

Setting up a RECYCLING PROJECT



Why recycle?

The average person in Ireland throws away ten times his or her bodyweight of rubbish every year - and this is increasing all the time. The disposal of this refuse is a growing problem. A different approach to consumption and packaging could reduce the amount generated and a lot of our refuse could become an asset if it were reused. Recycling saves raw materials and energy and reduces the impact of existing waste disposal systems on our environment and health.

What can be recycled?

Many materials that are thrown in the bin can be recycled or reused. Many towns in Ireland have recycling centres, but most people are unaware of just how much of our rubbish can be recycled.

■ Paper

The raw material used to make paper is trees, specifically plantations of conifers or eucalyptus trees. These trees consume large amounts of water and deplete the soil. Paper production uses a lot of energy and causes pollution.

Newspaper, office stationery, computer print-outs, and cardboard are recycled in Ireland to produce writing paper, toilet rolls, egg boxes, cardboard, horticulture products and animal bedding. Every tonne of recycled paper saves 17 trees, 7,000 gallons of water and enough energy to heat the average home for six months.



■ Glass

The raw materials used to make glass are sand and limestone, which are both plentiful. But the production process causes pollution and consumes a lot of energy and water.

Quarrying for sand wastes agricultural land and damages wildlife and amenities. 140



litres of oil are used to heat the raw materials for 1,000kg of glass. Recycled glass, sorted by colour, is crushed and used as a substitute for the raw materials. Every 1,000kg of recycled glass saves 1,200kg of raw materials.

■ Metal

Metal cans are made of aluminium or steel lined with tin. Both aluminium and de-tinned steel can be smelted and used again. Recycling aluminium is very important because the mining of bauxite, its raw material, causes the destruction of tropical rain-forests. The production of just one metal can uses the equivalent of half that can full of oil.

Recycling reduces energy use by 95%



■ Plastic

The raw materials of plastic include oil, coal, natural gas and salt. There are over 50 types of plastic in common use and they need to be separated before they can be recycled. Unfortunately, there are few facilities to do this so it is better to reduce consumption.



Creative Recycling!

With a little bit of imagination you can find ingenious ways to reuse things. Try out some of the following or come up with new ideas of your own...

- Milk cartons and plastic bottles can be used in the garden to protect young plants and seedlings from frost.
- Ice pop sticks can be used to label plants in a vegetable garden.
- Yoghurt cartons and small plastic containers can be used to plant seeds and cuttings.
- Re-use envelopes by covering the address with labels.
- Shoe boxes and large plastic containers make ideal storage containers. Decorate them using paint, wrapping paper or magazines.

Starting up a recycling project

Action Step 1

Collect Information

Contact your local authority for a list of recycling collection points and recycling companies in your area.

Find out when and how often collection takes place. Find out how the collected recyclables are to be presented for collection for example:

- separating paper into magazines, newspaper, cardboard etc.
- separating glass bottles by colour, removing labels and tops and clean if necessary
- separating cans by checking if they are aluminium or not.

Storage will need to be provided for the collected items.

Action Step 2

Get permission

Ask for permission to go ahead with the project and check that the storage of paper, for example, will not cause any insurance problems.

Action Step 3

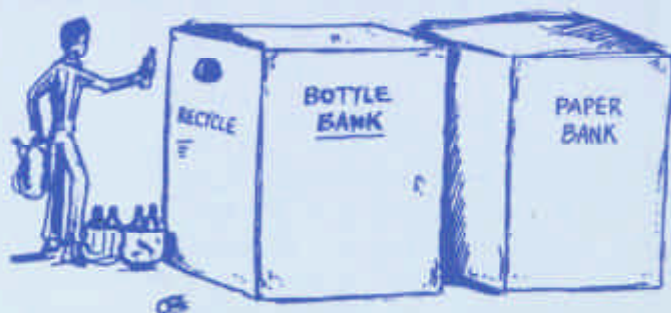
Decide what to recycle

Deciding on what you can recycle is the next decision to be made. Drinks cans, glass bottles, paper, plastic and clothes can all be recycled. Depending on collection points and permission you can decide to recycle some or all of these.

Action Step 4

Collection

Collecting the recyclables involves placing clearly marked recycling bins in accessible areas that people will use. A canteen or lunch area is ideal for collecting cans and bottles. You can use old empty containers as bins, for example plastic drums, metal drums, large strong plastic bags, etc. or perhaps you could get local sponsorship to



provide new bins. Make sure the bins are strong enough for the purpose, are tidy and do not cause any obstruction.

Action Step 5

Raise awareness

A successful recycling project will need the support of the whole school or community so informing everyone about the project is very important. Posters advertising the project are the best way of achieving this. You could even run a poster competition with a recycling theme and use the winning posters to advertise the recycling bins!

