



# Home & Environment

## Household Waste Management Reduce

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**W**aste management is the collection, processing and disposal, or reuse of recyclable and non-recyclable materials. The ultimate goal of waste management is to reduce the amount of waste material that is deposited in landfills through recycling and/or reuse.

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### Reduce

Reducing, at the top of the waste management hierarchy, has the greatest impact on the environment and starts with you reducing the number of products you purchase and use. In 2000, over 55 million tons of waste were eliminated by reducing packing materials, redesigning products, and not using landfills for wastes such as yard trimmings.

### Do I Need This?

Reducing your waste starts with the question “Do I really need this?” Ask yourself if you need an item before you buy it. Buying items that you may not use, or buying too much of any one item, hurts our environment and your pocketbook. A good deal may tempt you to buy more than you really need; an important part of becoming a waste-conscious shopper is buying only what you can use. Unused or spoiled product wastes money and natural resources.

- Buy only what you can use, or find someone who can use what is left over.

- Eliminate junk mail. DMAchoice at [www.dmachoice.org/](http://www.dmachoice.org/) can help you stop receiving unwanted credit offers, catalogs, and magazine offers.
- Make your own cleaning supplies using a few basic ingredients. For example, olive oil and beeswax can be used as furniture polish, and vinegar and water will clean glass surfaces. Baking soda is a good substitute for tooth polish, and peroxide removes organic stains from fabric and upholstery. For more ideas visit <http://www.ca.uky.edu/hes/fcs/factshts/HHF-LRA-173.pdf>.
- Use rechargeable batteries.
  - Rent or borrow things that you need only a few times.



The 3 Rs are the foundations of waste management. The order is based on the impact each has on waste management.

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### Know Your Product Origin

As a consumer, you can use your buying power to support products made from recycled materials. Everything from carpet to detergent bottles can be made from materials that have been recycled (Table 1). On product packaging, look for the words *Made from Recycled Materials* or *Made from Post-Consumer Recycled Materials*.

- **Recycled Materials:** materials were scraps or damaged in the manufacturing process and repurposed.
- **Post-Consumer:** all or part of the product or packaging is made from materials that have been recycled by consumers.

### Minimize Packaging

Avoid purchasing items that have excess packaging. Excess packaging results in waste from the product, the production of packaging, and the transportation costs of the extra weight. Instead of buying a product with excess packaging, choose another brand. If the product is an item you use in large amounts, consider buying that product in bulk if available.

- Choose the product with the least amount of packaging.
- Buy post-consumer packaging.
- Use canvas bags to carry your groceries, or reuse bags from previous trips.

**Table 1. Recycled materials and the products made from them.**

Material	Products
Aluminum (cans, foil, scrap metal)	Auto parts, cans, containers, siding, packaging
Steel (food cans, scrap metal)	Auto parts, cans, building materials
Paper (newspaper, office paper, cardboard)	Packaging, newspaper, wrapping paper, insulation
Plastic (bottles, bags, bulk items)	Clothing (fleeces and long underwear), truck bed coating, plastic bags, plastic lumber (fencing and decking), plastic bottles
Glass (bottles, containers)	Bottles and containers, fiberglass insulation, backfill, road surfacing (glasphalt)





- Use reusable water bottles instead of purchasing bottled water.
- Pack a waste-free lunch. Use a reusable lunch box and resealable containers.
- Buy in bulk when feasible and repackage for individual use. For example, purchase lunch snacks in bulk and place in reusable containers instead of buying individually wrapped snacks.
- Store perishable goods and those that attract pests in airtight containers to prevent waste.

## Conserve Energy

Waste management not only applies to the physical products that you purchase or use; it also encompasses energy use. The amount of energy it takes to develop a product and ship it to the consumer is often referred to as its “carbon footprint.” When you purchase a product, its carbon footprint is added to your carbon footprint. You can take steps to reduce your personal carbon footprint.

Purchase local products, which require less transport and packaging; support your local farmers and save money while reducing your carbon footprint. For more information on buying locally in Kentucky visit <http://www.kyagr.com/kyproud/index.htm>.

## Transportation

Your transportation choices can have an impact on the waste you create too. Some ways you can reduce your fuel use and emissions are:

- Bike or walk to reduce the amount of fuel you use and the resulting car emissions.
- Make a list before you go to shopping, and make sure it is complete. You’ll save time and money and reduce emissions by decreasing the number of trips you make.
- Walk to the store if it’s close enough. You’ll get exercise while saving money and resources.
- Use public transportation. You can use the time to do other things on your way to and from work, and you’ll help reduce congestion, which shortens commute times.
- Carpool. Look for ride matching services in your area, such as <http://www.uky.edu/Parking/transportation-ridematch.html>.

Reducing the amount of waste you create is simple, lowers your carbon footprint, and saves you money. All it takes from you is a little thought about what you can change in your lifestyle.

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## Sources

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