

RECYCLING

Participants will learn:

- The benefits of recycling.
- Things you can do to increase recycling.
- Which items are recyclable.
- Activities and resources to learn more about recycling.



Why Recycle?

Recycling saves energy, benefits our economy, and protects our natural resources. More items can be recycled now, and we expect to see more recycling opportunities in the future. Minnesotans recycle more than 2 million tons of material annually. Although we have one of the best recycling rates in the nation, there is still room for improvement. Recent studies show that 24% of our trash is recyclable paper and that more than half of the people in Minnesota don't recycle at all. Small acts of recycling add up to a big difference. When we learn how to recycle properly at home, in our schools, and on-the-go and then share that information with others, we can continue to increase recycling in our communities.

Materials that are recycled instead of thrown in the trash are manufactured into new products instead of filling up valuable landfill space. Manufacturing products from recycled materials uses far less energy than manufacturing the same product from virgin (new) materials. It takes 90% less energy to manufacture an aluminum can from recycled aluminum, about 50% less energy to make glass from recycled glass, and about 75% less energy to make paper from recycled paper. Recycling decreases our demand for fossil fuels, which protects our natural resources and increases our energy independence.

Recycling also has many benefits to the economy. In Minnesota, approximately 37,000 jobs are directly or indirectly related to the recycling industry. These jobs range from the trash and recycling haulers who pick up and sort recyclables, to workers at factories who make new products out of recyclable materials. For example, Rock-Tenn Paper in St. Paul makes new cereal boxes from recycled paper, and Anchor Glass in Shakopee makes new beverage bottles from recycled glass bottles. These jobs pay an estimated \$1.96 billion in wages and add nearly \$8.5 billion to Minnesota's economy.

Recycled materials are also worth money. The 2.5 million tons of paper, plastic, glass, and metal collected through recycling programs in 2010 was worth \$690 million. In the same year, Minnesotans threw away 1.1 million tons of recyclable materials that were worth an estimated value of \$210 million. Instead, it cost \$200 million in disposal costs, wasting valuable materials and losing revenue.

Recycling Facts

- A glass container can go from a recycling bin to a store shelf as a new container in as little as 30 days.
- Aluminum cans are the most valuable container to recycle and have the highest consumer recycling rate in the United States. Each year the aluminum industry pays out more than \$800 million for empty aluminum cans.
- It takes 75% less energy to recycle steel than to produce steel from iron ore.
- Only 37% of telephone books were recycled in 2009.
- Puffs® brand tissue boxes are made from recycled newspapers at the Rock-Tenn paper facility in St. Paul.
- A single, standard-sized corrugated box can be recycled up to eight times.
- The plastic recycling industry provides jobs for more than 52,000 Americans.
- Recycling one ton of paper saves at least 14 trees, three cubic feet of landfill space, and 7,000 gallons of water.

How to Increase Recycling

Ten things you can do to recycle more

1. Talk to your hauler, city, or county to find out what you can recycle.

Contact your hauler to clarify which items you can put in your curbside recycling bin. See Rethink Recycling's *Know What to Throw Guide* for items that most haulers will accept. Your local hauler is the best source of information about the specific materials collected in the recycling program at your home, business, or organization.

2. Look for recyclables in your bathroom, kitchen, laundry, garage, and storage area.

There are many items in your bathroom that can be recycled, such as shampoo, soap, and lotion bottles; boxes from toothpaste, medications, and other toiletries; and empty toilet paper rolls. You can also find many items to recycle in your kitchen and laundry, such as dishwashing liquid and detergent bottles, phone books, and junk mail. In your garage, look for used tires and scrap metal. In your office or storage area, look for cardboard, magazines, paper, electronics, and batteries. You may need to find drop-off options for materials not collected curbside.



3. Pair your recycling bin with a trash bin.

Always put the trash and recycling containers next to each other to make recycling as convenient as throwing something in the trash. If your trash bin and recycling containers are in separate locations, people may not make the extra effort, and you'll end up with trash in your recyclables or recyclables in your trash.

4. Stay up-to-date about what you can recycle.

As the market for recyclable materials continues to develop, materials accepted in recycling programs will change. Our waste stream continuously changes with the development of new products (e.g. cell phones, personal electronic devices, kid's toys, etc...). Manufacturers are finding new ways to make products out of these materials and are looking to make new products that are less toxic and easier to recycle. Therefore, keep checking with your local hauler and your city or county to see if there are any new materials they collect.

5. Let your voice be heard.

In order for haulers to collect your recyclables, there needs to be a market for recycled material so that haulers can sell them. In order for there to be a market, manufacturers need to use the recycled material to make new products. Consider contacting the manufacturer of a product to inquire about the recyclability of the product. The product manufacturer contact information can be found on the product or on the internet.

6. Buy products with recycled content.

Purchasing products with recycled content is vital to the recycling process, as it completes the recycling loop. Hundreds of everyday products, such as notebook and copy paper, polar fleece clothing, and yard and garden furniture, are made from recycled materials. When purchasing recycled products, look for those labeled "post-consumer," "pre-consumer," or "recycled-content."

7. Recycle more at a local drop-off location.

Check with your county (www.rethinkrecycling.com/contact-us) or city (www.rethinkrecycling.com/residents/recycle/city-recycling-information) to see if they offer drop-off locations to recycle large and bulky items such as appliances, electronics, excess cardboard, scrap metal or other items.



8. Recycle items while away from home.

Look for recycling containers at gas stations, businesses, and retail outlets. If they don't have any containers, ask the person or company in charge to consider making them available. Otherwise, bring a bag with you to collect your recycling to recycle at home.

9. Encourage recycling at parties or events.

Set out paper bags or containers and label them for recycling to encourage guests to recycle. Choose or encourage the use of reusable or recycled-content materials for beverage cups, plates, utensils, napkins, etc.

10. Recycle when you shop.

Many retail stores accept items for recycling, such as cell phones, plastic bags, and ink cartridges. Consider bringing items that can be recycled at retail locations the next time you are running errands.

Recycling Activities

The following activities are designed to help educate residents and community groups about what materials are recyclable in most community recycling programs. Contact your hauler for information about what's accepted in your home or building.

Recycling Activity #1 Recycling BINGO

Participants will learn about different types of items that are recyclable. The recycling BINGO activity is adaptable for groups of all sizes.

Suggested supplies:

- Bingo cards with images of recyclable items on the (a set of Bingo Cards are available at the end of the Recycling section of the Community Education Toolkit on RethinkRecycling.com)
- Bottle caps, buttons, paper clips, or something similar for markers
- Recycling bin/container filled with curbside recycling items
- Instructions (found at the end of this section)

Recycling Activity #2

Recycling Waste Sort

Depending upon the size of the group, you can do this as a large group activity or you can break the group into smaller groups. You could also choose to set up stations and have people do it individually and then come back as a group to discuss the answers.

The waste sort consists of a large trash bag of recyclable and non-recyclable materials. Tell the group that their job is to determine what items can be recycled and what items have to go in the trash. Have the individuals or groups place the items they think are recyclable in the recycling bin/container and the trash items in a large trash bag.

Suggested supplies:

- Large trash bag for each group
- Recycling bin (or a bag labeled "recycling") for each group
- Empty, clean containers or items that can be recycled (approximately 15 per group)
- Empty, clean containers or items that are non-recyclable (approximately 15 per group)
- List of what can and can't be recycled in your community



discussion starters

- Can you recycle all types of plastic containers?
- Can you recycle frozen or refrigerated paper containers?
- Which type of used battery can be thrown in the trash and which cannot?
- Where can you take your electronics to be recycled?

Recycling Activities

Recycling Activity #3

Recycling Relay

This team activity encourages your group to reuse and recycle before considering throwing something in the trash.

Suggested supplies:

- Clean but unwanted reusable items such as clothing, CD's, and small toys (5 to 10 per team)
- Empty, clean recyclables such as plastic bottles, cans (be sure to include tin), and paper (card board, phone books, office paper, junk mail, newspaper, magazines) (5 to 10 per team)
- Empty, clean trash examples (Styrofoam, foil juice pouches, chip and other snack bags) (5 to 10 per team)
- Three buckets or boxes per team



Instructions:

Gather a mixture of clean, reusable, recyclable, and trash items.

Organize three buckets or boxes: Label the first box "reuse" and place it closest to the start line. Label the second box "recycling" and label the final and furthest box "trash."

Team members are handed an item that they have to decide what to do with: reuse, recycle, or trash. They then run to the bucket, placing each item in the appropriate bin, run back, and tag the next team member.

The more items they reuse and recycle instead of throwing in the trash, the higher chance they have for winning. This also illustrates the idea that reuse is cheaper and uses fewer resources than recycling, and that recycling uses fewer resources than landfilling.

discussion starters

Review what was put in each box and have each team explain how they would have reused the items that they put in the reuse bin. The leader will confirm that the items they put in the recycling bin are really recyclable in your community, and discuss whether anything in the trash could have been reused or recycled.



Recycling Activity #4

Participate in America Recycles Day – November 15th

- Promote recycling and buying recycled goods.
- Display samples of clothes and goods that are made in Minnesota from recyclable material (see the Minnesota Recycled Products Directory at www.pca.state.mn.us). Encourage participants to shop for these items the next time they need them.
- Weigh or count the amount of recycling or number of bags (e.g. similarly sized paper bag or kitchen garbage bag) participants have recycled per week/month since the start of your campaign. Challenge them to make additional improvements in the coming months.

Recycling Activity #5

Tours

Coordinate a tour of a landfill and/or a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) to provide participants a first-hand look at where their curbside recycling goes to be sorted and shipped to recycling markets. Allied Waste MRF in Inver Grove Heights has a dedicated education room with cameras on the sorting line to view the process. There is also a landfill adjacent to the MRF if a landfill tour is also desired. Contact your county (www.rethinkrecycling.com/contact-us) for additional tours offered in your area.

Where to Get More Information

Community POWER Success Story

Our Community POWER project was called Generation Green. We are a public charter school in Apple Valley. Our project impacted our students, their families, and the community. Being a K-8 school with about 400 students, we were generating six to seven extra-large bags of trash daily! At the end of our project the school was down to ONE bag!

Generation Green educated the students in our club about lunch waste/recycling/composting. The club kids in turn taught their fellow students. It was so exciting to see! As a school, we did many amazing projects throughout the year, including lunch composting and hosting, introducing natural cleaners, making holiday wrapping paper, all-school family night about the environment, and an Earth Day fair for the community. The biggest challenges were getting teacher support and engaging junior high students. Looking ahead, we are continuing Generation Green with a focus on reducing the school's use of plastic.

Crystal Dawn Kohler
Environmental Education Coach
Paideia Academy
Apple Valley, MN



Print Resources:

- **Recycling BINGO cards and instructions***
- **From the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board**
—Know What to Throw Guide ([Contact your county](#) to request printed copies.)

**Attached at the end of this Toolkit.*

Online Resources:

- **Recycling Tips for Residents**
- **www.recyclomoreminnesota.org**
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's website about recycling in Minnesota. The website includes curbside recycling information as well as recycling options for non-traditional materials.
- **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency**
[Recycling web page](#) of facts, tools, and resources to learn more about recycling and different recycling programs.



Recycling BINGO Instructions

Contents:

- Bingo cards with pictures or photographs of recyclable items on them (see sample Bingo Cards on RethinkRecycling.com)
- Bottle caps, buttons, paper clips, or something similar for markers
- Recycling bin/container filled with curbside recycling items
- Instructions (also with Bingo Cards on RethinkRecycling.com)

Instructions

1. Assign one person to be the BINGO 'caller'
2. Distribute cards and bottle cap 'markers' to players
3. Caller selects an item from the recycling bin
4. Caller describes the item to the players
 - a. Explain the material (plastic, paper, metal, etc)
 - b. Point out any notable characteristics (bottle with a neck, recycling symbol on the container, etc)
5. Caller asks the players to determine if the item is recyclable
6. Players locate it on a card and cover with a bottle cap 'marker'
7. Caller continues to select items and call out items until someone calls out BINGO



*Try variations of BINGO, the caller can select to play regular BINGO, four corners, postage stamp or black out BINGO at the beginning of each game.

BINGO caller tips:

The recycling bin contains several recyclable items. To allow for longer discussion, it is recommended to call out the items by the EXACT item as listed on the BINGO card. For example, there are several types of plastic containers.

Recyclables in the bin can include:

- Mixed mail (junk mail, flyers, bills)
- Metal can (soup cans, soda cans)
- Shoe box
- Milk jug
- Cereal box
- Shampoo bottle
- Toothpaste box
- Band-Aid box
- Mayonnaise bottle
- Salad dressing bottle
- Syrup bottle
- Cleaner bottle
- Ketchup bottle
- Paper towel roll
- Newspaper advertisement
- Newspaper
- Toilet paper roll
- Magazine
- Water bottle
- Aluminum can
- Office paper
- Glass jar
- Pasta box
- Cracker box
- Aluminum foil
- Paper bag
- Glass bottle
- Dish soap bottle
- Shredded paper
- Telephone book
- Lotion bottle
- Tissue box
- Cardboard
- Glass bottles and jars
- Pop bottle
- Laundry detergent bottle
- Milk carton
- Margarine tub
- Juice box
- Plastic cup
- Soup carton
- Medicine box
- Yogurt tub
- Clear plastic container or "clam-shell" from baked goods, fruit, take-out etc.