

SMART SHOPPING

Smart shopping means making smart choices about what we buy in order to minimise our impact on the environment and to consciously avoid making waste both at the time of purchase and into the future. Consumption is central to our culture and we depend on the current economic systems (for example mass production, transport and world trade) in order to meet our everyday needs. The extent and effects these processes have on the world's natural resources is profound, as well as the often unknown factors such as labour conditions, production processes, pollutants emitted and so on. Thankfully, as we progress towards sustainability, many companies are paving the way with products, services and policies that reflect ethical care toward the environment and global society. It is up to us as consumers to use our purchasing power in support

and encouragement for these businesses and not purchasing goods from businesses involved in unsustainable practices.

Apart from supporting sustainable industries, smart shopping also means we should avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle where appropriate when we make our shopping choices. We can all play a part in resolving the problem of our growing waste. Reducing waste when shopping not only helps the environment, but can often save money as well! By making wise buying decisions and keeping in mind the potential impacts products and packaging have on our environment, you can reduce the amount of rubbish you throw away each week.

WHAT CAN I DO?

When shopping, avoid waste. Things to watch out for include:

- Consume less! Only buy what you need.
- Excessive packaging and packaging made of more than one material that cannot be separated, for example tetra paks, are difficult to recycle.
- Imported products that display the recycling triangle may be able to be recycled overseas, but may not currently be recycled here.
- Avoid disposable single-use products.
- Bulk buy products with a long shelf-life. For example choose a 2 litre drink bottle rather than a can. In particular, avoid individually wrapped items, which is often cheaper.
- Buy fresh food rather than processed. For example, avoid pre-packaged goods by buying fresh food that is in season.

Reduce waste:

- Buy one long lasting product rather than ones that are disposable. Think about durability and quality e.g. crockery instead of paper or plastic plates.
- Choose products that are concentrated or are refillable e.g. detergents, juices, cordials and cleaning products.
- Use a backpack, box or reusable shopping bag rather than plastic bags.

Reuse waste:

- Where possible buy reusable items rather than disposables. Items that last longer may cost more initially, but will save you money over time e.g. energy saving light bulbs.
- Buy good quality second hand/refurbished products. You'll save money as well!
- Keep a few reusable bags or cardboard boxes in your backpack or car for shopping on the way home from school, work or an outing.

Recycle waste:

- Recycling with our smart shopping choices happens not just when we buy a product which can be recycled in our local recycling service, but also when we buy recycled. We are not truly recycling until we have 'closed the loop'

MORE INFORMATION

- <http://www.ethical.org.au/> - a great website that simplifies consumerism in Australia with a broad ethical overview including issues associated with waste
- <http://www.choice.com.au> - the Australian Consumer Association provides a large array of items to research in order to find the most environmentally efficient (some areas may require membership)
- www.reduce.org/shopping/index.html - smart shopping tips.