

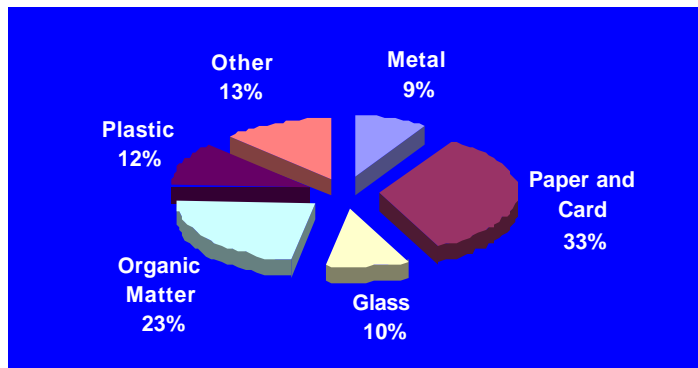
Waste

What can we do about it?

Have you ever thought about how much rubbish you and your family throws away every week? Or why we need to stop throwing so much away? Each year in Britain, we throw away 28 million tonnes of rubbish from home, that's half a tonne per person.

We can make a lot of simple changes in our everyday lives that can really make a difference to the amount of waste we produce.

What's in household waste?



Why it's important to produce less waste?

Once your rubbish is collected, most of it is buried in large holes in the ground. This is called landfilling. Some is burnt (incinerated) and some is recycled. We fill about 300 million square metres of land with rubbish every year, that's the same as covering the pitch at Old Trafford, Manchester United Football Club's ground, 28,450 times.

We don't recycle very much at all, only 9% of rubbish is recycled out of a possible 50%! We really could do better!

Below are some GOOD reasons why we shouldn't throw things away.

- Less valuable space is needed to get rid of waste.
- Making things from recycled material uses less energy and causes less pollution.

FASCINATING FACTS

28 million tonnes of rubbish weighs the same as three and a half million double decker buses. A queue of buses that long would go around the world one and a half times.



- Less incinerators will be needed to burn waste.
- Less new materials need to be quarried or mined and less managed plantations need to be grown to make new things. This preserves valuable resources, natural habitats and wildlife.
- Many people do not like wasting things and would prefer them to be recycled.

Can you think of any more?

How can we stop all this rubbish?

...by remembering the 3R's - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

In the home

- Save any glass bottles or jars, drinks cans, plastic containers and paper and take them to a recycling bank. Recycling saves energy and causes less pollution. Check with your Local Authority to see if they run a kerbside recycling scheme. Nearly half of all households can get glass, paper and tins collected free of charge from their households.
- Reuse envelopes. Many charities sell sticky address labels for this purpose
- You can save more trees by putting an end to junk mail forever. Register with the Mailing Preference Service, telephone 020 7766 4410.
- Clearing out your cupboards? Take any old clothes, toys or books to a charity shop, car boot sale or jumble sale so that someone else can reuse them, or if you think they're beyond use, place them in clothing recycling bins where they can be recycled in other ways.

FASCINATING FACTS

7 million trees are required to make the UK's supply of disposable nappies alone. Each child uses a total of 5850 nappies in their lifetime; that weights the same as an average family car!

- One million tonnes of nappies are thrown away every year, that's 8 million nappies every day. Use Terry Towelling nappies in place of disposable ones, if you don't like to thought of washing them then call the National Association of Nappy Services, for nappy laundry services in your area – 0121 693 4949.
- Compost your organic kitchen waste. Kitchen waste that can be composted includes vegetable and fruit peelings and teabags. Waste cardboard can be added to the compost too. The composted waste makes a wonderful fertiliser for the garden, which you can use to grow new food or flowers. Many local authorities sell compost bins at greatly reduced prices.
- Buy food with less packaging on. For example, buy loose fruit and vegetables instead of packaged ones.
- Take your own shopping bag to the shop. This way you will reduce the amount of carrier bags you waste.
- Save glass or plastic containers. You can reuse them for storing other things.

At School...

- Use reusable bottles or flasks for your drinks instead of individual cartons or cans and use reusable airtight containers for snacks and packed lunches instead of disposable wrappers.
- Buy snacks with less packaging on them. For example you could buy a piece of fruit instead of a packet of crisps or a chocolate bar, much healthier too.
- Always use both sides of a piece of paper, before you recycle it or throw it away. By using both sides of paper you reduce the amount of paper you waste.

FASCINATING FACTS

Each year food shops give away enough carrier bags to cover the whole of London with a layer of bags.

- You can reuse old paper, that can not be written on any more, to make papier mache models or masks or making your own recycled paper.
- Most of the waste in a school dustbin is paper ask the teachers if they can help you to find out if anyone can collect your school's waste paper for recycling. The local authority should be able to help you.
- Ask your school to buy and use recycled paper.
- Ask your school secretaries to reuse envelopes by sticking a label over the old address.
- Ask whether merits/rewards can be stamped in your journal/school diary instead of giving out paper merit/reward slips. This could be done for detentions as well.

FASCINATING FACTS

Every year we need a forest the size of Wales to provide all the paper we use in Britain. Each family uses about six trees worth of paper every year.

- Make a worm compost bin or see if your local council can provide you with one. You can recycle all the staff's tea bags, your fruit scraps, and some of the left over school dinners in a worm bin.

- Ask your school to join the Schools Waste Action Club (SWAC), it's an initiative that provides advice on waste reduction, reuse and recycling in schools, and helps children take practical action on waste. SWAC has developed a variety, of curriculum-based activities focused on the 3Rs - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle - for all school ages. Interested parties call Waste Watch on 020 7253 6266.

So remember the three R's reduce, reuse and recycle. Before you throw anything away ask yourself whether it can be reused or recycled.

1. Reduce the amount of waste you have in the first place
2. Reuse items if you can as it saves you buying new things
3. After you have reduced and reused as much as you can, recycle.
4. And lastly if it can't be reused or recycled then bin it!

Some interesting Facts and Figures

- 3 out of 4 cans on the supermarket shelf are made of steel. Every steel can is 100% recyclable.
- Steel cans are one of the most energy efficient forms of packaging. If all drinks cans in the UK were made of steel, the energy saved would be equivalent to that required to light every home in Britain for four weeks.
- Making steel from recycled materials uses up to 75% less energy than making steel from new materials.
- In 1998, recyclers were paid nearly £10 million for the aluminium cans they collected.
- Over 4 billion aluminium drinks cans were sold in 1998 - if they were all collected for recycling, over £38 million would have been paid to collectors.
- There would be 12 million less full dustbins each year in the UK if all aluminium drinks cans were recycled!
- Recycling aluminium uses only 5% of the power needed to make aluminium from raw materials. In other words,

20 cans from recycled aluminium use the same power as just 1 can made from new aluminium!

- In Britain, we use about 275,000 tonnes of plastic bottles in our homes every year – that's about 15 million bottles every day.
- Recycling just one plastic bottle can save the same amount of energy needed to power a 60 watt lightbulb for 6 hours!
- It takes about 25 recycled soft drink bottles to make one fleece jacket.
- Glass makes up about 9% of all the rubbish we throw away.
- On average, every family in the UK consumes around 500 glass bottles and jars every year – at the moment we recycle about 25% of these items.
- More than 1.5 billion gallons of oil are used every year in the UK to manufacture clothing.

Sources:

www.environment.detr.gov.uk

www.oiliercycles.com

www.doingyourbit.org.uk

www.wastewatch.org.uk

www.useitagain.org.uk

Background reading:

ROOM – Ikea magazine

Blueprint for a green planet – John Seymour

Severn Trent Water – Teachers Guide

A Guide to Saving Water – North West Water

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