



## My EcoChallenge is: to Reduce and Divert Trash

Living by the 3 Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) reduces our need for new sources of plastic, paper, metals, etc. and cuts down on the amount of garbage that needs to be buried in landfills. Reducing trash output can save money (on new products and trash pickup) and ease strain on our ecosystems.

### Ways to reduce your waste during the EcoChallenge, and beyond *(feel free to pick and choose from this list to create a plan that will work for you)*

#### I will:

- reuse 100% of non-recyclable plastics
- recycle and select products that are made from recycled material
- will bring my own reusable mug every time I buy coffee/tea on the go
- bring my own bags every time I shop during the Eco Challenge
- refrain from buying bottled water/juices/liquids and instead use a reusable mug or thermos
- clean out my home of unused appliances, items, clothes and donate them
- refrain from buying new clothes, appliances, etc. during the EcoChallenge
- start a compost to reduce the amount of trash my household produces
- use only natural or organic cleaning products and dispose appropriately (see below) of my chemical collection under the sink
- buy 90% of foods that are available in bulk from the bulk bins, in order to reduce the packaging that I buy and bring home

#### More ideas to incorporate into your daily habits:

Remember to bring a reusable shopping bag to the market

Buy products that are minimally packaged, or that use packaging that can be reused or recycled

Buy in bulk whenever possible- and bring your own recycled bags and containers

Buy larger packages when possible- for example, one giant bottle of detergent creates less waste than three small bottles

Buy concentrated products

Buy used whenever possible (garage sales, Craigslist, Freecycle, and secondhand stores are all great resources)

Don't buy single serving goods or foods

Reduce the number of things you bring into your house. Borrow, rent or share things you don't use often. For example, share a lawnmower or rent a carpet cleaner if you need one-- this will save money too.

Resist consumerism, weigh purchases carefully, always asking "do I need this?"

Cook at home rather than eating take out, which requires packaging that is generally thrown out.

Avoid buying foods that are package intensive, such as microwave meals, frozen dinners, and packaged prepared foods.

Buy milk in glass bottles that can be washed and reused.

Buy reusable products (cloth diapers, cloth napkins, reusable water bottles).

Buy rechargeable batteries.

Choose durability: Buy quality products. Maintain your things; take good care of your clothes and appliances. Repair items that can be repaired instead of replacing them.

Buy used electronics if possible, such as a refurbished laptop or recycled cell phone.

Reuse paper and print on both sides.

Talk to others about reducing their waste.

Take action to reduce the amount of unwanted mail you receive [Click Here](http://156.98.19.245/home/index.html) (<http://156.98.19.245/home/index.html>).

Dispose of household hazardous waste properly such as paints, cleaners, oils, pesticides and batteries [For Advice Click Here](http://www.epa.gov/waste/conserve/materials/hhw.htm#collect) (<http://www.epa.gov/waste/conserve/materials/hhw.htm#collect>).

Maintain your vehicle so that it lasts as long as possible.

### **Field Trip: Go To the Dump or Landfill during the EcoChallenge**

It is easy to be unaware of the sheer enormity of waste we produce. We put our trash out in the morning and come afternoon it is magically gone. This system shields us from the process and visual evidence of how much trash is being sent to landfills. By going to a dump you may find inspiration to further cut down your own waste stream- or engage your friends and family in taking action to reduce their trash output.

## My EcoChallenge is: to Reduce and Divert Trash

### For More Information, Check Out:

Read about an NWEI volunteer's efforts to reduce his trash last year:  
<http://www.nwei.org/news/earthmatters-newsletter-spring-2009>

Guides and information regarding waste: <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/index.htm>

The Secret Life Of T-Shirts <http://www.emagazine.com/view/?4695>

A list of [great blogs and bloggers](#) experimenting and reporting on their attempt to eliminate trash <http://www.greenecoservices.com/top-13-trash-blogs>

### Facts and Stats on Waste:

The average American generates 4.6 pounds of trash a day

American's make up 5 % of the world's population and generate 40% of the world's waste

1/3 of the waste generated in the US is packaging

Recycling an aluminum soda can saves 96% of the energy used to make a new can from ore, and produces 95% less air pollution and 97% less water pollution

Every year the US fills enough garbage trucks to form a line that would stretch from the Earth halfway to the moon

Every year, nearly 900,000,000 trees are cut down to provide raw materials for American paper and pulp mills

The average American, in one lifetime, uses: 18 tons of paper, 23 tons of wood, 16 tons of metal, and 32 tons of organic chemicals

Throwing away one aluminum can wastes as much energy as if that can were 1/2 full of gasoline

As of 1992, 14 billion pounds of trash were dumped into ocean annually around the world

1,500 aluminum cans are recycled every second in the U.S.