

What To Do With All That Waste?

Adapted from EarthCare article *Beyond the "Blue Box"* by U.N.I.T Productions

Reduce, Re-use and Recycle, in that order. Before you consider buying something, ask yourself if you really need it, or do you need it in this packaging? Reduce is the first and most powerful of the 3 R's. Next, ask yourself if the item can be reused in some format by someone, i.e., Re-use, the second of the 3 R's. Finally, ask yourself if the item can be recycled or does it have to go as refuse. Recycle whenever possible to avoid sending items to the landfill sites.

Some ways you can deal with waste:

1. Take re-usable bags with you when you go shopping.
2. Hold clothing exchanges (for both adults and children or for charity).
3. Make a rainbow for your school's front hall made from recycled materials to correspond with the colours of rainbow. Chicken wire is used to hold material in place. Make a mascot in school colours from recycled materials.
4. Pop tab collections. Donate the tabs to charities.
5. Ink-cartridge collections – some agencies pay for ink cartridges or plant tree seedlings. Check www.thinkgreen.com.
6. Composting- vermiculture or otherwise. Use the dirt in the school/community/home gardens.
7. Paper revolution - use both sides of paper or posters before recycling. Make scratch pads from paper used on one side only and deliver to teachers for use in the classrooms.
8. Make a butterfly garden. Take turns among classes caring for the garden. Partner with the community to care for gardens during the summer months.
9. Battery collection – collect old batteries (battery bake sales, lunches, etc.) and return them to a disposal centre rather than throwing them into the garbage where they can be very harmful.
10. Create junk monsters from recycled materials. Use aluminum cans to create a globe or other structural art. Make a tin man or robot from aluminum cans or pails. Check www.aluminouspublishing.com.
11. Cut plastic pop bottles in half and use as planters for seeds. When its big enough plant your seedling in the garden and watch it grow all summer.

12. Save gas and reduce pollution - start a walk to school or carpool program with your friends.
13. Save energy – turn off light and computers from the wall.
14. Hold a chalk-a-thon - draw environmental messages on your schoolyard. Make sure this is alright with your principal first.
15. Hold a book exchange or book sale.
16. Hold a used toy exchange or sale.
17. Make your lunch and snacks litterless everyday. Make homemade granola bars (look online for an organic recipe) and bring them in reusable containers.
18. Send the school newsletter on- line to as many homes as possible.
19. Have your teachers allow you to submit as many assignments as possible on-line or on scrap paper.
20. Choose to buy products (food and other) that are in recyclable packaging.
21. Make “Lug-a mug” a routine practice, no matter what the activity/event. Its great for your hot chocolate in the winter and juice in the summer.
22. Make it easy to comply. Make sure that there are recycle bins next to garbage cans in your school and at home.
23. Have a recycle race or competition. Prepare a garbage can or bag with a mixture of recyclables and refuse. Have teams of students and teachers complete to sort the refuse. Provide rubber gloves!