

STEP 1: REDUCE

When you reduce the amount of stuff you consume, you are (1) saving money (2) eliminating the energy used to harvest, manufacture, transport, store, and dispose of that item, (3) preserving the materials used to create that item, and (4) saving another item from being disposed.

What You Can Do:

- Purchasing items in bulk reduces the amount of packaging used for an item.
- Buy all of your purchases at the same time to reduce transportation costs.
- Try to refrain from buying products that are individually wrapped.
- Print less first, print double-sided next.
- Eliminate pesticides and fertilizers in your garden. Look up the tons of chemical-free ways to keep your plants growing strong.
- Don't buy or use disposable products.
- Choose the item that will withstand the test of time: is it fixable? Is there a warranty? Is the product reliable?
- Rent or borrow instead of buy.



STEP 2: REUSE

When you can't reduce, try to reuse products to extend its life before disposing it. This will make sure you got the maximum use out of every product.



What You Can Do:

- Purchase and use reusable, returnable, and refillable products, like water bottles, milk jugs, bags and silverware
- Think before throwing something out. Could you use it again? Could you use it in a different use? Go online and find the hundreds of creative ways you can reuse everyday items – you may be surprised how they can solve some of your silly life dilemmas!



STEP 3: RECYCLE

Recycling is the last option to take because it is an energy intensive process to make your old material into something new. However, recycling is still a great thing to do because it (1) keeps material out of landfills, (2) reduces the need for raw materials, and (3) uses less energy than a raw material would.

Recycling 101:

Paper: All paper items except tissue or wax paper

Plastic: All plastics # 1-7. This is typically everything but CD's, plastic wrap, plastic bags, and six-pack rings.

Metal: All cans, bottles, and aluminum foil. Don't recycle sheet metal, pans, car parts, pesticide cans.

Glass: Recycle bottles and jars. Do not recycle windows, light bulbs, or ovenware.

Other: For all items you cannot put in the commingled recycling bin, please check out the McHenry County Green Guide for places in town to recycle almost everything!

DO NOT recycle items that have food waste or grease on it. Rinse the item off first or throw it out. A contaminated item could cause the whole batch to be discarded.

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle are the three terms that make up the hierarchy of reducing waste. What is the importance of this anyways?

- All landfill liners will eventually fail. This means that even today, landfill liners are allowing every chemical, pollutant, and item thrown into the trash into our soil and water.
- What is the real cost of every item you purchase? Well the materials are harvested, then sent to one factory, then sent to a second factory, then sent to the store, then you drive to and from the store to get the product, then you use the product, then you throw it out. That is a lot of energy and material used for one single item!
- When you dispose of a product, energy is still used to transport it to the landfill or recycling facility.

This is why we first **REDUCE** to cut all energy associated with a product. When you can't reduce, you **REUSE** to eliminate buying more of the product. Last is **RECYCLE**, because it saves the raw material but not the energy used to make it.



*This pamphlet was developed by
the McHenry County Employee
Green Team*

McHenry County Employee

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Guide

*Steps to take in the
office and at home*