



Your country wants YOU!



Surely you already know the basics about what it means to recycle. Americans are making recycling more and more a part of their daily routines. In 1980, recycling kept only 15 million tons of waste from going into landfills nationwide. By 2013, we kept 87.2 million tons of waste out of landfills through recycling! We really are making recycling our habit.

However, of the 4.4 pounds of waste each person in our country creates every day, only 1.51 pounds are recycled or composted. We can do better! Here are some things you can do to increase recycling in your house right now.

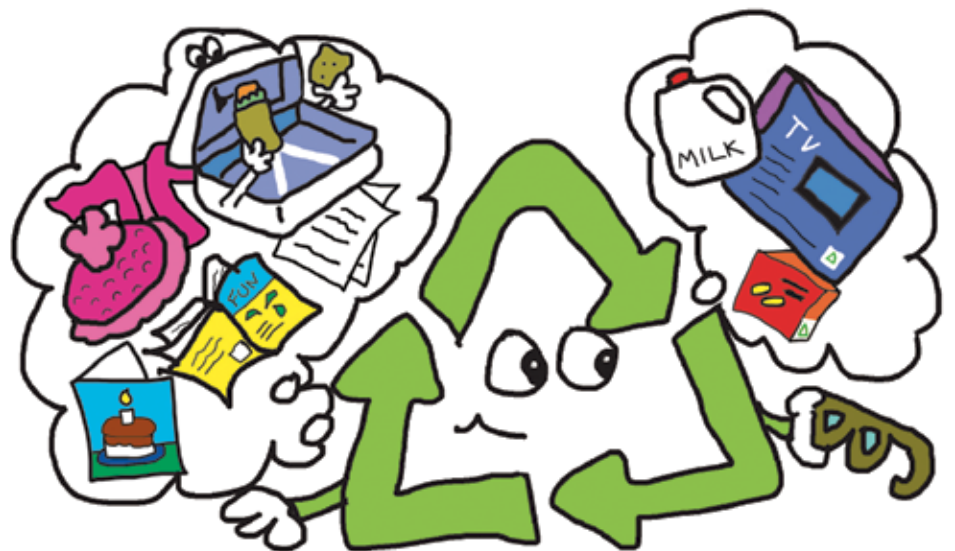
One is to buy new items made from recycled materials. The labels on these items say "Made from post-consumer recycled content," which means that the product was created from items people like you recycled. A lot of containers you use every day are made from post-consumer recycled content, such as food cans, fleece clothing, printer paper, cereal boxes, greeting cards, and magazines. Even bigger items can be made from recyclables, such as furniture, appliances, and countertops for the kitchen and bathroom. When you and your parents head out to purchase new things, check the labels for terms like "post-consumer recycled content" or "recycled content."

Another way to increase America's recycling is to "precycle." Precycling is when you buy an item with recyclable packaging, such as the plastic jug your milk comes in or the cardboard box protecting your new laptop. You can even think about the item you're purchasing. How long will your new laptop computer last? Where will you recycle it when you no longer need it? Precycling is an important part of the recycling process.

Last, and most important, if your family or school has not yet begun to make recycling a part of daily life, what are you waiting for? Take the lead to make recycling a habit at home and at school. You don't even need special containers. Any type of container will do, such as an old box or a clean trash can marked "Recycling Only." Place the recycling container next to the trash can so that it is as easy

to recycle as it is to throw something away in the trash. Be sure to find out how and where to put the recycling once your containers are full. At school, talk to your teacher, custodian, or principal. At home, ask your parents about curbside recycling or help find the closest drop-off center. Many communities have a curbside recycling program. Every county in our district has at least one drop-off recycling center. To learn more about recycling in your county, just call us at 800-997-4793 or visit our website, www.seird.org.

To show how serious you are about making recycling even stronger in your community and in the United States, you can take the recycling pledge. To join over 65,000 other Americans who have pledged to learn about recycling and to share their knowledge, complete the pledge online at www.americarecyclesday.org. You'll also see many ideas for how to celebrate America Recycles Day on November 15.



Let us help

How do you spend your time? You probably spend many hours at home and at school. Maybe you participate in sports or clubs after school, too. Do you ever spend time at a local park or community center? The chores we do at home, the work we do at school, and the activities we do in our spare time all have an effect on our environment. There are so many ways of protecting our Earth that you may feel overwhelmed thinking about how you can help. Worry no more; help is on the way! We are as close as an email or phone call and would love to teach anyone who would like to learn about helping our environment.

You can learn more about reducing, reusing, and recycling by visiting the Environmental Discovery Center and touring the Jefferson County Recycle Center, both of which are located on Jefferson Proving Ground outside of Madison. If your class or club doesn't have time for a trip to see us, we can visit you. Our Education Coordinator, Gary Marlin, offers fun, hands-on lessons right in your classroom or at your club meeting. For more information, ask your teacher or club leader to contact Mr. Marlin at 812-574-4080 or gary@seird.org.

Small but mighty: A compost tale

They were tiny, tiny creatures. They were smaller than the smallest child who lived in the big house. They were smaller than the redbirds and the goldfinches who darted among the bird feeders hanging from the backyard trees. They were smaller than the toads who plopped in and out of the pond behind the trees.

They were so tiny that they were almost never noticed, though they worked very hard day in and day out. These little workers—mites and millipedes, beetles and earthworms, centipedes and spiders, snails and slugs, and even tinier bacteria and fungi—did not care why they worked, only that the work got done. They crawled and crept. They slid and slithered. They moved all around, across, and through the big, soft pile behind the vegetable garden near the pond.

Almost every evening someone from the big house came out the back door to throw more on the pile. They brought scraps of fruits and veggies, shattered eggshells, pieces of paper and cardboard, used teabags, grass clippings, old cotton rags, and many other items they no longer needed. The crawly critters went about their business creeping around the pile until one autumn evening.

This evening the trees were wearing their brightest, fiery colors. The mother in the house sent the small boy and his little-bit-bigger sister out to the pile to turn it. This was their chore every Saturday. They would jab their pitchforks into the soft stuff they called compost and mix it. They turned clumps of the brown and green waste over and over with each jab. On this particular Saturday, the boy and girl dropped their tools to chase after a hopping toad that crossed their path. At the clatter of the pitchforks hitting the ground, Earthworm inched his red, wiggly head out from the pile of mushy muck and whined to Spider, “This time when they turn the pile, I hope I land far away from Snail and Slug. They are too slow, and they’re always in my way.”

“I don’t know why you think you’re so important,” Spider snipped back at him. “Not only do I work on this pile of compost, but I also use all eight legs to sprint over to the garden and back and...”

Spider was interrupted by Snail’s long, low “Waaaaiiit juuuust a miiiiiiinute there...just because I’m sloooow doesn’t mean you can taaaalk about me like that. I work just as haaaaard as everyone eeeelse on the pile.”

Slug groaned and slithered out from under some dryer lint.

“Snail, you do know that you’re the slowest creature on Earth, don’t you?” he said, which caused Snail to slimily remind him that Slug was nothing but a snail without a shell!

The buggy bickering continued as the sun began to set. The children had forgotten about their chore and had begun a game of hide and seek. As dusk fell, a strange-sounding, low-toned

“Whooooooooot” sent the children scurrying back up to their house. Luna, the wise, old owl, gazed down at the compost heap with her saucer eyes and scolded, “You creepy-crawling critters down there have awakened me earlier than usual. Don’t you have work to do?”

Earthworm was the first to reply, “Yes, we do, and some of us get in the way of those who are trying to work!”

This started the argument all over again. Snail couldn’t hold back, “Nooooow, hooooold on there, buuuuuddy,

I’m geeeeeeting tiiiiired of your aaaaattitude!” Slug butted in to tell Snail she wasn’t more important just because she carried her house around, and that, in fact, it made her even slower than Slug himself. Spider called all of them clumsy, legless, and boring. This prompted Centipede to crawl into the argument for the first time, bragging about having 92 more legs than Spider.

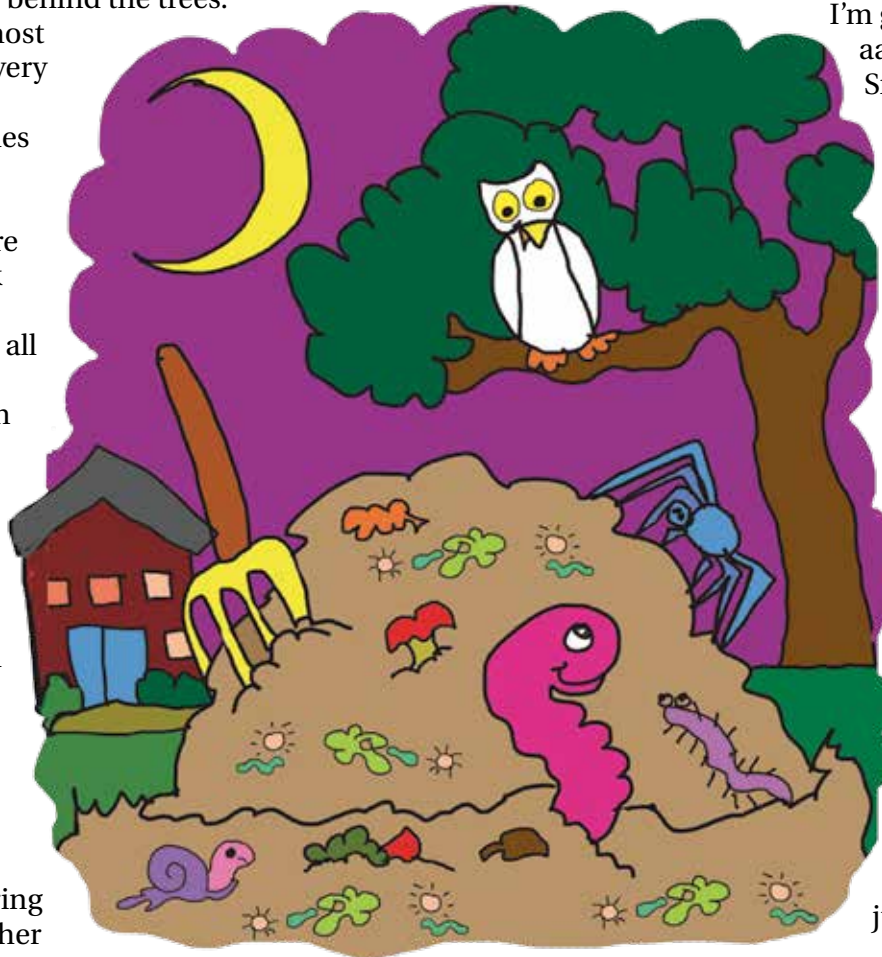
“STOP! Whooooo do yooooou all think yooooou are?” Luna hooted down from her branch, surprising them into silence. “Don’t you know that you are all very important to the compost pile? Because of all of you, green and brown waste is broken down into rich food for our Earth. Because of you and your friends, less waste is sent to landfills, which protects our Earth’s air and water.”

Earthworm replied, “I knew that I was important, but these others just get in my way.”

Luna swiveled her head a half-turn toward Earthworm and continued,

“Every one of you has an important job to do. Earthworm, you are constantly moving, eating, and making fertilizer. Though Slug and Snail may move slowly, they shred the scraps the people bring into smaller bits so that you can easily eat them. Spider helps by quickly catching and eating the extra insects not needed on the compost pile. She also gets rid of insects that eat the vegetables in the garden. Because of her, the rich soil you make from the compost heap can continue to make the veggies grow strong and healthy.”

By the time Luna had finished her lessons, Mother was shooing the children back out to the compost pile with their pitchforks. The sun settled down for the night, and Luna soared off to hunt. All of the tiny creatures were back to working better than ever, now that they knew how important they were to our Earth.



Every family can compost!

For details about setting up an indoor vermicomposting bin, or for more ideas on backyard composting, ask a parent or teacher to contact Gary Marlin at 812-574-4080 or gary@seird.org.

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