



## ***Rethink Waste: Reduce***

There's a reason why the 3 R's are ordered Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Reduce comes first because it is the most important thing you can do to live a more sustainable lifestyle.

Recycling and reusing will help slow the growth of landfills, and cut down on the amount of raw materials or natural resources used in creating new products, but reducing your actual rate of consumption is the most efficient way to manage our world's growing waste problem.

The average American creates 1,600 pounds of trash each year, but this number can be drastically reduced by the strategies you use to cut excess out of your life. With just a small effort you can make a large impact.

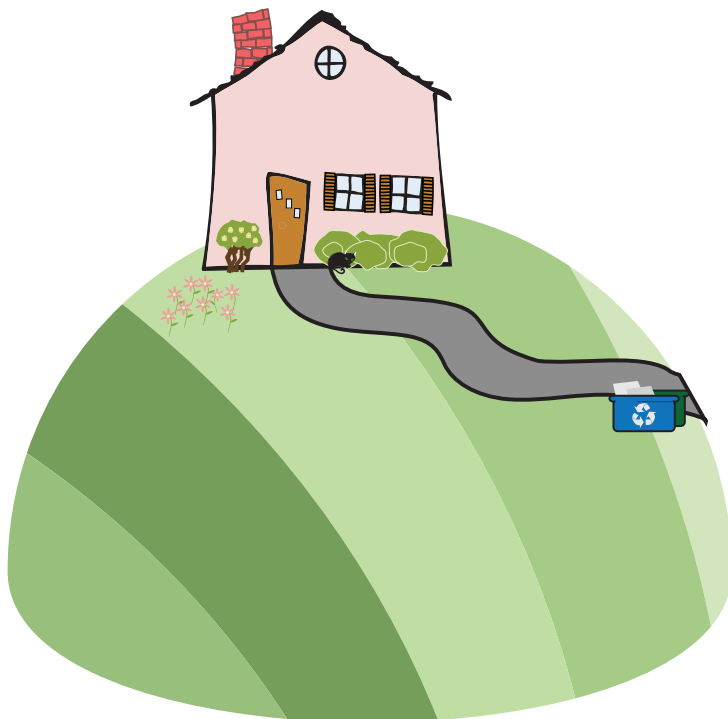
## Rethink: Buy Reusable

### Facts

Reusing items cuts down on the number of things you throw away and also how often you buy new items. Bottled water is a product that has seen enormous growth. In 1976, each person consumed 1.6 gallons of bottled water each year. Our consumption is now around 34 gallons per person (International Bottled Water Association, 2014). This number can be reduced to zero by switching from bottled water to tap water in reusable hard-plastic (polycarbonate), aluminum, or stainless steel bottles.

### Strategies

- ♻️ Buy long-lasting or reusable items, such as:
  - rechargeable batteries
  - fabric shopping bags
  - cloth napkins
  - storage containers
  - reusable water bottles
- ♻️ Buy “refills” for things you already own
  - household cleaning products
  - hand soap
  - ink cartridges



## Rethink: Reduce Packaging

### Facts

Almost one-third of the waste generated in the U.S. comes from packaging. Industry and business are responsible for most of this waste, but consumer product packaging accounts for about 15 percent of what's discarded.

### Strategies







- ♻️ Avoid excessive packaging. You can pay up to 45 percent more when you buy a product like fruit or vegetables that have already been cut up, placed on a tray, and then shrink-wrapped. Buying whole fruits or vegetables costs less, and you have less packaging to throw away.
- ♻️ Buy items in reusable or recyclable packages. Look for labels like “made from recycled materials” and “made from post-consumer recycled materials” (which means it is made from materials that have already been bought, used, and recycled).
- ♻️ Most grocery stores have consumer hot lines and customer service e-mail contacts that you can find on their websites. These services are great ways for companies to get your input as a concerned consumer. You can use these customer service lines to encourage the store to provide greener shopping options.
- ♻️ Buy from stores and companies that are making good environmental choices. Let store managers and manufacturers know that you recognize and appreciate their efforts.
- ♻️ Buy locally. Buying local reduces your carbon footprint. Less transportation and less packaging are required to get the goods to market, and you are supporting local businesses.

## Rethink: Reduce Purchases

### Facts

Buying used items means no new resources are used in production. You are reducing the flow of items into landfills, and usually you are purchasing items without excess packaging.

### Strategies

-  Purchase second-hand or gently used items from thrift stores, garage sales, or online markets such as Craigslist or Facebook marketplace.
-  Regift. Share with others the gifts you don't use and that they may enjoy.
-  Check out community "swap" groups. You can trade books, furniture, tools, and other products. To see if there are any such groups in your area, check the Freecycle Network ([freecycle.org](http://freecycle.org)).
-  Rent or borrow tools and appliances you don't use on a regular basis. Trade tools with your neighbors. See if your community has a tool library where you can borrow tools for home projects. If not, set one up.
-  Buy in bulk. For items that won't expire, buy the "family-size" container. Larger items use less packaging than smaller or individually wrapped items.
-  Use a multiuse cleaner instead of one for each room of the house. Make your own household cleaners. UGA Green Cleaning recipes are available *at*: [www.UGAgreenway.com](http://www.UGAgreenway.com).













## Rethink: Go Paperless

### Facts

Each person uses approximately one 100-foot-tall Douglas fir tree in paper and wood products per year. In 2012, paper and paperboard accounted for over 27% of the waste generated. The good news is that people are recycling over 64% of these materials.

However, it would be even better to eliminate the sources (EPA, February 2014). If 100,000 people stopped their junk mail, up to 150,000 trees would be saved each year. If a million people did this, each year close to 1.5 million trees would be saved.

### Strategies

-  Pay bills online and opt for digital banking, credit card, phone, utility, etc., statements.
-  Stop junk mail. There are a number of services available to help you. To stop solicitations from credit card companies, call **1-888-5-OPT-OUT**. If you change your mind, you can opt back in at a later date. To decrease junk mail, contact The Direct Marketing Association. You can register online for free at [www.dmchoice.org](http://www.dmchoice.org).
-  To register by mail you need to send a letter and a \$1 check to: Mail Preference Service; Direct Marketing Association; PO Box 643; Carmel, NY 10512. You can find more ways to reduce junk mail at [www.epa.gov/region1/communities/stop\\_spam.html](http://www.epa.gov/region1/communities/stop_spam.html).
-  Switch to an online newspaper and magazine subscription instead of a paper one.
-  Use the library or purchase e-books.
-  Replace paper towels with reusable cloths or rags.
-  When printing, use both sides of paper, and only print pages with information you need.
-  Send e-cards for special occasions and notifications.
-  Share photos online.
-  File your taxes electronically, save your tax information as a PDF instead of paper copies. (Remember to back up your computer for all of these electronic options!)
-  Switch to an electronic calendar, phone, or electronic notifications instead of paper notes.
-  Be sure to recycle the paper that you do generate.

## References

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