

Reducing Packaging Waste

When it comes to producing garbage, Canada is among the world leaders. Eighty percent of garbage now goes to landfills and a small amount to incinerators.

Packaging is a significant component of solid waste. Once the package is discarded, more often than not it ends up in a landfill rather than being recycled or reused.

Packaging is defined as a material or item that is used to protect, contain or transport a commodity or product. A cereal box, a soft drink bottle and the box used for shipping your refrigerator – all are packages. Some packaging is essential to meet government regulations to ensure health and information needs of consumers and safety of products. Regulations on packaging also exist to ensure that products are not damaged during transit to the store or to your home.

If we all work together, we can reduce the packaging we send to landfills. Look around your home, office, school or shopping area and see if any of these suggestions can be put to use. If you see other ways to reduce packaging waste, put them into practice.



Practice the 3 Rs:

- Reduce ▲ Select products with as minimal packaging as possible.
- Reuse ▲ Use an item again for the same or different purpose.
- Recycle ▲ Separate from your garbage all packaging materials which can be recycled through curbside collection or a recycling depot.



Information contained in this fact sheet is adapted with permission from the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment

While Shopping...

Choose products with minimal packaging or products with packaging that is reusable, recyclable or made from recycled materials.

Take reusable bags with you when shopping.

Look for durable multi-use products instead of single use disposable products.

Shop for unpackaged bulk goods, such as nails and other hardware items where possible. This not only could save you money but will cut down on packaging waste.

Buy products in large sizes such as a large bag of sugar rather than the individually wrapped packages for products you use frequently.

If you feel a product is over-packaged, talk to the manager of the store about your concerns and also write a letter to the manufacturer with suggestions for reducing packaging.



At School...

Pack lunches and drinks using a reusable lunch pail and thermos flask.

Organize special projects such as a survey of your school or home to see how much packaging is used, for what purpose and ways to reduce some of that packaging.

If your school cafeteria uses disposable dishes and utensils, ask that the disposable items be replaced by reusable dishes, cups, knives, forks and spoons.



At Home...

Reuse grocery bags as garbage bin liners. As well, reuse jars or sturdy boxes for storage purposes in the garage, workshop or kitchen.

Reuse envelopes.

Turn empty containers into something useful around the home. For example: cleaned pump spray bottles can be reused for misting your plants.

Participate in your community recycling program. If one isn't available ask your municipality to start one.

Reuse gift-wrapping or find creative ways to present gifts.



At Work...

Bring reusable cups, dishes and cutlery with you to work instead of using disposables. Keep a travel mug in your car, purse or briefcase.



If your work place doesn't have an in-house recycling program for used packages, start one. For example: find out if a local recycler can accept such items as: cardboard, metal drums, plastic wrap and containers and wooden pallets.