



5 Smart Ways to Go Green with Waste Management

Waste, and how we dispose of it, profoundly affects our global environment, the air, water, land, animals (including people!), plants, and man-made things. If we want a healthy environment for our families and our earth, smart waste management is a skill we need to learn. Here's a quick review of the 5 Rs of managing waste.

1. Reduce

Reducing means producing less waste so that you throw less trash and garbage into landfills. Reducing is the most effective way to manage waste and the place to begin when you can. A simple step at the grocery store: Bring cloth or mesh bags, so you don't take either paper or plastic. You'll immediately reduce the bags you would throw away when you get home.

2. Reuse

Reusing means getting the most out of things in their original form before you toss or recycle them. You can reuse things yourself or pass them along to someone who can use them when you cannot. Reusing is simple once you get into the habit. Plastic bags (both large white bags and clear produce bags) can be reused several times while shopping before they are recycled.

3. Recycle

Recycling is the R that has caught on the best. Recycling, like using cans to make new cans, is better than throwing them into the landfill, but it still takes energy to collect, crush, and remake them. So, recycle after you have reused things as much as possible. Reuse plastic bags as many times as you can, then take them to the recycling bin at many grocery stores.

4. Reject

Rejecting is one of the newer Rs. Some people call it pre-cycling. This is the act of rejecting excessive or unnecessary packaging. When shopping, it means saying *no thanks* to a bag for small purchases that you can easily carry in your hands. You can also reject foods, beverages, or other products in fancy, multi-layer packaging that you will just have to throw away.

5. Respond, react, and reward

This R goes by different names, but they all come down to one thing: letting manufacturers and businesses know what you think about their waste management practices. Contact them by letter, email, or calling the toll free number listed on the package. Using the bag example, thank a store manager for selling cloth bags and/or providing a way to recycle plastic bags.