

The Importance of “Re-use”



Reduce ~ Re-use ~ Recycle, the original slogan for the modern environmentalist, is still as important as ever. Did you know that these words are actually listed in order of effectiveness? The best way to help the environment is to **reduce** the amount we consume in the first place. Next, we can find additional uses for the things we already have (**re-use**). Finally we can **recycle** products when they have reached the very end of their useful life.

Re-use is often confused with **recycling**. **Re-use** in the broadest sense means any activity that lengthens the life of an item – and that would include much of what happens when you **donate** it. **Recycling**, on the other hand, means reprocessing an item for use in a new product – e.g. grinding tires and incorporating them into a road-surfacing compound. **Re-use** is more effective than **recycling** because it uses less energy and fewer resources, creating less pollution and waste.

There are many, many ways to “re-use.” Here are a few examples. Hopefully you will be inspired to create more of your own.:

Purchase items with re-use in mind

- Sturdy reusable water bottles instead of single-use ones
- Durable goods, instead of cheaper fad items
- Reusable shopping bag, rechargeable batteries
- Cloth diapers, napkins and dish towels instead of paper

Re-use items for their same use instead of recycling or throwing away

- Rubber bands, paper bags, twist-ties, boxes, envelopes, freezer bags
- Packing materials, wrapping paper, gift bags, file folders, ring binders
- Leftover paint - mix with other colors or paint one accent wall
- Glass pasta (and other) food jars reused as containers
- Plastic plates and silverware

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Repurpose items

- Calendar pages/the “funnies” for wrapping paper
- Shredded documents as packing material
- Popsicle sticks, cardboard paper rolls, used wrapping paper for art projects
- Wine and other glass bottles for vases
- Small jars/bottles to store nails, elastics, beads, leftovers
- Shoe boxes, box lids, and plastic containers for dividers in drawers or cabinets
- Foam/plastic vegetable containers for trays under house plants, or for painting
- Worn-out clothing for pajamas, dress-up clothes, or rags

Sell or give away items to someone who could use them

- Garage sales, second-hand/consignment shops
- Craig's List, Freecycle.org, Nextdoor.com
- Eyeglasses to the Lion's Club, hangers to dry cleaner
- Create a community swap or recycling “party”

Buy used items

Avoid buying when you can rent, borrow, share with neighbors

- Use the library
- Equipment (lawn mowers/snow blowers)