

Tips on Reusing

<http://www.recyclebank.com/live-green/at-home-cat/444-reuse-revolution>

Take Stock

Keep track of the amount of waste you generate on a weekly basis. How much recycling and garbage is coming out of your household, and of this waste, what could be reused or reduced? Once you have determined areas for improvement, set some tangible goals. Perhaps those three bags of waste can become one, or maybe those disposable plastic water bottles will find their status downgraded to that of unwelcome guests.

Pack Your Own

You have probably heard of the so-called “latte factor,” which is the amount of money you spend on your daily dose of caffeine. Why not take your hot beverages to work with you in your own reusable mugs? While you’re at it, pack your lunch in reusable containers too. You’ve just done away with an expenditure of at least \$12/day by my uncertified public accounting, not to mention the cups, lids and plastic to-go containers that will no longer be your personal landfill legacy.

Buy in Bulk

Much of the waste we generate comes from excess packaging. Bring your own bags and containers, and purchase products in bulk, or in concentrated form, whenever possible. More and more stores are offering items from shampoo to olive oil in bulk (just don’t confuse the two!). These kinds of purchases are almost always less expensive, and stores often offer a discount when you bring your own containers.

The Trend of Thrift

One of the best places to find items for reuse is at your local thrift store. From clothing to furniture, thrift stores are an inexpensive and eco-friendly place to nab just the right *new-to-you* item.

Shop at Home

Before any outing that may involve a potential purchase, be sure to check your house thoroughly for the items you need. Items from tape to picture frames can often be found lurking in a box in the closet or the murky “everything” drawer in the kitchen.

To avoid impulse buying, consider if a purchase is necessary for at least a week before taking the plunge. In the meantime, look throughout your house for alternatives that you may already own. Check out *Real Simple's* column, [New Uses for Old Things](#) for ideas on creative conversions.

Obvious (I hope!) exception: If it's a health staple like toothpaste or toilet paper, please do not let your commitment to reuse stand in the way of a necessary purchase, but be sure to buy the most environmentally friendly version (no chemicals, biodegradable, highest level of post-consumer recycled content, etc.).

Reuse Other People's Stuff

Another great way to stave off the urge to shop and give yourself a great excuse to throw a party is to organize a swap with friends. Depending on your interests and needs, almost anything is fair game – clothes, books, toys and CDs are all popular items at a swap. Ask friends to bring some snackables and drinkables as well, and you will easily have yourself a fete, all without a new purchase. You can also check out the many [swapping websites](#) that easily and inexpensively allow members to swap books, CDs and DVDs online.

Free is the Magic Number

There are many ways to “shop” online without ever spending a dime. Websites such as [Craigslist](#), [Freecycle](#), and [Freebootr](#) have myriad free items that are yours for the taking.

Learn to Love Lending...

...and your neighbors. If you do find that you need a necessity such as a book or a tool, ask your friends if they have what you need first. As we all learned in the sandbox, sharing is a great way to extend and expand the use and variety of resources. Don't forget about the library too; after all these years, it's still a good place to find a book!

Lastly, resolve to share your progress with others; one of the most effective ways to inspire others is to share your success and excitement about the process.