



# EnviroKids!

Educational Tools for Tomorrow's Environmental Heroes

Issue Created by



Spokane County Regional  
Solid Waste System

## REDUCE, REUSE, THEN RECYCLE



What's the deal with trash? We all make it; in fact, every person makes more than four pounds of garbage every day. In our homes, schools, hospitals, stores, restaurants, and other businesses – we are making a lot of trash! You have probably been asked to take out the trash, but have you ever wondered where it goes?

Here's the **bad** news, there's no such thing as throwing something "away". Trash sticks around in one form or another. Ready for the **good** news? We can do something about our trash problem. The solution starts with you!

You may have heard of the three R's when it comes to dealing with trash.



### Reduce



### Reuse



### Recycle

Most people know how to recycle. You may have a blue bin at home or at school where you can recycle items like aluminum cans, cardboard, plastic containers, and paper. When we recycle right, these things can be made into something useful. Recycling saves valuable natural resources and energy. We should recycle as much as possible. But have you ever noticed that Recycling is #3 when it comes to the three R's?

There's a reason that REDUCE and REUSE come before RECYCLE. If we really want to solve our trash problem, we have to follow the three R's in order!

When it comes to trash, REDUCE simply means make less. REUSE is when we use something over and over or find a new purpose for something we already have. It sounds easy but making less trash can be tricky.

Here's some ideas for practicing the REDUCE and REUSE principles of the three R's:

- Reduce plastic waste by choosing a reusable water bottle.
- Pack snacks and leftovers in reusable containers with lids and reduce single use plastic baggies foil, and wrap.
- Use washable plates instead of paper plates. Makes reusable napkins out of fabric scraps.
- Next time you're at the grocery store, notice the different ways food is packaged. When we pay attention to the amount of trash in our world, we can take steps to REDUCE waste.

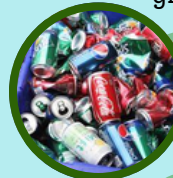
Think about the way you are already reusing items. Do you take bags into the grocery store instead of choosing plastic bags at checkout? Do you shop at secondhand stores or make donations of used clothing and household items? Have you ever saved a box or a container and reused it to store something? There are a million creative ways to REUSE materials that can REDUCE garbage.

We can all work toward a cleaner planet by **REDUCING**, **REUSING**, and **RECYCLING**.

Practice the three R's and practice them in order.

### WHAT IS THIS MADE OF?

Everything in our garbage and recycling containers came from a natural resource. This means it was either grown or mined from the earth.



Soda cans are made from metal. Metal comes from minerals that must be mined out of the earth with heavy machines.

Paper is a renewable resource that comes from cutting down trees.



Glass bottles are made from melted sand.

Plastic comes from petroleum, which is drilled out of the earth. This is the same stuff that comes out of the gas pump, but it goes through a complicated process to become plastic.



## Spokane Materials and Recycling Technology (SMaRT) Center

In Spokane, the items you place in your blue bin are transported to the Spokane Materials and Recycling Technology Center, or the SMaRT Center. At the SMaRT Center, clean materials are sorted, bundled, and sold to manufacturers who use them to make something new. It's important to only include the right materials in your bin. Too many wrong things can cause problems when those materials are sorted to be sold. This can lead to higher costs for customers, and a lot more work for the people doing this job. Check the label on your blue bin to make sure you only include those items. You can teach your family to RECYCLE RIGHT!



**Keeping these materials out of your recycle bin makes a big difference!**

## Can you spot what doesn't belong?



Which items should you keep out of your recycling bin?



Not sure? Check the label on your recycle bin for the answers!

- Lids, caps and straws
- Electronics
- Styrofoam of any kind
- Plastic Bags
- Cartons
- Food wrappers
- Batteries
- Bubble wrap and other plastic film

**Recyclables should be**

**EMPTY CLEAN DRY**



## Think About It

Consider the materials in your house/classroom. Make a list of things made from paper, metal, glass, and plastic. Which list is the longest? Discuss the natural resources used to make these items. Are these resources renewable? Which items are recyclable?

What are 10 items you own that you would never want to part with? Can you think of 10 things you own that you don't need? Discuss the differences between the things you treasure and the things you can do without. What makes some items more valuable than others?

## Waste Challenge

Put your garbage can on a diet. Weigh your trash container before sending it out to the dumpster or curbside bin and then see if you can cut your waste in half.

Here's some helpful tips:

- Compost fruit and vegetable scraps in a backyard compost pile
- Place food scraps in your green bin
- Replace paper towels with reusable rags
- Recycle clean paper and cardboard
- Donate unwanted clothing and useable household items

We can all take steps to make less trash. Put the three R's to work and explore ways to reduce and reuse in your home and classroom.



**REMEMBER!**

**The best way to deal with waste is not to make it in the first place.**



Envirokids is a collaborative effort among multiple environmentally focused agencies in the Spokane region working to provide locally relevant educational resources to teachers and families.