

Recycling Fact Sheet for Teachers

The facts and stats in this support sheet could be useful when you are delivering lessons on recycling and sustainability. All facts have been checked and verified by WRAP: www.wrap.org.uk. Recycle Now is the consumer facing campaign of WRAP and has teamed up with Wastebuster to deliver this new range of resources for you. There is lots of information related to recycling on: www.recyclenow.com.

Overview of recycling

- Only 44.3 per cent of household waste was recycled in 2015/16 – (DEFRA 2016)
- Around 1.8 million tonnes of household waste per annum ends up in landfill
- Food waste is a major issue. In the UK, we throw away 7.3 million tonnes of food and drink from our homes every year, the majority of which could have been eaten. It's costing us £12.5bn a year and is bad for the environment too. (Love Food Hate Waste 2017)
- 'In a business-as-usual scenario, the ocean is expected to contain one tonne of plastic for every three tonnes of fish by 2025, and by 2050, more plastics than fish [by weight].' Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2016

Councils use different methods of collecting residents' recycling. There are kerbside 'sort' schemes where recyclables are sorted into their respective materials on the lorry at the kerbside; and co-mingled collections where all your recyclables are put into one compartment on the lorry before being taken to a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and sorted. Local authorities also operate Household Waste Recycling Centres where residents can take their recycling if it's not possible to collect it from their kerbside.

At the MRF, all the mixed recycling is sorted and separated into different types of materials by hand or machine (or both) before being sent to manufacturers who make it into new products. The materials accepted at different MRFs will vary across the country.

Materials for recycling become valuable commodities in the worldwide market.

Problems and issues

The biggest problem is when incorrect items are put in the recycling container as they must be removed by hand. This slows down the process and if these items are missed it can clog or damage the machinery and other equipment. This is why it is important to know which items you can and can't recycle in your local area.



For further information on the recycling process please visit: www.recyclenow.com/recycling-knowledge/how-is-it-recycled/recycling-centre or have a look at the Recycling Locator which gives you information on what can be recycled locally: www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling

What happens to our recycling?

There are many recycling plants in the UK, reprocessing millions of tonnes of material every year

- All of the newsprint manufactured here in the UK is now made from 100% recycled paper
- All of the organic (garden and kitchen) waste we collect is recycled in the UK, usually quite close to where it is collected
- In the UK, over 80% of the glass is collected and the majority of it is used to make new glass bottles and jars

Frequently asked questions

Is our recycling sent to China?

Whilst it's true that recyclable materials are often sent to China for recycling, which might sound environmentally unsound, it's actually no bad thing. As the biggest manufacturer in the world, China regularly sends container ships full of products to the UK. Instead of these huge ships travelling thousands of miles back to China empty, the cost is offset by filling them with recyclable materials. In this way unwanted items like our old plastic bottles are recycled into new products like fleeces, buckets & benches which are sold in new markets!

Do I need to thoroughly wash my items for recycling?

Items for recycling don't need to be thoroughly washed to be recycled. Just make sure they are empty and give them a quick rinse. Top tip: use leftover washing up water for rinsing.

Do I have to take the tops off bottles for recycling?

No, please keep them on! Plastic bottles with plastic lids – like water bottles, milk bottles, shampoo and bleach can keep their lids on. Milk bottles and drinks bottles can be squashed to save space, but the lid can be put back on since these can be recycled too. Empty and rinse glass bottles and then put the metal lid back on for recycling as this is a valuable material which the reprocessors can extract during the recycling process.



What about bleach and kitchen cleaners?

Some people assume bleach bottles and kitchen cleaners can't be recycled because of their contents – but it's easier than you might think to safely recycle them. All you need to do is ensure the bottle is empty and leave the lid on. Then they can be transformed into the likes of watering cans and water butts without any risk of harm during the recycling process.

What's the point of recycling?

Some think it makes no difference – not true! Using recycled materials in the manufacturing process uses considerably less energy than that required for producing new products from precious raw materials – even when comparing all associated costs, like transport.

Source: www.recyclenow.com



Facts and stats

Plastics

- Of the 480 plastic bottles used by the average household each year, only 270 are recycled. This means a whopping 44% are still being put in the rubbish bin
- If all the plastic bottles that are not collected for recycling in the UK each year were placed end to end, they would go around the world 31 times
- 25 recycled plastic drinks bottles make 1 fleece top
- Recycled materials from plastics like margarine tubs can be used to make plastic paint pots
- Amazingly football shirts can be made from recycled plastic
- When you recycle your shampoo and shower gel bottles you're giving them the chance to live again...and again. Perhaps as more plastic bottles, or even as a bucket!
- Recycling just one plastic bleach bottle saves enough energy to watch 1 ½ football matches on TV
- Recycling 5 plastic bottles make a cuddly Busta soft toy mascot

Food

- If all the bananas thrown away in a week were placed end to end they would reach from London to Athens
- The food waste sent to landfill in a year creates more methane gas than ½ million cows can in a year
- The average household fills 2 wheelie bins of food waste each year. If this was recycled it could generate enough energy to boil a kettle 700 times
- Recycling food waste makes energy. Recycling just 35 used tea bags can generate enough energy to power a TV for an hour
- 7 million tonnes of food waste is generated annually in the UK, equivalent to the weight of 1.4 million African elephants
- 7 million tonnes of food waste is generated annually in the UK, equivalent to 20 billion frozen pizzas OR almost a pizza per day for everyone in the UK
- 135,000 tonnes of food waste is generated per week in the UK, if all of it was recycled we could generate enough energy to power the manufacture and assembly of 7,500 cars
- A caddy load of food waste can generate enough electricity to toast 8 rounds of bread



- A caddy load of food waste can generate enough electricity to boil a kettle 3 times
- A caddy load of food waste can generate enough electricity to power a light bulb for more than 24 hours

Electricals

- In the UK each year about 1.4 million tonnes of electricals are bought and roughly the same amount of electrical waste is created. Only about half of this waste is recycled. And just a small amount is reused
- On average, each person in the UK buys almost three new electrical items each year – or around 170 million nationally
- For every 5.9kg of small electricals purchased in 2012 (the average amount per person), only a fraction of these items (1.8kg) were sent to be recycled
- There's no need to bin items – you can drop them off at your local recycling centre. Check our handy recycling locator to find your nearest recycling centre that accepts waste electricals: www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling
- Recycling electricals is environmentally friendly – unwanted electricals and electronics can be re-used or recycled and contain valuable raw materials. For example, one iron contains enough steel to produce 13 steel cans
- Some retailers offer free recycling schemes or take back options. Ask your local retailer for more information

Further information available: www.recyclenow.com/recycling-knowledge/how-is-it-recycled/electricals

Card and paper

- Recycling just one cereal box saves enough energy to watch the Minions Movie on TV
- The weight of paper and card not collected for recycling last year, is the same as 2,000 blue whales
- Recycling just one glossy magazine saves enough energy to boil a kettle 9 times

Metal

- Last year in the UK we recycled around 4.5 billion aluminium cans - that is enough to stretch around the world over 13 times
- Recycling just one aluminium air-freshener can, saves enough energy to make 30 Lego bricks



- The UK uses over ½ million tonnes of metal packaging in a year
- The UK uses an estimated 174,000 tonnes of aluminium packaging in a year
- It is estimated that only half of the aluminium packaging used in the UK is recycled
- It is estimated that nearly ¾ of the steel used in the UK is recycled
- Recycling one aluminium can saves enough energy to toast 14 rounds of bread
- Recycling one aluminium can saves enough energy to boil a kettle 5 times

Glass

- Recycling just one glass cooking sauce jar saves enough energy to power an iPad for 15 days
- The UK uses nearly 2 million tonnes of glass packaging in a year
- It is estimated that just over 1 million tonnes of glass is collected for recycling in a year
- Recycling two glass cooking sauce jar saves enough energy to bake a lasagne in the oven
- If everyone recycled one more jam jar, it would save enough energy to put the dishwasher on in every household

Cardboard

- If everyone in the UK recycled one toothpaste box, it would save enough energy to run a fridge in over 2,000 homes for a year

