



# WASTE NOT

## Reduce

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Reducing the waste stream is the most significant of all waste management options. To reduce the waste you produce usually requires lifestyle changes. The first step is to reduce the amount you purchase. If you need a quart of paint, don't buy a gallon and then throw away unused paint 6 months later. One way to simplify life is to accumulate less. You can also reduce the waste you generate by becoming a better environmental shopper and by disposing of waste in environmentally acceptable ways.

Select products that are durable, easy to repair, energy efficient, and functional. Choose products that have good warranties and are nonpolluting in both manufacture and use.

## Packaging tips

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One of the best ways to reduce municipal solid waste is to cut down on packaging. Packaging makes up about 40 percent of the solid waste stream, according to a 1988 Franklin Associates study for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It accounts for 50 percent of all paper produced in the United States, 90 percent of all glass, and 11 percent of all aluminum. One dollar out of every \$11 spent for groceries in the United States pays for packaging.

- ✓ **Buy in bulk or large sizes** — Buy food and dry goods in bulk. Items with a long shelf life such as laundry detergent, flour, and dry pet food can be purchased in large containers. Avoid individually wrapped portions of items such as cheese, fruit, and juice to cut cost and waste.

- ✓ **Use concentrates** — Purchase concentrates, add the liquid yourself, and eliminate the big packages.
- ✓ **Buy fewer processed foods** — Buy fresh rather than prepackaged fruits and vegetables. Incorporate less highly processed foods in menu planning. Many times these foods are also the least packaged products.
- ✓ **Evaluate packages for number of disposable components** — An item surrounded by Styrofoam beads in a box placed inside another box all wrapped in plastic may be very secure. Yet all or most of the extra packaging material (the cost of which is added to the price you pay for the product) ends up in the landfill.
- ✓ **Use refillable containers** — Many food cooperatives allow customers to bring their own containers to refill. Peanut butter, cooking oil, honey, flour, nuts, shampoo, and other products can be purchased in this manner.
- ✓ **Try resealable and reusable containers** — Invest in resealable and reusable containers for storing leftovers; avoid using disposable wraps and storage bags.

## Support reduction

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- ✓ **Buy recycled material** — No material is truly recycled until it is brought back into productive use. Consumer preference for products made from recycled materials can help close the recycling loop by increasing demand for

collected recyclables. Look for the recycling symbol.

- ✓ **Buy goods that can be recycled** — Buy products in containers that can be recycled. If the same product is sold in a recyclable glass container and a container made of nonrecyclable material, select the glass container. When you purchase items from the store, evaluate each one based on cost, convenience, and environmental impact. Consider how many pieces of material will have to be disposed of rather than reused or recycled. Avoid containers made of mixed materials, which can be harder to recycle.
- ✓ **Rent, borrow, or share** seldom used items such as power tools, party goods, books, and special occasion clothing.
- ✓ **Buy durable goods** — Buy product brands that are durable and repairable instead of disposable. The initial cost may be more, but the long-term cost may be less.
- ✓ **Minimize toxic waste** — Use less-toxic commercial products or make your own less-toxic cleaning materials. Substitute manual, pump spray containers for aerosols. They are less expensive and you can refill the bottles over and over again.
- ✓ **Try backyard composting** — In some parts of the country the highest fraction of the waste

stream is yard waste. Backyard composting does not necessarily add major chores to yard and garden upkeep; however, it does require space and proper maintenance. Contact the local county Extension office for more information.

Ask manufacturers to consider these areas when designing packaging:

- ✓ Plan for recyclability, both in design and material choice.
- ✓ Design the most purposeful, least wasteful packaging.
- ✓ Offer more reusable, refillable, and concentrated products.
- ✓ Design less wasteful packaging for preventing theft and marketing products.

**Waste reduction is everybody's business!**

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