

What about disposables? Yes, they're convenient, but they add to the waste stream. When thinking precycling...think reusable. Shy away from paper plates, plastic dishes, paper napkins, disposable razors and lighters whenever possible. Look instead to cloth napkins, rechargeable batteries, thermos bottles and other reusable items. Because less packaging means less waste.

And, last but not least, bring your own reusable grocery bags to the supermarket with you. Not only are you making a statement, but also a canvas or plastic bag can be used again and again.

Reach For A Change.

Yes. One person really can make a difference. Buying and insisting on recyclable and recycled product packaging will keep the recycling loop rolling. So, When you're shopping, think before you buy, because you really can reach for a change.



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REACH FOR A CHANGE



P RECYCLE!

T

hink Before You Buy.

There is more to recycling than just collecting aluminum cans, bundling your newspapers, or even separating your plastics and glass. There's the first step. And this first step is called Precycling. Precycling is technically defined as:

Precycle – (pre-si-kel)

v. 1. to minimize household waste by buying products with minimal, recycled and/or recyclable packaging, to consider the environmental impact of packaging at the point of purchase, recycling is one option for conserving resources and solving solid waste disposal problems in our communities.

The three arrows of the recycling symbol represent “collection,” which is the gathering of recyclable materials for recycling, “manufacturing,” which is the manufacturing of products and their packaging which is made of recycled materials, and “distribution,” which is making available new products made from the materials initially collected.

But what does this really mean

To you and I as consumers?

Simply stated: Think before you buy.

P

ackaging That's Recyclable.

The essential link in collection.

Glass is 100% recyclable, meaning that no new or “virgin” materials need to be added for glass containers to become new glass containers. Further, glass can be recycled again and again without losing any of its qualities. In Hampton Roads, we can recycle the three colors of glass commonly found: green, brown and clear. If we recycle our glass packaging, the only waste left is the lid.

Aluminum is another type of packaging, which is readily available and easily recycled. It is also 100% recyclable and can be recycled again and again. The most commonly recycled aluminum packaging is aluminum cans, but in some local municipal programs, aluminum foil and pie plates are being accepted.

Packaging such as steel cans used for juice, vegetables and pet foods is also recyclable right here in Hampton Roads.

Plastic packaging is by far the most confusing of all recyclable materials. Manufacturers have voluntarily labeled their container with a number 1-7 inside the recycling symbol, as illustrated to the left.



Here in Hampton Roads reliable opportunities for recycling plastic only exist for PET 1 and HDPE 2 plastics. The most commonly accepted plastic within the industry is HDPE 2, which you can easily identify as plastic packaging with a neck.

When making purchases, look to buying products packaged in recyclable materials. It's the essential link in collecting for recycling.

R

ecycling at Point of Purchase

Buying products made from Recycled materials.

Now that you are purchasing products packaged in recyclable materials, collecting these materials and participating in curbside recycling, or taking these recyclables to your nearby recycling facility, what's next? Purchasing products packaged in materials which have *already* been recycled!



But, when you're making purchases, how will you know which products are packaged in materials, which have been recycled? It's easy, really. Most manufacturers who use recycled materials in their products or packaging display that information prominently on the product.

This is particularly evident on cardboard packaging such as soap powder boxes, cereal boxes and other dry food purchases. It's not so obvious, however, on aluminum and glass packaging, which are materials that are 100% recyclable. Plastic can also be tricky, so be sure to look at the packaging carefully for a label that indicates you are purchasing a product that is packaged in recycled materials.

What is really meant by “minimal packaging?” If a product is packaged in more than one layer of packaging material, it could be considered as over packaged, particularly if these layers are made of materials which are not easily recycled. As consumers, we can voice our concerns to the manufacturers by not purchasing products that are over packaged, as well as calling their 1-800 numbers which are listed on their products. Manufacturers really do care, but it's up to us to make a difference.

Other ways we can reduce packaging waste is by purchasing economy size or bulk and larger size packages. This not only reduces the amount of packaging waste you dispose of; it can save money, too.