

THE ABC's of RECYCLING AT SCHOOL

There are lots of ways that we can reduce waste and improve recycling at school. By thinking ahead and being creative, you can earn high marks for environmental consciousness and save money at the same time.

Pack a “no-waste lunch”

A no-waste lunch is a meal that does not end up in the trash. Buy food items in bulk then put them in reusable containers to carry to school. Use a reusable lunch box or bag and fill it with your lunch in reusable containers.

Take only the food you'll eat

More than 20 percent of the food we buy – 48 million tons annually in the U.S. alone – is thrown away. One way to figure out how much food you waste is to measure and track all the food you throw away from your lunch in a week's time. By taking only what you can eat or sharing your extras with a friend, you are taking steps to waste less and save money.

Carry reusables

When you go to the store for school supplies, look for durable, long-lasting items and reuse them. Refillable pens and pencils, a durable backpack and a lunchbox are all good examples of products that can be used over and over again.

Use less paper

Even though we recycle much of the paper we use, it is still a significant part of what we throw in the trash. Think of all the paper you've thrown away that only had writing on one side. That paper could have been used a second time, potentially cutting in half your paper use. Also, buy paper and notebooks that contain previously recycled paper.

Reduce mail

Another large source of waste paper is unsolicited mail. Ask your teachers and school administrators (and your parents!) to tear off the mailing labels and send them back to the company with a note asking to be taken off their mailing list.

Organize a sale

Rummage sales and yard sales are great ways to pass along items that you no longer want to someone who might need them. Instead of throwing your unwanted items away, put them to good use by planning a class or school-wide rummage sale with your teacher. Collect and sell

used items such as clothes, toys and sporting goods. Then donate the proceeds to a charity or back into a school fund.

School supplies

The end of summer usually entails a “back to school” shopping trip. Why not try to make the school supplies you buy this year environmentally friendly? Look for recycled content in the items you buy.

When buying paper products, such as notebooks and loose-leaf, look for post-consumer waste content (PCW) and process chlorine free (PCF) labels.

Many pencils and pens have PCW content or are wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Some pens are made from cornstarch and are 100 percent biodegradable. For teens, invest in an expensive pen that uses cartridges instead of disposable pens.

For plastic products, such as backpacks, rulers or binders, look for “No PVC” labels to ensure the product does not contain vinyl, which is produced with and contains toxins that accumulate in the environment and living organisms.

Many scissors and rulers are made from recycled steel, metal, or plastic, and are often less expensive than the traditional ones.

Adopt a few of these practices and you’ll be at the head of your class!

