

# Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

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The decisions you make every day make a big difference!

## STEP 1: **REDUCE** the Amount and Toxicity of Trash You Discard

It is always better to prevent the generation of waste in the first place. This approach is good for your wallet as well as the environment. Reducing waste can occur during the entire lifecycle of a product starting with the manufacturing process.

Look for and support manufacturers who:

- Use a production processes that promote the use of non-toxic or less-toxic substances;
- Implement conservation techniques; and
- Re-use waste materials generated in the production process.

As a consumer, ask these questions when making purchase:

- Do I, or the other person I am buying this for, really need this product?
- How much of it do I need to do the job at hand?
- Is there another product that would do the same thing more efficiently or effectively?
- Will this last a long time?
- Do I know how this item was made, how it will be used and how it will be disposed of?
- Was this product made in a way that uses resources wisely?
- Is this item available with less packaging or is the packaging recyclable?

Look for efficient, effective and environmentally safe products at:

- [Design for the Environment and EPA Partnership Program](#)

## STEP 2: **REUSE**, Repair or Donate Containers and Products

Try to buy items that are durable, maintain them and have them repaired when necessary. If this is done, many things cannot only last a lifetime, but can be passed along from generation to generation. If something is truly unusable for its original purpose, try to think of how else it might be used. When you can no longer use a product, consider giving it to charity. Reusing products, when possible, is even better than recycling because the item does not need to be reprocessed before it can be used again, which saves both energy and natural resources.

**Things you can do to reuse:**

- Use a mug or glass instead of disposable cups.
- Use reusable water bottles rather than disposable plastic bottles.
- Reuse plastic and paper bags from the store or bring your own canvas bag.
- Buy rechargeable batteries instead of disposable, one-time-use batteries.
- Borrow, rent or share items that are used infrequently.
- Donate your used or surplus building materials including appliances, hardware, kitchen cabinets, bathroom fixtures, etc.
- Where possible, repair worn shoes, boots, handbags, briefcases, watches and electronics.

### Did You Know?

The City of Rockville is required to pay money for every ton of **refuse** taken to the Transfer Station. **Recycling** helps the City earn money and helps keep collection rates lower.

### **Explore what you can donate or repurpose old, unwanted items.**

- **Clothes Donation** - If you have old clothes, consider donating them to local charity.
- **Clothes Resale** - Resell your gently used clothes in consignment stores and stop in to see if you can get some bargains of your own. Check the Internet or the yellow pages under consignment.
- **Used and Surplus Building Supplies** - If you are remodeling your home, explore Montgomery County's [Don't Dump, Donate!](#) program to learn how to donate building materials in usable condition.
- **Used Books and Household Items** - Stop by the [Rockville Senior Center](#) to donate used books and household items.
- **Everything Else including Furniture** - If you are looking for someone to pick up and reuse your old furniture, search [Montgomery County's "Use It Again" Database](#).

### **STEP 3: RECYCLE as Much as Possible; Buy Recycled Products**

Recycling means taking a product or material at the end of its useful life and turning it into a usable raw material to make another product.

Recyclables generally follow a three-step process to be reinvented into a new product. First, the recyclables are collected from the curb outside your house and are sent to a materials recovery facility to be sorted and prepared into raw materials for manufacturing. Next, these recycled, raw materials are re-manufactured into new products. Finally, the new products are purchased by consumers and used again. "Buying Recycled" keeps recycling in demand and plays an essential role in making the recycling process a success.

#### **Recycling Includes Composting**

Composting is the controlled biological decomposition of organic matter, such as food and yard waste, into humus, a soil-like material. Composting returns needed organic matter to the soil. While improving the soil for gardens, composting also reduces the amount of material going to the Transfer Station. For more information or to get a free compost bin visit Montgomery County's [Compost Bin](#) site.

[Grass-cycle](#): leave the height of your grass long when mowing and leave clippings on your lawn to decompose. "Grass-cycling" provides your lawn with a great source of nitrogen and saves water and fertilizer.