



Did you know?

- Australians waste a quarter of all food purchased, which is equivalent to throwing out \$5.3 billion a year.
- Every year Australians spend \$1.7 billion on clothes that are never worn.
- 2,000 litres of water and large amounts of pesticides are needed to spray the cotton that is needed to produce one t-shirt.
- A cotton t-shirt has an average lifespan of only 25 washes.

Why shop smart?

A lot of the waste generated by households comes from shopping. Packaging and disposable items that are not recyclable end up in landfill. One way to minimise waste is to look for certain features when you shop. Shopping smart is a great way of achieving the first step towards waste minimisation and reducing waste before it becomes an issue, has environmental benefits, and saves money because you get more use out of what you buy and the cost of waste disposal is reduced. The choices you make as a consumer can affect the way businesses operate by encouraging them to make their products more environmentally friendly.



Buy local

Are you serving up a dinner from Italy, China and the USA? Buying imported products when local products are available is a waste of resources. Just think of how many kilometres a can of tomatoes from Italy had to travel to get to an Australian dinner table. Buying Australian produce boosts the economy by helping Australian businesses, and reduces the carbon footprint of the food you eat.

A carbon footprint measures the impact our activities have on the environment, and in particular climate change. It relates to the amount of greenhouse gases produced in our day-to-day lives through burning fossil fuels for electricity, heating and transportation. Therefore buying local produce helps the greenhouse gases produced by transporting food overseas.

There is a growing movement of people who only eat food that has been grown within a 100-kilometre radius of their home. Growing some of your own fruit and vegetables in your Waste Wise garden and supporting local growers at produce markets is a great way to start.

Fair Trade

The Fair Trade branding of products ensures that the growers in developing countries get a fair market price for their products. This helps farmers to invest in more sustainable growing practices instead of depending on artificial fertilisers and pesticides to boost production in the short term. In Australia, the main fair trade products available are coffee, tea and cocoa/chocolate. If you cannot buy locally grown food then shop smart by purchasing products with the Fair Trade branding.

Being Waste Wise about shop smart

Reducing the amount of waste you bring home with your shopping also reduces the amount of waste produced by your household before needing to reuse and recycle.

Reduce

To reduce waste when shopping, think about what is a necessity and take notice of excessive packaging. Buy products that:

- come in bulk quantities
- are not individually wrapped and then placed in a bigger bag
- are durable rather than disposable.

Only buy the food you need and reuse the left overs or feed them to chickens or worms. Plan weekly meals before doing the shopping and check what can be used from the cupboard or fridge first. Avoid using the plastic bags supplied by shops. Instead you could use calico or string bags, a basket or a box.

Reuse

Look for products that can be reused for either the same or a new purpose. Where possible buy quality, durable products that will last longer. Examples include:

- cloth napkins instead of paper
- washable picnic cups and plates instead of disposable paper or plastic ones
- refillable containers (some shops will refill for you or you can do it yourself)
- lunchboxes rather than disposable lunch wrap
- rechargeable batteries
- pens that have refills
- second-hand books and clothes.

Whatever products cannot be reduced or reused should be recycled wherever possible. Ask your local council

what can and can't be recycled in your local area and try to only buy products that are recyclable.

Recycle

The 'Recycle It' directory can provide information on what you can and can't recycle in your council area.

When choosing between items, choose the one that comes with recyclable packaging. For example, if you are looking at two brands of shampoo and one is packaged in plastic code five and the other in plastic code two (check the symbol on the base of the bottle), choose the brand with code two as it can be recycled (see 'Plastic' fact sheet).

Some products that cannot be recycled in your regular kerbside collection can still be recycled. These include:

- plastic shopping bags
- corks
- ink and toner cartridges
- motor oil
- car batteries
- mobile phones.

Some of these items can be dropped off at specific collection points and then picked up for recycling. For example, Battery World will take car batteries, Mobile Muster will take mobile phones and some supermarkets have bins to collect plastic bags for recycling.

Closing the loop

Closing the loop means to complete the recycling process by buying recycled products. Buying recycled products improves the economic viability of recycling by increasing the market for recyclables.

Many glass bottles and jars as well as aluminium and steel cans are manufactured fully or partly from recycled materials. Once you have identified which brands use recycled materials to make their products, shopping smart will be made easier.

Sources

Carbon Footprint Ltd
www.carbonfootprint.com/carbonfootprint.html

Fair Trade Association of Australia and New Zealand
www.fta.org.au

Planet Ark
www.planetark.com.au

The 100 Mile Diet
www.100milediet.org

The Waste Wise Schools Program

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