<https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/reduce-reuse-recycle.php>
**The ‘Reduce, Reuse, Recycle’ Waste Hierarchy**

If you have heard of something called the “waste hierarchy” you may be wondering what that means. It is the order of priority of actions to be taken to reduce the amount of waste generated, and to improve overall waste management processes and programs. The waste hierarchy consists of 3 R’s as follows:

* **Reduce**
* **Reuse**
* **Recycle**

Called the “three R’s” of [waste management](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/waste-management-and-waste-disposal-methods.php), this waste hierarchy is the guidance suggested for creating a sustainable life. You might be wondering as to how can you incorporate these principles in your daily life. They are not hard to implement. All you need is to bring a small change in your daily lifestyle to [reduce waste](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/15-easy-ways-to-reduce-landfill-waste.php) so that less amount of it goes to the landfill that can reduce your [carbon footprint](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/StepsReduceCarbonFootPrint.php).

As per Missouri Department of Natural Resources,

“*The three R’s – reduce, reuse and recycle – all help to cut down on the amount of waste we throw away. They conserve natural resources, landfill space and energy. Plus, the three R’s save land and money communities must use to dispose of waste in landfills. Siting a new landfill has become difficult and more expensive due to environmental regulations and public opposition.*”

By refusing to buy items that you don’t need, reusing items more than once and disposing the items that are no longer in use at appropriate recycling centers, you can contribute towards a healthier planet.

## **The First ‘R’ – Reduce**

The concept of reducing what is produced and what is consumed is essential to the waste hierarchy. The logic behind it is simple to understand – if there is less waste, then there is less to [recycle](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/benefits-of-recycling.php) or reuse. The process of reducing begins with an examination of what you are using, and what it is used for. There are three simple steps to assessing the reduction value of an item or process –

* Is there something else that can be used for this purpose? Using multi-use items is essential to beginning reduction. One example would be a coffeepot and a cappuccino maker. Both of them do distinctly different things, but you can buy a coffeepot that has a steaming attachment on it so it can do both. The purchase of the one item means that you don’t use two. It reduces the amount of production, and the amount of waste packaging material that will be generated.

Is this something that needs to be done? A lot of our waste material comes from items that are considered to be “disposable.” Not in the sense that you use something once and then throw it away, that can actually be a part of [environmental responsibility](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/environmental-engineering-scope-and-environmental-engineers.php) when you are working with medical items – disposable in this sense means whether or not what the item allows you to do has any real meaning or purpose.
* Is the item a part of something that you need to do, or want to do in your life? There is a limit to what you need to be prepared for in life. Chances are you won’t need a car that is equipped to handle a sandstorm in the desert. Buying one encourages production, wastes your resources and creates more generative [waste](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/waste-to-energy.php) than you can imagine. Always make sure that what you consume, or keep in your life as preparation – matches the reality of potential opportunity in your life.

**Here are some of things you can do to reduce the waste:**

**1.**Print on both sides of the paper to reduce paper wastage.

**2.**Use electronic mail to reach out to people instead of sending paper mail.

**3.** Remove your name from the mailing lists that you no longer want to receive.

**4.** Use cloth napkins instead of paper napkins.

**5.** Avoid using disposable plates, spoons, glass, cups and napkins. They add to the problem and result in large amount of waste.

**6.** Avoid buying items that are over-packaged with foil, paper, and plastic. This excess packaging goes to waste.

**7.** Buy durable goods that have long warranty. They generally run longer and save landfill space.

Number 3 deals with the problems created by living within a culture of consumerism. This type of consumption driven culture also makes fulfilling the second “R” difficult, but it is getting easier to do.

## **The Second ‘R’ – Reuse**

You may have a box of things you keep that are broken or that you don’t have a use for that you hang on to in-case you find another use for them; or you may find bargains on old furniture or go trash picking and get things that you can refinish – in either case you are working towards reusing the item. Learning to reuse items, or re-purpose them for a use different then what they are intended for is essential in waste hierarchy.

One of the best examples for how this is being done today is the modular construction of homes and office buildings that is being created out of discarded shipping containers. These large, semi-truck sized metal containers represent a huge waste problem. Repurposing them as homes and offices saves them from the landfills and doesn’t require the additional expenditure of nature resources to melt down and reconfigure the metals used to create them.

You may either reuse those items for your own use or donate so that others can use them. You can reuse below items like:

**1. Old jars and pots:** Old jars and pots can be used to store items in kitchen. They can also be used to store loose items together such as computer wires.

**2. Tyres:** Old tyres can either be sent to recycling station or can be used to make tyre-swing.

**3. Used wood:** Used wood can be used as firewood or can be used woodcrafts.

**4. Newspaper:** Old newspapers can be used to pack items when you’re planning to move to another home or store old items.

**5. Envelopes:** Old and waste envelopes can be used by children to make short notes.

**6. Waste paper:** Waste paper can be used to make notes and sketches and can be send to recycling center when you don’t need them anymore.

**Items that can be donated to others include:**

**1. Old books:** Your old books can be used by poor children or can be donated to public libraries.

**2. Old clothes:** Your unwanted clothes can be used by street children or can be donated to charity institutions.

**3. Old electric equipment:** Old electric equipment can be donated to schools or NGO’s so that they can use them.

**4. Rechargeable batteries:** Rechargeable batteries can be used again and again and helps to reduce unnecessary wastage as opposed to regular batteries.

Apart from this, you can build a compost bin and reuse many waste items like used tea bags. The waste then degrades and turns into [compost](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/Composting.php) that help your plants grow and shine.

## **The Third ‘R’ – Recycling**

The last stage of the waste hierarchy is to recycle. To recycle something means that it will be transformed again into a raw material that can be shaped into a new item. There are very few materials on the earth that cannot be recycled. One of the issues facing communities that want to become more involved with a recycling effort is that while the relying collection and sorting process may be affordable to implement, there still has to be a facility to receive and transform the discarded waste into a raw material. More progress is being made toward uniting recycling plants with industries that can process the waste material through agreements and incentive credits.

One need to learn as to what products can be recycled and what not. By carefully choosing the products that can be recycled, can be a first step towards efficient recycling.

**1.** Buy products from market that are made up of recycled materials i.e. the product should be [environment friendly](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/environmental-ethics.php).

**2.** Buy products that can be recycled such as glass jars.

**3.** Invent new ways to recycle different items.

**4.** Avoid buying hazardous materials that could pose difficulty for you to recycle. Buy non-toxic products, whenever possible.

**5.** Buy products that have been made from recycled material.

**6.** Use recycled paper for printing or making paper handicrafts.