

WASTE AVOIDANCE

Disposing of an increasing amount of household waste is not easy. As landfill sites become harder to find and waste disposal and recovery costs continue to increase, it is clear the only real way to solve the waste problem is to create less.

As the world population grows and the standard of living improves across the globe, we are urged to consume an even greater amount of goods and materials. Continued consumption of goods (raw materials and natural resources) means that there is a constant stream of goods disposed of to landfill. As a community we must decide if we want to continue to consume our natural resources and send goods to landfill at an ever increasing rate, or if we are prepared to take action and change our waste creating behaviours.

Waste avoidance simply means not creating waste in the first place. It is the simplest and most effective way of reducing the amount of waste we all create, but for many people it is the most difficult. Avoiding waste means keeping a check on your consumption of goods. This may require small changes to the way we go about our daily lives. For some people though, even a small change is not easy!

Avoiding waste means we all must become careful consumers, considering the environmental and waste disposal impact of each item we purchase. It means a return to the good old days of buying only what we need and reusing (or recycling) as much as we can.

WHAT CAN I DO?

You can avoid creating waste by following these simple steps.

- Take a bag, basket or box with you when you shop.
- Avoid goods that have excessive layers of packaging.
- Avoid individually wrapped items like potato chips, yoghurt or fruit juice.
- Choose products that come in concentrated forms or that have refills.
- When buying packaged goods choose packaging that is made from recycled materials or that can be refilled, reused or recycled.
- Buy fresh foods where possible – they are packed in nature's own packaging.
- Where there is a range of sizes available, choose the largest that you can use.
- Hire equipment rather than buy (books, videos, machinery...) or borrow items that you don't use very often.
- Shop at stores where you can take your own containers. That way you only pay for the item, not the packaging.
- Remember, disposable items cost you money and produce garbage every time you buy them. Reusable items only cost you money the first time and create garbage only once.
- Compost all food and garden wastes, and recycle as many items as you can.
- Put a 'no junk mail' sticker on your letterbox.

Buy products:

- Made from recycled materials.
- That are durable and will last a long time.
- That will not go out of fashion quickly.
- The can be repaired.
- In bulk.
- That can be reused rather than disposable or single use items.
- That are second hand/refurbished.
- Designed for extra life.

Before buying anything, consider whether you can avoid buying it. Ask yourself:

- Do I really need this?
- Can I make do with a smaller amount?
- Will it last? Can it be maintained, repaired or restored as it gets older?
- Is there a simpler, less wasteful alternative?
- Is it over-packaged? Is there another product with less packaging?
- What are the environmental impacts of my buying this product?
- Can I repair or restore it?
- Is there a long lasting or reusable alternative to a throw-away item?

MORE INFORMATION

- For further information about avoiding waste contact your local council waste or environmental education officer
- Check out www.epa.nsw.gov.au for more information about recycling and the environment.
- Shop Smart Buy Green booklet available from www.ea.gov.au
- Browse the North East Waste Forums Reuse directory for reuse and repair business in the northern rivers. www.reusedirectory.com