

REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE

The three R's are the foundations of environmental stewardship. These simple concepts are a good place to start when teaching environmental issues to young children. Practicing the three R's helps with conservation of energy and resources as well as landfill diversion. Let's take a look at each in more detail.

Reduce

Being environmentally conscious eventually leads to the next step—being proactive in daily life. When buying products at the store, it helps to think about what kind of effect the product is having on the environment. Sometimes we purchase items that we don't really need. Other times we purchase items that have more packaging than is necessary. When we make decisions with these issues in mind, we're using our power as consumers to be proactive in helping the environment.

Simply put, *Reducing* means producing less waste, consuming less and consciously avoiding products with unnecessary packaging. Reducing is the most effective of the three R's.

Tips to help you reduce your waste:

- Avoid items that are excessively and needlessly packaged.
- Buy reusable coffee filters and cloth napkins. Avoid paper/foam plates and cups.
- Avoid plastic bags. Carry reusable bags for your shopping trips.

Reuse

The second most effective strategy for environmental stewardship is to reuse. Before throwing something in the garbage, it helps to think about how that item might be reused. It might be reused for the same purpose or it might be used in a different way. For example, newspaper can be used as wrapping paper or cushioning for packaged items.

“Can this be reused?” This is a great question to ask before throwing something in the garbage or the recycling bin. What's old to you might be new to someone else. On the same note, you might be able to find something you need at a second hand store. When we reuse each other's goods we save them from going to the landfill and we save energy and resources that would otherwise go to making new products.

Tips to help you reuse items:

- Save and reuse scrap paper for writing notes and always try to write on both sides of paper.
- Use refillable containers (like Tupperware or reusable mugs) and rechargeable batteries.

- Wash and reuse plastic food storage bags and heavy aluminum.
- Donate unwanted clothing to charities or second-hand clothing stores.

Recycle

The last resort is to recycle. Ask yourself if the unwanted item is recyclable or compostable? These days we are recycling more materials than ever—approximately 50 percent of household waste can be recycled.

When we recycle, we give material a new life and save it from going to the landfill. Materials like glass, plastic, aluminum, and paper can be mass collected, broken or melted down, and made into entirely new products.

Tips to help you recycle items:

- Donate clothing, furniture, appliances, and electronics to not-for-profit organizations.
- Hold a yard sale to recycle unwanted items. One man's garbage is another man's treasure.
- Place all recyclable items in the blue box for weekly collection.

Before you throw anything in the garbage make sure to try the 3R's first. The garbage should be your last resort after you've tried the 3 R's and there is no other option. It is estimated that Canadians produce a total of more than 31 million tones of household waste each year. It is important for everyone to make an effort in reducing the amount of garbage we send to the landfill. The central landfill in Greater Sudbury is expected to reach its capacity in the year 2025; where will the next landfill go? It's not easy to find a new location for a landfill but if we all practice the three R's we can reduce the need for new landfills and extend the life of current ones.

Always remember: Don't trash it until you've tried the 3 R's.