

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair

Before you begin

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair are also known as “the most important 5R’s” of waste management. The concept of 5R’s is to decrease the amount of things we use and simultaneously also decrease the amount of things we throw away. Since we have limited space on earth to dispose all the waste, it is important to use the resources efficiently and create less waste. The 5Rs play an important role in solving the problems which can arise out of wrong waste management habits.

The 5R’s

Refuse

Refuse whenever and wherever possible. Choose items that are not packaged in plastic, and carry your own bags, containers and utensils. Refusing will eliminate most of your waste/ trash. Ask the question, “Why are we purchasing this item?” or, “Why do we need this?” For instance, make a personal commitment to say “no” to plastic straws. Whenever ordering a drink, politely request “no straw, please.” as such plastics are not recyclable and are harmful for the environment. So refusing such things which are not necessary will not end up harming us and nature.

Reduce

Reduce/Reduction: To make something smaller or use less, resulting in a smaller amount of waste. Waste reduction simply means reducing the things that we use and only consume what is necessary. This way the amount of waste that is created in the end is reduced and avoids going to the dump. This also reduces the pressure on natural resources which are utilized in treating the waste as well as natural resources which are required to manufacture new things. Reducing things that we use can also save a lot of money since we stop buying the product entirely. For instance, we can reduce the consumption of bottled water and instead carry a steel bottle to avoid sending the used bottles to landfill/recycling plant. Also, avoid buying new toys frequently, rather, build toys to play with.

Reuse

Reuse is a method or a practice of using something again. This can be done to use the product for its original purpose or to fulfil a different function. Reusing a product more than one time benefits us as well as the environment. Reusing also helps in saving time, money, energy and resources. For example, there are glass jars at home in the kitchen. These jars are used multiple times after being empty. Old books can be used by other people after being used once. The book can be used for reading or the paper of the book can be used for other purposes if it is a notebook. Use cloth gift bags and stop ripping the paper off gifts . If you remove the wrapping paper carefully, you can use it again.

Recycle

Recycling is one of the key components in the waste management system. It is the process of converting waste materials into new materials and objects. It is the practice of reprocessing and reusing the items in the same or a different form which otherwise could have been discarded as waste. This process saves a lot of time, energy and resources and money. It also reduces the consumption of natural raw material used to produce things. It is thus important to buy recycled as well as recyclable products in order to reduce the pressure on the environment. For example, your old notebooks can be recycled into recycled paper and then used again to bind notebooks.

These are some things that can be recycled: • Aluminium Cans • Building Materials • Cardboard • Electronic Equipment • Glass (particularly bottles and jars) • Lead • Magazines • Metal • Newspapers • Paint • Paper • Plastic Bags • Plastic Bottles • Steel Cans • Tyres • Writing/Copy Paper • Garden Waste

Repair

These days, we find it easier to buy a new product than to repair and use an existing product. This is true of especially electronic goods like mobile phones and domestic appliances, which can last a long time if repaired when necessary. Reducing, reusing and recycling, decrease both the demands on natural resources, as well as the rate at which they are consumed. Fewer resources are used and supplies that are limited are conserved. In addition, less waste is generated, thereby reducing the amount of trash that must be landfilled or incinerated. As the amount of trash buried or burned decreases, so too does the potential for water and air pollution which can occur as a result of burning or improper disposal of waste. Our world has a limited supply of natural resources, including land used for landfills. All these techniques help us conserve such natural resources.

Importance of 5R's

Waste has become a big challenge for the environment and humans in modern times. Our water bodies, our grasslands, our fields, our public spaces; all of them are being affected by the waste we discard. It is important to take steps for Refusing, Reducing, Reusing and knowing about Recycling at a young age. It is important to know what we actually need and what we just want.

