

# The 4 R's of Waste Reduction

- **Reduce:** Waste prevention, or "source reduction," means consuming and throwing away less. Source reduction actually prevents the generation of waste in the first place, so it is the most preferred method of waste management and goes a long way toward protecting the environment.
  - **Reuse:** Reusing items -- by repairing them, donating them to charity and community groups, or selling them -- also reduces waste. Reusing products, when possible, is even better than recycling because the item does not need to be reprocessed before it can be used again.
  - **Recycle:** Recycling transforms materials that would otherwise become waste into valuable resources. In addition, it generates a host of environmental, financial, and social benefits. Materials like glass, metal, plastics, and paper are collected, separated and sent to facilities that can process them into new materials or products.
  - **Rebuy:** In order to make recycling economically feasible, we must buy recycled products and packaging. When we buy recycled products, we create an economic incentive for recyclable materials to be collected, manufactured, and marketed as new products. Remember, you're not recycling unless you're buying recycled products.
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## 1. Reduce

Take a look at what you're consuming. Sure, it's great to buy things and then recycle them, but why not skip the purchase in the first place? Reducing the amount of trash generated at the source is the number one waste management priority of the UC Davis R4 Program. A person or a department may reduce the number of items which need disposal by considering certain things before making purchases. Some people call this "recycling." Some suggestions for source reduction include:

- Avoid purchasing disposable goods such as paper towels and disposable razors.
- Buy in bulk when possible and use your own container.
- Buy products made with minimal or recyclable packaging.
- Buy products packaged in materials which are recyclable, such as cardboard cartons versus polystyrene cartons, or glass bottles and not squeezable containers.
- Avoid plastic packaging which cannot be recycled.
- Use concentrated products, such as powdered detergent, rather than liquids in plastic bottles.
- Buy products made with recycled materials.
- Take your own bags to the store.
- Carry a reusable mug.
- Use electronic mail.
- Make double-sided copies.
- Use one-sided paper for scratch paper and note pads.
- Use rechargeable batteries.
- Use long-life fluorescent light bulbs (compact fluorescents).
- Voice your product packaging preferences to store managers and business owners.
- Rethink, "Do I really need this item?"
- Consider a new product's expected durability and ease of repair in addition to its purchase price when you are shopping.

## 2. Reuse

Acquiring products that have been used or can be reused is another environmentally sound choice as well as a cost saver. Here are just a few ways that you can reduce:

- Purchase and use a reusable coffee mug or cup.
- Remember your reusable shopping bags when you go shopping
- Use the unwritten side of paper as scratch paper, or to print rough drafts or e-mails. This small, but valuable, technique saves paper.
- Reuse non-recyclable packing materials such as bubble wrap, Styrofoam peanuts, and corrugated boxes.
- Get your whole family involved in coming up with multiple creative uses for "single use" products. One perfect example is the one gallon milk jug. After being properly cleaned, it can be used to store and freeze water. It can also be made into a birdhouse, piggy bank, plant seedling "greenhouse", berry picking basket, litter box shovel, or used as a storage container.

## 3. Recycling Facts and Figures

- In 1999, recycling and composting activities prevented about 64 million tons of material from ending up in landfills and incinerators. Today, this country recycles 28 percent of its waste, a rate that has almost doubled during the past 15 years.
- While recycling has grown in general, recycling of specific materials has grown even more drastically: 42 percent of all paper, 40 percent of all plastic soft drink bottles, 55 percent of all aluminum beer and soft drink cans, 57 percent of all steel packaging, and 52 percent of all major appliances are now recycled.
- Twenty years ago, only one curbside recycling program existed in the United States, which collected several materials at the curb. By 2006, about 8,660 curbside programs had sprouted up across the nation. As of 2005, about 500 materials recovery facilities had been established to process the collected materials.
- Recycling saves natural resources by creating less air and water pollution during the manufacturing process and reducing the amount of land that is converted to landfills.
- The recycling process saves money because the materials collected can be sold instead of paying to have them brought to a landfill.

Information provided by <http://www.epa.gov>

## 4. Rebuy: Purchase recycle goods



Those 3 arrows you keep seeing everywhere were designed to be symbolic of the 3 steps involved with recycling: collection, reprocessing, and repurchasing. Rebuying goods shows your support of recycling and makes the work we have all put in worthwhile, not to mention completing the recycling loop!

- Donate goods that you don't need any more
- Patronize used goods stores such as used bicycle shops, and used baby clothing, furniture and clothing stores.
- Use local online used goods services such as the local paper and Craig's list ([phoenix.craigslist.org](http://phoenix.craigslist.org))