



# Reduce trash when you shop

and save some  
money, too

**Y**ou probably don't go to the store saying, "I think I'll buy some garbage today." But depending on which products you choose, that is at least partly what you're doing. By purchasing stuff that's over-packaged, disposable, or of poor quality, your cash can soon end up as trash.

And we pay for this garbage again and again — when it's picked up by the garbage haulers, and through our taxes which help pay for things like recycling, landfilling, incineration, and clean-up.

Reducing the waste you create through your buying habits helps prevent the costs and hassle of trash.

**TO LEARN MORE**  
[www.reduce.org](http://www.reduce.org)

## Bring your own bag

An easy way to reduce shopping waste is to use fewer bags. Bringing your own bags to the store is easy once you get in the habit. Durable bags of cloth or string are great, but disposable types can be reused, too — bring back that sack!

### Shopping tips:

- Keep several reusable bags — you'll probably need more than one.
- Store bags in your car, backpack, or purse. After unloading your purchases, put those bags back so you'll have them next time.
- Establish a habit. Put a note on your dashboard or front door to remind you to bring your bag along. Challenge yourself to reuse a bag for your next five shopping trips.



**Benefits:** A sturdy reusable bag makes shopping easier, and reusing conserves resources. By carrying your own bag you'll show that you care about the environment and set a good example for others.

## Purchase products in bulk or with the least amount of packaging



Buy what you need and buy products in bulk containers and concentrates with less packaging. Shop in the bulk aisle at the grocery store for things that you seem to be buying often and have

long shelf lives such as detergents, dog food, pasta, cereal, cleaners, and paper products. Buying in bulk will decrease waste and the total cost. Watch out for individually wrapped items that are packaged together and sold as a bulk item. You will be getting a lot more packaging than you were counting on.

**Example:** Next time you go to the store, make a list of what you need. Then look for opportunities to buy in bulk or buy products that have less packaging. Look at a product and think about how much of what you are paying for will end up in the trash.

**Benefits:** Not only are you saving money, but you won't have to go to the store as often.

When you shop smart by buying things in bulk or in concentrate, you can reduce the amount of packaging headed to the trash.



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## Get the most out of what you buy

The things we buy today will eventually become waste in the future. To protect your investment and prevent wasting time and money, here are some questions to ask before you buy.

**Is it reliable?** Ask the “experts” — people or organizations who have tested or repaired the product you want to buy. Evaluate the repair history of that product. Compare warranties. A longer warranty often means that the manufacturer feels confident that it will last longer.

**What does it really cost?** The purchase price is not the same as the cost to use and maintain a product. The longer you own something, the less it costs over time.

**Can I repair or upgrade it?** Buying products that are easy to repair will make your initial investment last longer. Upgrading lets you have “state-of-the-art” equipment with less waste.



ELECTRONICS



TOYS



FURNITURE

## Extending the life of your rechargeable devices

do

- Read and follow the charging instructions provided with your product. Each charger uses a specific strategy to charge the battery.
- Charge your new battery overnight before using it. This is called “initializing” and will enable you to obtain maximum battery capacity.
- Let a discharged battery cool to room temperature before recharging. A warm battery will signal a thermal cut-off switch to stop the charging process prematurely, and the battery will not get a full charge.



don't

- Avoid recharging batteries when they are close to fully charged already. A discharged battery can be detected by a sharp drop in speed or power, or by a reduction in the number of power indicators.
- Don't return a fully charged battery to the charger for an “extra boost.” This can overcharge the cells and significantly shorten their life span.
- Don't use the charger as a stand. Only use the charger if your rechargeable appliance — phone, power tool, or electric razor — needs to be fully recharged. Continuous charging will shorten battery life.

Source: Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation



Each month in Minnesota, approximately 572 tons of liquid cleaners and 132 tons of toilet bowl cleaners are washed down the drain.

## Choose the least hazardous cleaning products

With so many choices of products to clean your house, it can be difficult to choose the best one. Instead of buying many different types of cleaners, use one general-purpose cleaner.

Buy cleaning products with the least dangerous signal word: caution, warning, danger, or poison. Use the least dangerous product to do the job. You can also try home remedies such as vinegar and water to cut grease, and baking soda to scrub stains.

### Become a label reader

Look for key words on labels and choose the least hazardous product.

Less toxic	↑	<b>Caution</b>	mild/moderate
		<b>Warning</b>	moderate hazard
More toxic	↓	<b>Danger</b>	extremely flammable, corrosive or highly toxic
		<b>Poison</b>	highly toxic

## Buy green products

Minnesota residents are great recyclers. Our recycling rate is consistently among the highest in the nation. Nearly half (47%) of what we discard is recycled.

But there's more to recycling than putting your newspaper, glass, plastics, and metals out on the curb each week. Consumers should look for recycled content in the products they buy.

Recycled products are high-quality, proven products that perform as well as their non-recycled counterparts. By using recycled materials, the manufacturers of recycled products create less pollution and use less energy.

Recycling is good for Minnesota's economy, too. When you buy recycled-content products, you're supporting more than 8,700 Minnesota jobs and preserving the environment.



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### Why buy if you can get it for free?

Get or give free reusable goods for the home, garage, and garden at [twincitiesfreemarket.org](http://twincitiesfreemarket.org). It's open to residents of the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, and very simple to use. Another option: [craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org) has a Free section.



## Evaluate the products you buy and use

Look for something in your home that you rarely use. Did you need to buy it or could you have rented or borrowed it? Is it durable? Will you have to buy another one again if it fails? By asking yourself these questions you can save yourself money and time by only buying items you really need.



## Rent or borrow instead of buying

By renting equipment, you can avoid having to purchase items that you may only use a few times. Some of the most commonly rented items are trailers, lawn care equipment, tables and chairs, ladders, power tools, tents, and tree-trimming equipment. You could also borrow items from friends or family to avoid purchasing.

**Example:** Rent or borrow items for your family or neighborhood get-together. Churches and schools are great resources for tables and chairs, and tents can be rented from most party rental centers. Renting reusable dishware from banquet halls for events and gatherings can prevent waste from disposable cups, plates, and silverware.



**Benefits:** Renting items saves you money and time, plus it can reduce the amount of trash created by these events. Often the rental center will drop off and pick up the items for you.

## Slightly worn in

Options for reuse of consumer goods are alive, well, and here to stay if we make a conscious effort to locate and support them. There are a number of local resources and contacts to help you find reuse opportunities in the marketplace.

Consumers can access reuse opportunities by “letting their fingers do the walking” through the local newspaper’s classified ads and the Yellow Pages. Businesses promoting reuse can be found under categories such as antiques, rental service stores, salvage, secondhand stores, and thrift stores.

Other categories in the Yellow Pages —such as appliances, books, camping equipment, clothing, compact disc (and other recording media), computers, and sporting goods—include listings for businesses that rent these things or sell them secondhand.



To learn more about what you can do:

[www.reduce.org](http://www.reduce.org)



Your county solid waste office is a great resource for waste reduction materials, including local waste and environmental information, education resources, and speakers.



Heavy-duty or professional-grade equipment can make the task go easier. And renting the right tool keeps it affordable. Why buy something you will need to store but rarely use?

Living  
Green  
365



Need a reminder? Sign up for the Living Green 365 e-newsletter and receive monthly tips for living green, and a calendar of community events and resources. Living green means making choices and taking action to lead a healthier and more sustainable life.

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Minnesota Pollution  
Control Agency

