

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

The 'reduce, reuse and recycle' message has been around for many years. Practising the three Rs of waste management—reduce, reuse, and recycle—is not only important for a healthy environment, but it also can be fun. Here's how to do it.

- ### REDUCE

 - Purchase products in materials/packaging that can be readily recycled. So whenever you have a choice, put plain and recyclable packages in your trolley.
 - Avoid single-serve containers. You can buy drinks and certain foods in large recyclable bottles or cans then divide it up into reusable, washable containers as required at home.
 - Before you buy bottled water, find out if you really need it. Town water is usually just as healthy, much cheaper, and may even be safer than bottled water products.
 - 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 your purchases. And don't forget to take your old plastic and paper bags back to the supermarket for reuse or recycling. Most supermarkets have convenient paper and plastic recycling bins located near the entrance.
 - Buying in bulk gives the best product to package ratio. 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 series of small boxes. Packaging is expensive, so buying in larger volumes reduces the unit cost.
 - Use durable goods longer. Durable goods are sturdy things such as furniture or household appliances that can 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 used to get it to the store and then to your house.
 - Start a compost bin to transform your household food waste into a rich earth-like material that can be added to a garden to help plants grow. Grass, leaves, paper and some types of food can naturally decay and turn into compost, and that compost can then be put to good use in your garden. Replace lawns with mulched gardens that are just as pretty, and are better for our environment.
- ### REUSE

 - Use washable cups or travel mugs instead of disposables; a lot of cafes will be willing to fill or refill your own mug.
 - When you do use disposables such as 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.
 - Why not repair bicycles or other durable goods such as washers, dryers, rather than replace them when they break? This is another form of reuse. New is not always better, nor is it always necessary.
 - When you do decide to replace something large and reusable, be sure to donate the old one to charitable outlets, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and others that are in your area. Most of the time the item can be repaired by those groups, then redistributed into other homes rather than being sent to landfills.
 - Hold a garage sale or give-away. Ask your neighbours 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 office may run a 'swap shop' at recycling centres. When you do need to purchase something, check garage sales and charitable outlets first to see if they have what you need before buying something brand new.
 - Use washable table napkins instead of paper serviettes—cloth napkins are usually much larger and more absorbent than paper products, and they can dress up your dinner table too!
- ### RECYCLE

Here is a list of things you may be able to recycle:

 - Aluminium cans
 - Cardboard
 - Electronic equipment
 - Glass (particularly bottles and jars)
 - Magazines
 - Metal
 - Newspapers
 - Paper
 - Plastic bags
 - Plastic bottles
 - Steel cans
 - Writing/copy paper
 - Green waste (leaves, grass).

Ask your local council about what can be recycled in your local area. Some items can be collected by a particular recycling centre or be picked up by council. Look on the council's website for further information on special recycling days.

Helpful hints, tips and facts to inspire students, staff and families!

How long does it take for my waste to decompose in landfill?

You may be surprised to find out just how long it takes one small item to decompose and be gone from landfill sites. Think about what you throw out as rubbish each week and check how long those particular items take to disintegrate. Now think about the fact that everyone in the world is throwing out similar things each week. That's an awful lot of rubbish that can take weeks, months or even years to be gone from our environment. Some things never decompose! Check out the list below.

| Waste item | Length of time it takes to decompose |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Paper towel | 2-4 weeks |
| Banana peel | 3-4 weeks |
| Newspaper | 6 weeks |
| Cardboard | 2 months |
| Apple core | 2 months |
| Paper | 2 months |
| Orange peels | 6 months |
| Woollen sock | 1-5 years |
| Milk cartons | 5 years |
| Cigarette butts | 10-12 years |
| Leather shoes | 25-40 years |
| Steel cans | 50 years |
| Aluminium cans | 200-500 years |
| Plastic bottles | 450 years |
| Disposable nappies | 550 years |
| Fishing line | 600 years |
| Plastic bags | 20-1000 years |
| Glass | 1-2 million years |
| Styrofoam | Never breaks down! |

Less to Landfill Challenge (LtL) - an excellent separation system!

This Separation System is in every classroom and staff area at Prospect North Primary School to help them with the Challenge, and comprises

- 3 shelf unit - approx \$15 (homewares store)
- 3 tubs - approx \$4 each (\$12)
- 1 sealable bucket for food scraps - approx \$8 (hardware store)
- Labels and mini bin– Less to Landfill resources

Total cost - approx = \$35
Savings– significant reduction in collection of materials for landfill!

An ice-cream container for items students are unsure about is placed next to the mini bin, with daily LtL tally sheet underneath, for marking off as the mini bin is filled!

An ice-cream container for clean plastic (not contaminated with food) is included in the Recycle tub. These are squashed into empty bread bags and taken to the soft plastic bin at the local supermarket (metro areas only at this stage).

Recyclable items, including a milk bottle for empty glue sticks, lids and straws is included in the Recycle tub.

Empty 10c refund containers without lids and straws are placed into the Refund tub.

