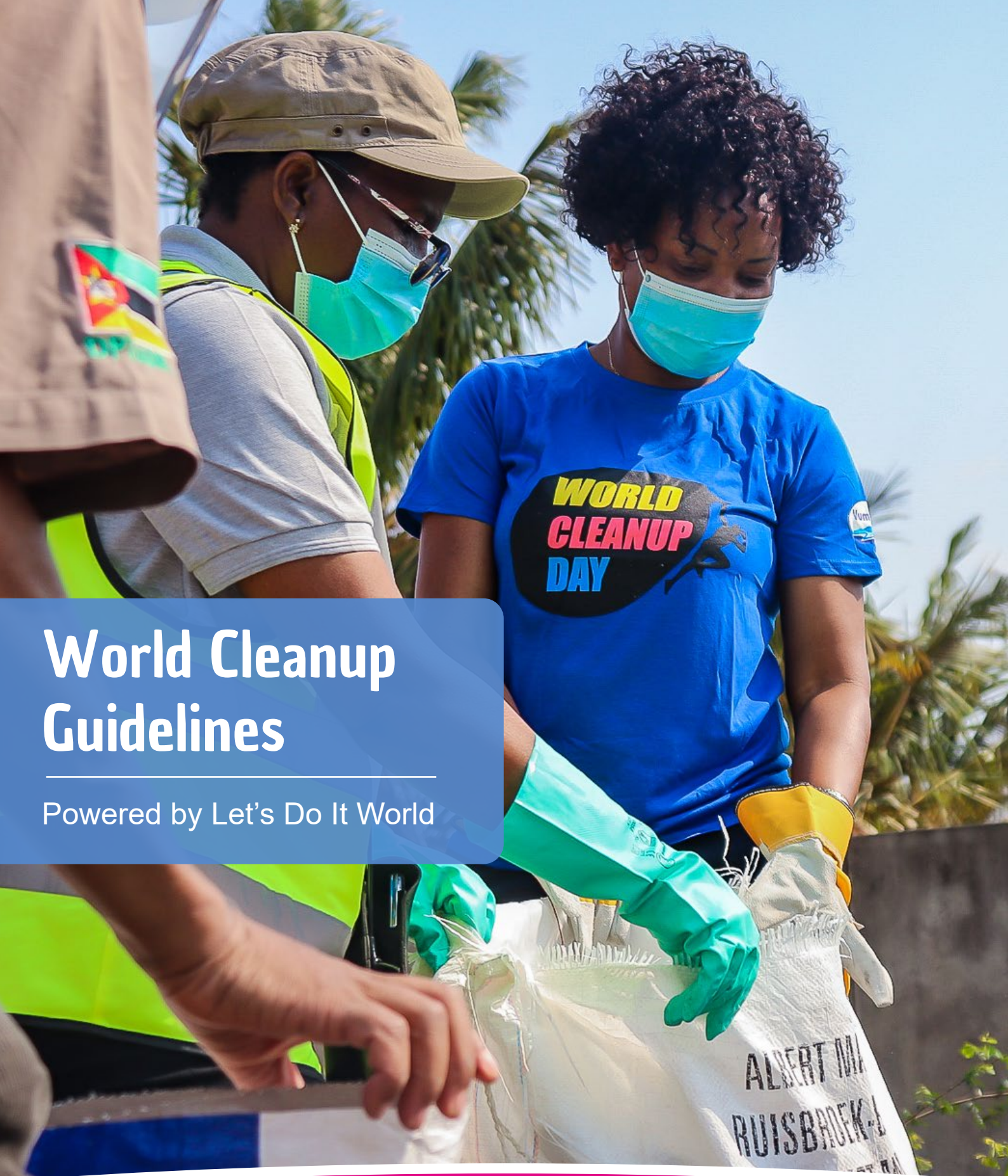




World Cleanup Guidelines

Powered by Let's Do It World





LET'S DO IT WORLD is one of the world's largest environmental networks, with active leaders and teams tackling the global waste problem in 164 countries. The flagship project of Let's Do It World is World Cleanup Day, which takes place on the third Saturday of each September. On this day, Let's Do It World engages volunteers and partners worldwide to clean up litter and mismanaged waste from beaches, rivers, forests, and communities.

To move towards a waste-free world and survive as humankind we need everyone to contribute. The necessary shift towards sustainability can only be achieved by acting together through positive collaboration.

This guide gives you an overview of the essential information needed to organise a safe and sustainable cleanup.

HOW TO ORGANISE A CLEANUP

8 SIMPLE STEPS



1 Pick your cleanup site

When choosing the site, consider and plan out logistical issues such as how people will reach the location and how the waste will be collected—e.g. where it will be collected from and how it will be managed afterwards.

Complete a risk assessment to establish whether there are any threats to volunteers which need attention.

Do a waste mapping exercise to establish how much waste there is to be collected (e.g. using a waste mapping app or just looking around). Calculate how many people and cleanup tools/resources you'll need to collect all the waste you have identified.

You will need to plan:

- Where on site the volunteers will meet/register upon arrival

- Where volunteers will collect pick-up materials like gloves, bags, etc.
- Where filled bags of waste and recyclables will be left for collection
- Which areas will be cleaned as part of the clean-up activity

2 Contact partners

Contact the local municipality for permission and waste disposal. Aim to recycle as much waste as possible. In many countries, municipalities are responsible for managing waste.

Organise volunteer insurance if needed.

You might find partners who can provide free waste bags, transportation, drinks, food, etc.

3 Communication

Promote your event and communicate clearly what you will be providing on the day and what volunteers should bring along themselves (e.g. gloves, bags, water, etc.).

Register your volunteers. You may need their contact details on the day in order to coordinate the cleanup action.

4 Kick off the cleanup event

Prepare the meeting point (e.g. info and registration, signs, parking, waste disposal, toilet access, etc.). Provide hand washing facilities or hand wipes.

Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged and you are reachable all the time in case of need or an emergency.

Welcome all the volunteers. Provide safety, cleanup and segregation instructions for all volunteers.

Delegate cleanup areas to volunteer pairs and/or groups and distribute cleanup materials. Try to use reusable materials as much as possible—so that we don't create even more waste while collecting it. Clarify that during the cleanups all man-made materials should be picked up.

5 Assisting volunteers

Sort the collected waste into recyclable groups during the cleanup.

Separate materials that can be recycled. If someone finds weapons or other suspicious items, contact the local police. Caution in handling hazardous waste! Provide first aid if needed.

6 Sorting and reporting

Count the number of 30l waste bags and put different waste streams in separate trash bags.

Report your results. Send the number of people and amount of collected waste to the HQ office as instructed.

7 Celebration and thank you!

Celebrate the day! Dance! Thank all the volunteers! Take a group picture. Share it on social media.

8 After the cleanup

Manage collected waste with your partners or using regular waste management facilities. Make sure you don't leave anything (i.e. any collected waste!) behind.



OTHER TYPES OF CLEANUPS

You can make your cleanup more fun by using some additional activities and competitions.

Plogging

Plogging is a combination of jogging and picking up litter. It's a Swedish trend that started back in 2016 and is rapidly gaining popularity around the globe. In some countries you can use the WePlog app, which shows which streets ploggers have recently visited, and helps you focus on the streets which are most littered. Plogging is a nice way of combining a healthy lifestyle with sustainability.

Cigarette butt challenges

Each year, 6 trillion cigarette butts are produced, and 4.5 trillion of them end up in natural habitats and water bodies. The effect is devastating to our natural resources. One cigarette filter contains more than 150 extremely poisonous toxins—capable of ruining 1000 litres of water, and taking 15 years to disintegrate. Since cigarette butts are made of plastic, decaying filters contribute massively to the micro-plastic problem the world faces today. So be sure to pay attention to cigarette butts, pick them up separately, and make a competition out of it.

P.S! You don't need to count cigarette butts one-by-one. [Here you can find some tips](#) on how to estimate cigarette butts quantities easily.





SAFETY GUIDELINES

Cleanup work should be carried out as safely as possible! Being aware of various safety points not only reduces the risk of accidents or illness, but also enables groups to work more effectively—thus increasing everybody's enjoyment and satisfaction. However, things can happen, and it is better to be prepared for them!

Preparations for a cleanup

- 1 **Carry out a risk assessment of the area** that you are going to clean up. Map the possible risks that come from traffic, the neighbourhood, the landscape, nature or man-made infrastructure like power grids, pipelines or even land mines. Try to avoid risky locations.
- 2 **Prepare a Basic First Aid Kit** that includes wound care (e.g. bandages, gauze roll, leukotapes) and tools (e.g. scissors, precision tweezers, hand sanitiser, medical gloves). Make sure there is at least one person in the group who can provide first aid.
- 3 **Stay up to date with the local weather forecast** and prepare for what is coming. If the weather forecast predicts extreme conditions (such as storms, very heavy rain or wind, or high heat), ask for advice from

local experts as to whether it is safe to continue with the cleanup.

- 4 **Have all important contacts and emergency numbers handy!** Keep a record of the names and mobile phone numbers of all your volunteers. Make sure there is at least one fully-charged mobile phone per group and know where the closest calling option is.

Safety during a cleanup

- 1 **Think 'Safety First'** while cleaning up the site and inform your volunteers of how to safeguard themselves and others. The golden rule should be: "If it is not safe, do not do it. If you are not sure whether it is safe, do not do it."
- 2 **Organise work in pairs or small groups** for safety and mutual assistance. This means that if anyone is in difficulty, others can help immediately.
- 3 **Make sure all volunteers have proper personal protective equipment** to ensure protection and safety during the cleanup. For example, wearing gloves, appropriate clothing and closed-toe shoes, etc.

4 In the case of high temperatures, pay attention and ensure that volunteers drink water regularly, wear hats and sunglasses, and rest if they are tired.

5 Ensure that volunteers don't lift heavy weights. Volunteers usually have a “doers” mentality during a cleanup and it's easy to overestimate one's ability to lift heavy objects.

6 Do not let anyone touch or pick up any unknown containers, explosive materials or dangerous chemicals. The locations of such items need to be flagged and reported to the local responsible authorities. Waste which could potentially be hazardous must be collected separately, i.e. medical waste, oil, tar balls, etc.

7 Do not enter private land, hazardous areas or unstable ground. Where signs or common sense indicate such an area, use caution and stay away.

8 Pay attention to children's safety. The site may seem like an interesting playground to them, and they must be carefully instructed by their parents regarding hazardous objects and other threats. Instruct parents that their children are their responsibility and they should look out for them with care.

9 Last but not least—do not harm the environment during the cleanup.

In case of an incident

Call the emergency services if someone is injured. The most important thing is people's health and their life! What to do if an unexpected situation happens:

1 Stop your cleanup work!

2 Stay calm and ensure your own safety.

3 CALL the emergency services! Tell them clearly what happened, where and with whom.

4 Follow their instructions.

5 Give first aid if needed, if you are qualified to do so. If your skills are insufficient, ask for assistance from the emergency services and do your best.

6 Monitor the injured person's conditions until the emergency services arrive.

7 Make sure everyone else is safe!





SORTING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Managing the waste after the cleanup can be a big and difficult task. Here we have few basic guidelines to help you plan the process. If you are not able to follow all of them, even just following one or two of them is a good start!

The first ultimate rule is that waste in one place is better than waste in thousands of places. Getting as much waste as possible into one place is already a step in the right direction, even if the possibilities to manage it properly are poor.

Collecting waste to one place will:

- Erase or minimise related health and environmental risks from the mismanaged waste
- Make it easier to manage and control the collected materials
- Make the waste and related problems more visible to authorities
- Help better organise the following steps

However, do not simply leave the waste after collecting it! Contact the municipality until the waste is taken care of properly.



SORTING

Waste pickup and sorting will vary depending on the location.

We aim to minimise the leakage of resources from circular models. This means separating and recycling what you can, so that the life of these materials can be extended. **Aim to maximise the recycling rate during a cleanup!**

Before the cleanup, have an overview of what kind of possibilities you have for sorting and recovering the collected waste. You might need to be creative here—in many countries there is no official recycling system, but there might still be opportunities for putting those materials to use.

See what makes sense to be sorted. Check if there are any companies who take metals, any types of plastic, wood, glass, stones, textiles, or construction and demolition waste for recycling. Some waste may be reusable or even sellable.

All clean biodegradable waste can be composted. If you manage to collect clean organic material—free of plastic, metal, glass, chemicals—build a compost heap. (See the “Dealing with biowaste” section for more information.)

For hazardous waste—e.g. electronics, chemicals, medical waste—it’s best to have skilled people to handle it. If not possible, find a place to store it separately. (See the “Dealing with hazardous waste” section for more information.)

For everything else—i.e. materials that can’t be reused or recycled—aim to get this pile as small as possible. This should go to landfill, a temporary dumping site or any other existing local disposal sites.

If sorting during the cleanup, use bags with different colours to make it simpler for volunteers. If not sorting during the cleanup, mixed waste bags should be used for everything.

In summary, the following materials should ideally be sorted separately for recycling during a cleanup:

- Paper and cardboard
- Biowaste (compost onsite if possible)
- Metal
- Recyclable plastics and packaging materials
- Glass
- Electronics
- Tyres
- Hazardous waste

Sort and recycle as much as possible. Each material saved is a contribution to the circular economy and sustainable future.





DEALING WITH BIOWASTE

Biowaste is waste that naturally biodegrades, such as food scraps, garden waste, yard trimmings, etc. All these materials can be easily composted, e.g. processed into a fertiliser and recycled back into the soil as organic matter. This is very important for soil fertility.

During the cleanup, do not mix organics (biowaste) with plastics or other waste streams. Recycling plastic becomes challenging once mixed with biowaste. So always try to collect biowaste separately! If the organic waste can't be separated from other waste—i.e. it's considered “dirty”—then collect it together as mixed waste and to be managed accordingly. Biowaste does not include any packaging plastic, metal or glass.

The best way to deal with biowaste is to compost it onsite. This minimises the transport requirements and the fertile soil stays where it is. This is easier in rural areas, but

in urban areas we recommend collecting organics and transporting it for composting to the closest location in which there is enough space. This could be a garden, park, common green space or recycling station. If it is not possible to compost, then you can leave all organics behind during cleanups, as eventually they will degrade naturally.

Items which are good to compost

(if “clean” non-contaminated organics):

- Garden leftovers, grass clippings and prunings from tree/shrubs
- Kitchen waste—all leftovers from the preparation of meals and the meal itself (eggshells, fruit and vegetable peelings, bones, skins, feathers, etc.)
- Waste from rearing animals (manure, poultry litter, feed)



DEALING WITH HAZARDOUS WASTE

Hazardous waste is waste that poses a direct threat and danger to human health and/or the environment. Hazardous waste can be toxic, flammable, explosive and/or infectious.

Some hazardous waste examples:

- Clinical/medical wastes—e.g. used needles, gloves, masks, medicines, used bandages stained with blood or other body fluids (possibly infectious);
- Waste oils or water, hydrocarbon or water mixtures, usually leaking from boats or vehicles;
- Waste from the use of resins, latex, plasticizers, glues/adhesives (often found in construction waste);
- Waste resulting from surface treatment of metals and plastics—e.g. stain, paint and dye residues;
- Residues arising from industrial waste disposal operations—e.g. chemicals, insulation materials;
- Electronic and electrical waste. These usually contain certain dangerous compounds like mercury, lead, cadmium, zinc and copper.
- Dead animals and body parts (not including food waste).

If you are not sure whether the waste is hazardous or not, always treat it as if it is hazardous then let experts decide later.

What to do if you encounter hazardous waste?

The best option is to refrain from touching the hazardous waste. Instead, mark the place, take a photo if you can, and call experts in to handle it. Don't open closed bottles or containers. Keep them leak-proof and air-tight.

Don't break electronic devices apart. Electric and electronic waste is the only type we recommend that you do take with you (but wear gloves to be safe). Collect and store these items separately from the rest of the waste.

If there are no experts in your area and you need to store hazardous waste yourself, be sure to store all materials properly—i.e. not too close to each other and in ventilated, dry, cool areas. Keep storage areas free from materials that may cause tripping, fires or explosions, or that may attract rats and other pests.

For more info on healthcare waste, you can look up info from the World Health Organization [here](#). Another great resource is the [HCWH \(Health Care Without Harm\) website](#), which includes info, tools and documents on health care waste, chemicals, etc.

It is imperative not to burn hazardous waste—it is extremely dangerous and potentially life threatening!





WASTE MANAGEMENT

Set-up a “resource station” to be supervised by a resource manager. We propose calling it a resource station rather than a waste station, as many items or materials in the waste collected at cleanups are still usable, and therefore still valuable resources. This is a great way to raise awareness of the value of waste.

A resource station is a place where all the collected waste can be stored temporarily before being transported to a recycling center or landfill. This place should be suitable both for sorting activities and for keeping waste safe from being carried away again by the wind, water or anything else. Remember to also consider the space required for trucks to move around the waste heaps.

Be prepared for the waste potentially not being transported to the recycling center or landfill on the same day. In the case of a temporary resource station, try to consider all that is needed to prevent it from becoming an uncontrolled dumping site. For this reason, areas with restricted or controlled access are preferable.

Sorting may be done in resource stations or at already existing facilities, e.g. a landfill site or a municipal recycling center. That would be the best case scenario.

Be sure to avoid any and all fires! Burning of mixed waste is the worst case scenario.

Find out who is responsible for waste management in your region. Make sure you know if and what kind of laws and regulations apply in your region for waste management, and in particular for removal of litter. Ask your local municipality or waste experts.

Always consider whether you need to get permits or permission to keep the waste on the spot you have chosen or to transport it, and find out who is

the jurisdictional authority or owner of the site (some possibilities might be: municipality, district, county, region, state or private owner).

In most cases, the local municipality will partner with you to manage the waste collected during cleanup. If the municipality doesn't want to cooperate, you can find responsible professional partners to transport, manage and recycle the waste instead.

What if there is no landfill for the final destination for waste which is not recoverable (i.e. not reusable/recyclable)?

You may need to create a local disposal site. For more info on how to create a local disposal site, you can [read the guide](#) created by WasteAid.

Make sure you find someone who can advise you on waste management in your country, region or community. Some examples of where to look for expertise:

- Governmental agencies (e.g. environmental protection agencies, planning agencies, health authorities);
- Municipality experts, as you are acting within municipal jurisdiction;
- Business sector (public waste companies, private waste management companies, etc.), as you may need technical help;
- Research groups and universities/schools, as you may need their advice;
- Other NGOs who have expertise in waste, as they know how voluntary actions work;
- Informal recyclers, as they know a lot about their immediate surroundings.



The 5 R-s

Relying on cleanups alone is not the solution for a waste-free world. Our ecosystems are being ravaged by waste and pollution. We must keep our beaches, woods, seas, rivers, countryside and city streets clean. Only then can our environment once again regain its health and beauty.

To do this, we need a systemic shift in our approach to resources—drastically reducing the amount of waste created, and preserving all resources at their highest quality by reusing what we can, and recycling or composting everything else. We also need a collective consensus on creating a healthy waste-free environment for all. We must shift our perspectives, and treat all waste as a precious resource—just like nature does. It's only waste when it's wasted.

We need to turn linear models into circular ones—maximising reuse, repair, refurbishment, recycling, composting or any process that retains the value of materials. We not only have to minimise the need for disposal but also reduce the demand for new primary raw materials, making production and consumption patterns and lifestyles sustainable.



Here are the 5 R-s to follow daily:



RETHINK

The first step towards change is to start asking questions. Let's think about the environmental and social impact of everything we do. Are you for the cheapest and easiest option or do you aim for the most sustainable option? Some things to consider:

- **What are your purchases made of?** Do you know their source?
- **What are the 'side-effects' of their manufacture** and their journey into your hands?
- **Do you need to buy new clothes, gadgets and gear** or can you do without it, borrow it or buy it second-hand?
- **Think about what the meaning of 'eco,' 'sustainable', 'organic' or 'green' is on the packaging.** How eco and sustainable really are these products?
- **How much waste do you generate each week?** What type of waste is it? Food, packaging, paper? How can you generate less of each type?
- **The most important one! What makes you truly happy?** Is it another pair of trousers or meaningful conversation with friends? What do you really NEED for a fulfilled life?
- **Refuse to accept a plastic or paper cup at the coffee machine or water cooler.** Paper cups have a plastic lining that is difficult to remove and they are therefore often not recycled. Bring your own cup instead.
- **When shopping, say no to plastic bags.** Bring your own reusable one.
- **Eat at the outlet, or order takeaway food from places where you can return dishes.**
- **Refuse to buy cosmetics with plastic ingredients.**
- **Refuse to eat fish that are overexploited or endangered,** and explain why to the vendor or restaurant owner. Shark, whale, and bluefin tuna are still commonly found on menus.
- **Refuse to accept daily menus made from meat,** as meat production has a huge environmental footprint compared to vegetable agriculture. Ask for the vegetarian or vegan menu! These are usually much less resource-intensive food sources. Support your local producers too, to help reduce the transportation footprint.



REFUSE

Refusing to consume goods that don't have the planet's wellbeing in mind sends a very powerful message to society. This simply means saying NO. Refusing materials is the primary way to lower our impact on landfill. Refuse everything that you do not need.

An easy action we can take is to refuse single-use plastic. This is plastic that is used one time only—and very often for just 15 minutes. 12 million tons of plastic leaks into the oceans annually. By 2050, there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish. This is a relatively easy problem to tackle, as very often we don't actually need single-use plastic, so we can easily refuse.

You might find that in many cases there is only one option available, and this option comes as single-use plastic. It's easy to just go with the flow, but every time you refuse and ask for sustainable solutions, you nudge society and entrepreneurs into finding them.



REDUCE

The waste crisis is a direct result of over-consumption. We advocate re-assessing one's needs by asking the simple questions: do I want it, or do I need it? An evaluation of one's own consumption patterns helps you to take action.

- **Only buy things if strictly needed.**
- **Avoid packaging when possible.** Avoid products wrapped in plastic or excessively packaged in boxes and bags. This is a great way to generate less waste, plus you'll save energy and natural resources.
- **Rent items instead of buying them.** If you need something less than 5 times per year, you don't need to own it.
- **Choose products built to last**—opt for high-quality

items. You may have to pay more, but high-quality items may last longer, perform better, and give fewer problems than lower-quality items.

- **Instead of disposable items, opt for durable ones** such as crockery, reusable cups, and reusable water bottles.
- **Buy large economy-sized products** instead of individually wrapped items. Buy items in bulk, in concentrate, or in refillable packages.
- **Buy new electronics only when they're needed,** not just because there is a newer model available. Use your electronics as long as possible.
- **Buy local products**—besides stimulating the local economy, buying local products means we reduce the negative environmental impacts from transportation.





REUSE

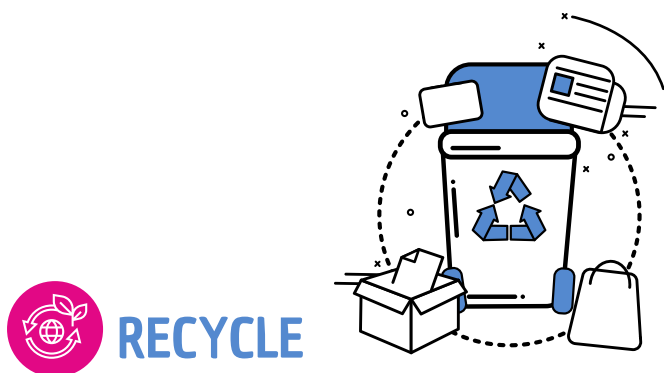
The reusability of an item determines its value throughout its whole life-cycle. This is something that should be thought about throughout the whole production-consumption process. Whereas for business the changes require careful consideration and overhaul of certain processes, for individuals the decision to reuse is more straightforward:

- **Buy second-hand items. Prolong the life of products by repairing, redesigning, upcycling them.** If we really look at the things we are throwing away, we can learn to see them as materials that can be reused to solve everyday problems and satisfy everyday needs. Most of us, however, haven't even begun to exploit the resources in our trash. Once you have made up your mind to use trash for positive uses, you can begin to brainstorm and generate ideas. Reusing saves money, conserves resources, and satisfies the human urge to be creative.
- **The majority of waste is made of plastic.** Before you toss something away, perhaps the item can serve another purpose? Reuse packaging when you can. Reuse the chips or peanut box, jar, spice pots, or zip-lock cereal bags to store other items. Old pill jars are especially useful when travelling. Reuse plastic bags as garbage bags.
- **Start to replace all single use items with reusable ones.** For example, replace plastic bags with reusable textile bags. Bring a bag or two whenever you go shopping. If you do end up with a plastic bag in your hands, re-use it for as long as you can.
- **Replace plastic bottles with reusable drinking bottles** and use tap water wherever possible. Avoiding buying bottled water by carrying a reusable drinking bottle with you at all times already makes a big difference. Opt for tap water at home, at your office, and especially while out and about. If you don't like the taste of tap water, use a filter.
- **Plastic straws are in the top six single-use plastics found in the ocean.** It's a routine add-on in most of the world, but many alternatives are out there, such as stainless steel, bamboo, glass etc.
- **Make a habit of bringing your reusable items** with you wherever you go. By being well-prepared, you can avoid 'having' to accept hundreds of plastic items. Hit the road with a spoon, fork, knife (or "spork"), straw, bag, cup, a storage container for takeaway and refillable bottle/filtered bottle.
- **If you have babies, replace disposable diapers with washable ones.** An average baby uses seven diapers a day. Assuming the little one is potty-trained by age two—that's over 5,000 diapers! In many places around the world, novel services like cloth diaper libraries, cloth diaper laundry services already exist. The modern cloth diapers are easy to use, cute, and kind to babies and nature. They can also save families significant amounts of money each year.
- **Replace tampons or sanitary pads with reusable cups/sanitary products.** Women use an estimated 11,000 tampons or sanitary pads in a lifetime. The average pad contains as much plastic as four carrier bags. Most tampons contain plastic and may be bleached, making them an unhealthy choice for both a person and the environment.
- **Give outgrown clothing to friends or charity. Offer furniture and household items that are no longer needed** to people in need, friends or charity. Old, outdated furniture can be reupholstered or covered. Have padding added to the furniture to give it a new look. Often the frame can be modified slightly to change the way it looks. Old towels and sheets can be cut into small pieces and used for dust cloths. Books and magazines can be donated to schools, public libraries or nursing homes. Old tyres can be used in the garden or playground.



- **To be able to reuse items, we also need to be able to repair them.** Repairing clothing is a simple skill that can be learned. But we must also demand that our products are built to last and are repairable. Remember the last phone screen you had that shattered? Well why not send a message to its producers—through reviews, social media or direct feedback? You can also let your elected representative know that this issue is important to you by sending them an email.

There are lots of ways to be better at our choices. Just keep your eyes open and be creative. There is no “away”, so use the items as long as possible.



Recycle what you can, and choose products made from recycled materials. Products made from recycled materials are a better choice than those made of virgin materials.

However, recycling is the final option on the waste hierarchy before landfill. Many materials can only be recycled a certain number of times. For example, the recycling life cycle for paper is 5 times, and a maximum 3-4 times for certain types of plastic. The majority of plastic is non-recyclable. Either because it's dirty, it's moulded together with other materials, or it is made out of types of plastic that are not possible to recycle.

Recycling helps to create awareness, and it's very important to do it right, but it's not the final solution! Even if you dispose of your waste correctly, you never know where it will end up. So it is important to prioritise other options (refuse, reduce, reuse) over recycling wherever you can.

Here are a few important things to consider when it comes to recycling:

- Compared to making a new plastic product, recycling uses less water, fossil fuel and resource extraction. But don't forget, plastic can only be down-cycled—losing quality each time. Therefore, **considering whether to use plastic at all is the most important decision for businesses.**
- **Remember to always recycle old electronic equipment.** They contain a lot of valuable materials and parts that can be used. They can often be refurbished too.
- **Find a way to compost your organic waste.** There are solutions for apartments, private homes, offices, schools and the like. Ask your local government to start creating composting stations all around the town.

These questions are not only for individuals, but organisations, producers and service providers must also ask the same or similar questions about their business models, production, transportation, and all related activities.

Change is not possible with cosmetic, one-time efforts. It's not a goal, it's a journey. Let's aim for the smallest possible footprint on the planet in everything we do!



For more information:
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