when it cannot be reused or recycled.

Practicing the 3 Rs makes a difference. Recycling just one can, donating just one old cell phone, or even buying just one product with reduced packaging is an act of good will for the environment and your community. This guide offers tips on how to incorporate the 3 Rs in everyday life. It shows how your choices can make a difference, now and for years to come.




For parties, picnics, and barbecues, try using reusable plates, cups, silverware, tablecloths, and napkins instead of disposable ones. Disposable tableware creates mountains of waste and releases contaminants into the environment as it breaks down in landfills.


In the KITCHEN

The kitchen is the center of your home. Start with small changes here to make it the core of your reducing, reusing, and recycling habits. Here are some ways to reduce the amount of waste you produce, reuse what you can, and recycle items that might normally end up in the trash.

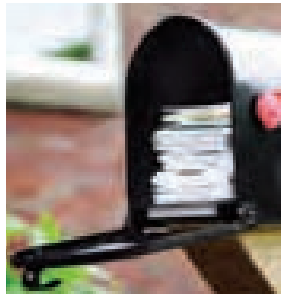
- **Compost organic waste.** Peels, skins, and trimmings from fruits and vegetables; coffee grounds; egg shells; tea bags; and lots of other kitchen waste can be combined to make compost, which you can use as natural, organic fertilizer on your lawn and garden.
- **Recycle food packaging.** Most community recycling programs accept cereal and cake mix boxes, beverage bottles and cans, and steel soup, vegetable, and fruit cans. Learn the different materials your community's recycling program accepts at www.Earth911.org.
- **Buy in bulk or concentrates.** Buying bulk sizes of the products you use often or in large quantities saves you money. Bulk and concentrated goods also come with less packaging, which prevents waste.
- **Choose fresh and local instead of packaged food.** When you buy fresh produce, you not only enjoy food that tastes better and is often healthier, you eliminate cans, boxes, or bags that you have to throw away or recycle.



The organic material in your compost stores carbon, keeping it from entering the atmosphere as a greenhouse gas. Nutrients in compost encourage healthy bacterial growth in soil, enabling plants to grow strong and healthy the natural way.



Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to keep a 100-watt light bulb burning for almost 4 hours or to run your television for 3 hours. Every time you turn on the television, think about how your recycled cans have made that energy use sustainable.¹



On average, each American receives 41.5 pounds of unsolicited promotional mail each year and spends 70 hours dealing with it. Opting out of receiving this mail saves time and means the resources that would otherwise be used to create it can be used elsewhere.²

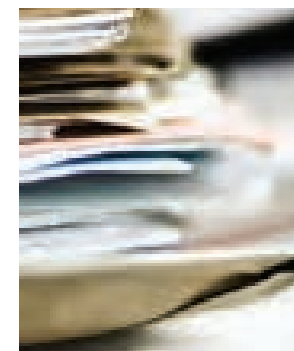
In the HOME OFFICE

Reducing, reusing, and recycling in your home office doesn't have to be a lot of work. Use these tips to incorporate the 3 Rs into your routine, and see how you can enrich your workspace and your community.

- **Bank online.** When you receive electronic account statements and pay bills online, you reduce paper waste. Keep a CD backup of important documents, instead of printing them, to conserve paper. If you must print documents, print double-sided and cut your paper use in half.
- **eCycle electronics.** Make an effort to donate electronics that you no longer use and are less than 5 years old. Donating usable electronics helps those who lack access to new technologies and opens the door for growth and opportunity to people who are less fortunate, closing the gap on the "digital divide." Find an organization that accepts donated electronics by visiting www.epa.gov/plugin.
- **Opt out of unsolicited promotional mail.** Visit the Direct Mail Association (DMA) at www.dmachoice.org to opt out of receiving unsolicited promotional mail. This service requires a one-time fee of \$1.00.
- **Opt out of telephone directories.** Go to YellowPageGoesGreen.org to opt out of receiving white or yellow page telephone directories.
- **Create a home mailing center.** Save boxes and packing materials such as foam peanuts or bubble wrap and reuse them.



Your actions make a difference. Recycling white paper in your office for 1 year can save almost 26 gallons of oil, 273 kilowatt hours of energy, 467 gallons of water, and more than 1 tree. You can also prevent 4 pounds of air pollution from entering the atmosphere.³





Recycling just 2 gallons of used oil can generate enough electricity to power the average American household for almost 24 hours.⁴

In the GARAGE

For most of us, the garage serves many purposes. We use it to store tools and lawn and garden equipment, organize home improvement projects, and protect our bikes and cars. Put the 3 Rs into practice by using your garage to serve yet another purpose—promoting the health of the environment and your community—with these simple tips.

- **Rent tools and appliances.** Consider how often you will use the next tool you are about to buy. If it is something you will rarely use, rent it at your local home improvement store or nursery instead of buying it.
- **Recycle used oil.** Motor oil from your car, truck, motorcycle, boat, or lawn mower can be re-refined into new oil, reconditioned and processed into fuel oils, or used as a raw material for the petroleum industry. Imagine: if all do-it-yourself oil changers in America recycled their used oil, it would be enough for more than 50 million cars a year.⁵
- **Organize a garage sale.** Host or organize a neighborhood garage sale. Sell all the usable items that would otherwise end up in the trash. Offer broken, but fixable, items for free or at a very low price. Set an example for sustainable living in your community.

Help create a home for someone in your community. If you are remodeling your home, local charities could benefit from what you no longer need. Organizations such as Habitat for Humanity accept donations of housing materials and tools that are in good, working condition. Check with your local government or community organizations to find out what they accept.



Donate your old car or truck to charity for reuse. Donated vehicles are usually sold to raise money for charities in your community or used to help those who cannot afford a car of their own. Plus, your donation may be tax-deductible.



In the BACKYARD

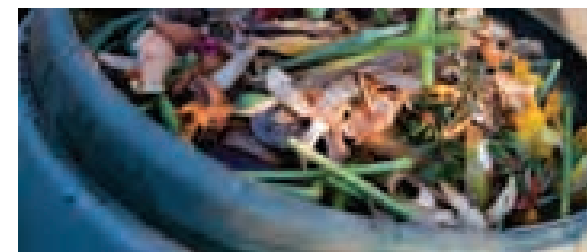
Your backyard—your piece of the environment—is an ideal place to practice the 3 Rs. It is also the place where the impact of your efforts can be most visible. Use the following ideas to incorporate the 3 Rs into your backyard activities.

- **Greenscape your lawn.** Greenscaping is a set of landscaping practices that maximize the health of lawns and plants while minimizing the environmental risks posed by some traditional practices. Greenscaping promotes the use of bio-based and organic products, native plants, and sustainable water management to prevent soil erosion, water runoff, and other negative consequences of traditional landscaping. Best of all, it's easy to do. Learn the 5 simple steps to greenscaping at www.epa.gov/greenskapes.
- **Buy recycled.** Purchase lawn furniture, decking, and other outdoor products that contain recycled content. These items include welcome mats made from recycled flip-flops, birdhouses crafted from reclaimed wood, or patio furniture made from recycled plastic. Buying recycled-content products makes it economically viable to collect recyclables and conserve resources. Search the 8 product categories for recycled-content vendors providing products you use: visit www.epa.gov/cpg.

The next time you mow your lawn, grasscycle. Leave the clippings on your lawn to provide mulch and nutrients.



Create a compost pile of your organic, biodegradable kitchen waste and apply finished compost to your lawn and garden. Composting does more than improve the quality of your soil: it keeps carbon from entering the atmosphere as a greenhouse gas, diverts waste from landfills, and eliminates the creation of new waste by reducing the need to purchase fertilizers and pesticides. Learn more about how to compost and its benefits at www.epa.gov/composting.

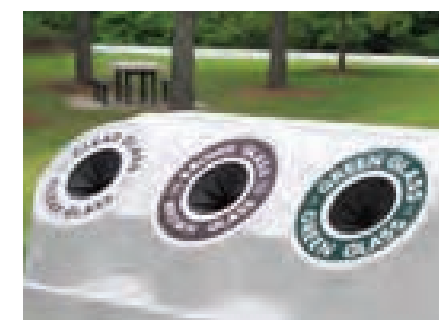


On the GO

The pace of work and family life often has Americans on the go. Fortunately, it is easier than ever to take the 3 Rs with you as you commute, run errands, work, and travel. Small changes to incorporate the 3 Rs in your on-the-go habits can make a positive difference for the environment. Use the ideas on this page to think about ways you can make a difference wherever you are.

- **Bring your own bag.** Of course, it's easy to forget to bring your own bag when you are in a hurry, so keep one stashed in your car or bike pack as a backup. Consider buying a reusable bag for groceries or other shopping to avoid creating waste.
- **Have trash, will travel (with it).** Sometimes it is difficult to avoid creating waste while on the go—receipts, soda cans, and other waste can add up quickly. Look for recycling bins near trash cans, and remember that grocery stores often have recycling centers. Or, keep a bag in your car for recyclable waste and empty it into your home recycling bin when you return.
- **Drive smart.** If you rent a car while traveling or participate in a car-sharing program at home, try to choose one that runs on alternative fuel or gets high gas mileage.
- **Plan your route and combine errands.** Combine errands into one trip instead of making many small trips. By planning your route to complete your errands, you can cut down on time and gas.

When you leave your house, unplug the electronics in your home to save energy and cut pollution. Electronics that are plugged in continue to draw a small amount of power, even when they are turned off. Make “unplugging” easy by using a power strip: use the switch on the power strip to cut all power to your electronics when you are away from home.



Recycling centers are everywhere! Whether you are visiting a museum, going to a sporting or cultural event, or going shopping, you are likely to find a convenient place to recycle waste. If you create waste while on the go, search for a recycling bin before using the trash.

More and more hotels are becoming green by reducing the amount of waste they create and by implementing recycling programs to divert unavoidable waste. Hotels like these recognize that practicing the 3 Rs makes sense for the environment and for business. Before making a reservation for your next vacation or business trip, ask the hotel about its green practices.



How Do I RECYCLE?

- **Learn what type of recycling program your community offers.** Visit your local government's Web site to learn more about recycling in your area. Find out where and when your local recycling program accepts recyclable products and materials, or which businesses in your area recycle large or bulky items such as computers.
- **Clean containers and sort materials.** Remove lids and rinse food and drink containers to keep pests away. You might also need to remove labels on jars and cans or flatten boxes to save space. In addition, some local programs will accept all materials in one bin, while others require sorting materials into different bins for glass, plastic, and paper.

Where Do I RECYCLE?

- **Hazardous materials.** Common household products may contain hazardous substances that can catch fire, react, corrode or leak toxins, or even explode under certain circumstances. These products are known as household hazardous waste (HHW) and can pose risks to people and the environment if not used, stored, and disposed of properly. Most cities and counties hold special collection events for hazardous waste, paint, medical waste, or electronics waste. Contact your local government to find out when a collection event is being held near you.
- **Miscellaneous items.** Many retailers accept some materials for recycling, plastic and paper bags, cell phones, and even CFLs. Visit www.Earth911.org to find out your closest recycling locations.



Taking Your Efforts FURTHER

Re-think your world. Valuable materials are all around us: everything we produce, buy, and use is a resource. By practicing the 3 Rs, we make the best use of the resources already available at our fingertips. These actions translate into real change for the environment and our communities, now and for years to come, from reducing greenhouse gas emissions to supporting families in need. To make a lifelong impact, begin to rethink your world: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Take action. If a recycling program does not exist in your community, take action to start one. There are many resources online that can help you, but here are a few tips to get you started:

1. Obtain support from community associations and/or building management to ensure cooperation from all parties;
2. Form a “green team” to coordinate, implement, and manage the program;
3. Focus on recyclable materials that appear in your waste stream the most to identify the materials you want to be collected; and
4. Emphasize the cost savings and energy efficiency of recycling, and enlist your neighbors to support the effort.

Encourage businesses to visit www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve for information on how to start a recycling program.

Spread the word. You are the best example of how easy it is to practice the 3 Rs and the best resource for information about how important it is to start making a difference. Tell your family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues how one person can make a difference. The benefits to your community and the environment multiply as good ideas become good habits.



Citations

¹ *The State of California Department of Conservation*
www.consrv.ca.gov/DOR/rre/kids/RecyclingFactsFun.pdf

² www.41POUNDS.org

³ *The State Washington Office of Financial Management*
www.ofm.wa.gov/sustainability/resources/source_impacts.pdf

Data were manipulated by a factor of 15 in order to determine the annual environmental savings for the average office worker.

⁴ *Used Motor Oil Collection and Recycling - American Petroleum Institute*
www.recycleoil.org

⁵ *US Environmental Protection Agency*
<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/materials/usedoil/campgn/en-dumpbr.pdf>

EPA Online Resources

Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery
www.epa.gov/epawaste

Greenscapes Program
www.epa.gov/greenscapes

Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG) Program
www.epa.gov/cpg

Composting
www.epa.gov/composting

Plug-In to eCycling Partnership
www.epa.gov/plug-in

Resource Conservation
www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve

