



Going Green

Top Recycling Tips

- **First things first, a little R & R & R**

The aphorism is so tired it almost might seem like “reduce, reuse, recycle” should go without saying. But in fact, most of us have only really heard the last third of the phrase, and they’re ranked in order of importance. Reducing the amount that we consume, and shifting our consumption to well-designed products and services, is the first step. Finding constructive uses for “waste” materials is next; tossing it in the blue bin is last. (The garbage can is not on the list, for good reason.) Through a balance of these three principals you can easily see your landfill-destined waste dwindle fast. A good example of recycling is setting your empty water bottles in the bin on the curb. But by using a water filter and reusable container you can *reduce* or completely eliminate your need for disposable plastic bottles.

- **Know what you can and can't recycle**

Read up on the recycling rules for your area and make sure you don't send anything in that can't be processed. Each city has its own specifics, so try to follow those guidelines as best you can.

- **Buy recycled**

The essence of recycling is the cyclical movement of materials through the system, eliminating waste and the need to extract more virgin materials. Supporting recycling means feeding this loop by not only recycling, but also supporting recycled products. We can now find high recycled content in everything from printer paper to office chairs.

- **Recycle your water**

If you're a homeowner, consider rearranging your plumbing so that rainwater or wastewater from your shower and tub is used to flush your toilet. If you have a garden, water it with leftover bathwater or dishwashing water (as long as you use a biodegradable soap). For more on water recycling see [How to Go Green: Water](#).

- **Recycle your greenery**

William McDonough and Michael Braungart, authors of the groundbreaking [Cradle to Cradle](#), envision so-called “waste” divided into two categories: technical nutrients and biological nutrients.

Biological nutrients are those that, at the end of their useful life, can safely and readily decompose and return to the soil. Composting is one of the simplest and most effective recycling methods. Both your garden cuttings and your green kitchen waste can go into an outdoor or indoor composter (with or without entertaining a population of worms). If you don't have a garden yourself, find neighbors or a community garden that can make use of your soil. Composting food scraps will mean your regular kitchen wastebasket fills up more slowly and also won't smell. Hotter, more active compost heaps can also consume tougher stuff like newspaper and paper napkins.

- **Anticipate recycling**

In addition to buying recycled goods; keep a keen eye out for recyclable goods. Whenever you purchase something packaged, think about how you can reuse the packaging, return it to a shipping store for reuse, or try to otherwise recycle it. If you get something likely to run down or wear out over time, such as an electronic component, give preference to the model that can be easily upgraded or cannibalized for parts so that you don't have to junk the whole thing if one part breaks. Products that are impossibly fused together are often called “monstrous hybrids” and are, while often cheaper up front, frequently unfixable and unrecyclable.

From the Planet Earth web site.

