



Why We Should All Do Our Part to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

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Since the Industrial Revolution in the later part of the 1700s, humans have been negatively impacting the earth in leaps and bounds in three directions: the depletion of natural resources, extinction of plant and animal species and the deposition of toxic waste into the environment. In order to restore the balance, we need to be more aware about how we consume and how we discard waste on a daily basis. Some of the earth's resources can be sustained, reused and repurposed which is becoming necessary if we are to continue inhabiting and sharing Mother Earth.

Sustainability

Living sustainably ("going green") means reducing the demand on natural resources in daily life by making sure that what is used is replaced to the best of one's ability. We can practice sustainable living by doing some of the following:

- ❖ Become part of a community garden or have your own garden. This creates green space, promotes healthy eating, substitutes part or all of your grocery bill on vegetables
- ❖ Planting trees and vegetation helps prevent soil erosion, promotes a haven for birds and insects and trades carbon monoxide for oxygen thus limiting greenhouse gases that cause climate change

- ❖ Consign your home goods, clothes, furniture instead of bringing them to a landfill
- ❖ Use natural cleaners like water and vinegar to reduce use of plastic packaging and chemicals into the water system
- ❖ Walk, bike, carpool or take public transportation to work. The more you walk or bike the healthier you'll be and having less cars means less pollution
- ❖ Change out lightbulbs to LEDs. They consume up to 90% less energy than regular light bulbs
- ❖ Limit paper mail by paying bills online and looking at e-catalogs. It will save trees!
- ❖ Conserve water by taking less time in the shower, shutting off your tap when brushing your teeth and fixing leaky faucets – all of these tips will save you money on your water bill!
- ❖ Use reusable bags instead of plastic or paper bags when grocery shopping
- ❖ Use ceramic cups instead of foam or paper cups and use reusable cups at your favorite coffee shop
- ❖ If you must use straws, use paper straws or buy straws that can be washed and reused



Recycling

Common household containers that are made of glass, plastic and aluminum can be processed and repurposed into other products which reduces the amount of waste going into landfills and incinerators.

Glass that is recyclable is crushed mechanically into crude pieces then sized as big as pellets or as small as sand to be used for home insulation, matches and ammunition, filler in paints and pool filtration systems.

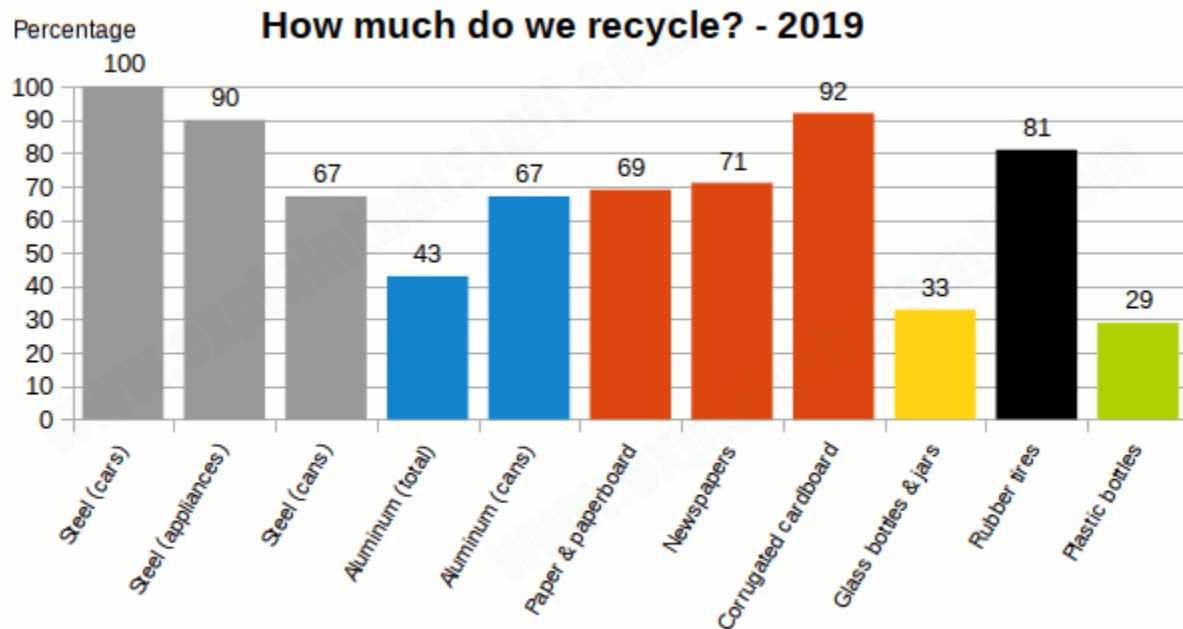
- ❖ *Interesting Fact:* A modern glass bottle would take 4000 years or more to decompose – and even longer if it's in a landfill. <https://www.usi.edu/recycle/glass-recycling-facts/>

Plastic containers are sorted according to number (#1,2,4 and 5 can be recycled. #3,6,7 contain toxins that cause human health problems so they are not recyclable. Those end up in landfills or are incinerated). They are reduced to shreds or granules and then melted into plastic pellets to be used in wood products, carpeting, floor tiles, furniture and more.

- ❖ *Interesting Fact:* Americans alone have produced 8.3 billion metric tons of plastic. Only 9% of that is recycled. 79% ends up in landfills while 12% is incinerated. <https://greentumble.com/how-is-plastic-recycled-step-by-step/>

[More than 50% of aluminum is recyclable.](#) It is lightweight, flexible and strong and when combined with other metals like copper, silicone and magnesium becomes resistant to corrosion. Once shredded and melted, it is formed into ingots and transported to other manufacturing plants to be combined with other metals.

- ❖ *Interesting Fact:* Approximately 200 billion aluminum cans are purchased by consumers around the world each year. <https://greentumble.com/how-is-aluminum-recycled/>



Source: Drawn in 2019 using latest available data for 2017 (aluminum, rubber, plastic), 2015 (paper, glass), 2014 (steel), and 2013 (aluminum cans). Sources as per caption.

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Electronic devices have a high turnover-rate as new technology replaces old. Items such as laptops, computers, tablets, smart phones all turn over within two to eleven years. That creates an estimated 49 million tons of e-waste worldwide! By 2021, it is estimated that there will be over 57 million tons worldwide. Luckily, 99% of electronic parts are recyclable!

- ❖ *Interesting Fact:* It takes 539 lbs. of fossil fuel, 48 lbs. of chemicals and 1.5 tons of water to manufacture one computer and monitor. <https://turtlewings.com/blog/11-facts-about-e-waste>