Reduce Your Waste

Reduction prevents waste from being created in the first place. It reduces the amount or toxicity of waste at the source. Because source reduction actually prevents the generation of waste in the first place, it is the most preferable method of waste management.

We can reduce waste by purchasing durable, long-lasting goods and making them last longer by repairing them when necessary. Reusing products and packaging, and reducing the amount of packaging that is discarded. It is also about looking for and asking for products and packaging that are as free of toxics as possible.

Reducing waste can be as simple as reaching for a cloth napkin instead of a paper one. It can be as complex as redesigning a product to use fewer raw materials in production, have a longer life or be used again after its original use is completed.

There are many ways to avoid single-use products and to reduce waste generated at home, school and work.

Reducing Waste at School

In Malta over 100 schools are participating in a waste management project which is financed by WasteServ.

- **Buy recycled paper and use both sides**, and then recycle it at the bring-in sites so it can be re-used again.
- **Start up or join an environmental club at school**. In Malta, by joining the Eko Skola scheme run by Nature Trust, schools can improve both the environment at school as well as in the school’s locality.
- **Get informed**, and think of things you can do to make a difference.
- **Ask your school to use items such as reusable** cafeteria trays.
- **Encourage your school to adopt a ‘No to plastic bags’ policy** where students bring their snack in a lunch box.

Reduce at Work

- **Examine your production and procedures** to see where waste can be reduced. Significant savings in supplies and disposal costs can result.
- **Establish and support a collection program for recyclables.**
- **Encourage employees to bring their own washable mugs** to work or consider
providing mugs as a gift.

• Next time your company buys a photocopier, get one that makes **two-sided copies**.

• **Use electronic mail to send memos**, or route memos to staff members rather than making a paper copy for each person. You can even add a message to your emails asking your contacts to consider the environmental responsibility before printing an email.

• **Use re-used envelopes** for internal mail.

• **Use direct deposit** for your paycheck.

• **Ask suppliers to deliver materials in returnable/reusable containers**.

• **Use a thermos for beverages**, reusable containers for snacks, a washable bag or plastic container for sandwiches and a cloth napkin.

• **Pack it all in a reusable cloth bag** or lunchbox.

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**Reduce at Home**

• **Use washable utensils** and dishes for picnics, outdoor parties and barbecues.

• **Use cloth napkins**. Reach for a sponge or dishcloth instead of a paper towel to clean up.

• **Use internet banking** for paying bills.

• **Use up existing home chemicals**, like paint, paint stripper, paint thinner and other chemicals, before buying more. You'll save money by not having to buy new products.

• **Choose rechargeable batteries** when you have to use a battery-powered appliance or toy. Keep in mind that after rechargeable batteries will no longer accept a charge, they may not be put in the garbage but must be collected separately. Battery bins are available at various outlets, local councils and schools.

**Buy concentrates, returnable, large containers or products in bulk**

• **Buy products such as milk, water and beer in returnable containers**. Products sold in these containers often cost less than those sold in other types of containers because the containers don't need to be replaced after each use. Reusable containers are carefully sanitized by the distributor, refilled and returned to the
• **Buy the largest-size food packages** that you can use without spoilage.
• **Buy fresh produce without packaging** whenever spoilage won't be a problem. Avoid using plastic bags for purchases such as a couple of cucumbers, bulbs of garlic or lemons.
• **Buy economy-size packages of household products** you use regularly such as laundry soap, shampoo, baking soda, pet foods, kitty litter, etc.
• **When buying paint, pesticides and other home chemicals, buy the smallest amount that you can** for your project. For household chemicals, economy sizes aren't a bargain when you add in the cost and inconvenience of disposal.
• **Buy grains, beans, cereal, pasta and other items in bulk** whenever possible. They can be kept on the shelf for a long time without spoiling. Reuse plastic or paper bags or buy a container once, then refill it from a bulk container.
• **Buy products in concentrate form** such as fruit juices and drinks, detergents, and automobile windshield washer fluid, to eliminate the need to pay for and carry a big package. Try bouillon cubes instead of canned soup stock.
• **If storage space is a concern, try sharing bulk purchases** with friends and neighbours. You also can extend the "buying-in-bulk" concept to mail order purchases. Place an order with a group of people to save more on shipping costs and reduce packaging waste.
• **If you currently buy food in single servings**, try buying the next largest size and storing the leftovers in sturdy reusable containers.

**Select products with the least wasteful packaging**

The total amount of packaging waste stream has more and more. New products introduced in "convenience" packages are increasing yearly. The cost of this packaging is often passed on to the consumer. This means that buying less-packaged products can save you money.

• **Avoid buying goods with unnecessary packaging**, such as "blister-packs" that wrap items in plastic seals with cardboard backing, or "double-packaging," such as a bottle inside a box.
• **Avoid packaging made with mixed materials**, such as paper laminated with plastic or foil. Given two equivalent products, choose the one packaged more simply, with no packaging or with a single, reusable or recyclable material.

**Buy, maintain and repair durable products**

• **Avoiding disposables** goes hand-in-hand with buying durable and repairable products. Long-lasting clothing, tires, appliances and other items may cost more at first, but they usually save money in the long run. They need fewer repairs and will not have to be replaced as frequently.
• **Select energy-efficient appliances** and electronic equipment with good warranties and service contracts. Check consumer publications for articles on products with a record of high consumer satisfaction, good value and good repair records.
• **Keep appliances in good working order.** Follow manufacturers' suggestions for proper operation and maintenance. Before throwing a product away, check into repair and warranty options. This is often less expensive and more energy efficient than buying a new replacement.

• **Buy digital** thermometers, digital thermostats and standard light switches (rather than silent switches) for your home. These don't contain mercury.

• **Buy long-lasting tires and maintain them.** To extend tire life, check tire pressure once a month; follow the manufacturer's recommendations for upkeep and routine tire rotation; call auto repair shops to inquire about purchasing retreated or remanufactured tires instead of new ones.

• **When possible, mend clothes and repair worn shoes,** boots, handbags and briefcases. Shoe repair is often offered at stores where shoes are sold.

• **Purchase durable furniture,** luggage, sporting goods and tools.

• **Buy energy-efficient fluorescent lights** rather than incandescent ones. They last longer, reduce your electric bill, reduce the amount and toxicity of solid waste and reduce the need to generate electricity. Although they must be disposed of separately, the use of fluorescents instead of incandescent bulbs reduces the total amount of mercury released into the environment because they require significantly less energy to produce the same amount of light.