

Tip 5: Reuse Bags, Containers, and Other Items



Many everyday items can have more than one use. Before discarding bags, containers, and other items, consider if it is hygienic and practical to reuse them. Reusing products extends their lives, keeping them out of the solid waste stream longer. Adopt the ideas that work for you, add some of your own, and then challenge others in your school, office, and community to try these ideas and to come up with others.

🌻 Reuse paper and plastic bags and twist ties. If it's practical, keep a supply of bags on hand to use on the next shopping trip, or take a string, mesh, or canvas tote bag to the store. When a reusable bag is not on hand and only one or two items are being purchased, consider whether you need a bag at all.

🌻 Reuse scrap paper and envelopes. Use both sides of a piece of paper for writing notes before recycling it. Save and reuse gift boxes, ribbons, and larger pieces of wrapping and tissue paper. Save packaging, colored paper, egg cartons, and other items for reuse or for arts and crafts projects at day-care facilities, schools, youth facilities, and senior citizen centers. Find other uses or homes for old draperies, bedding, clothing, towels, and cotton diapers. Then cut up what's left for use as patchwork, rags, doll clothes, rag rugs, or other projects.

🌻 Reuse newspaper, boxes, packaging "peanuts," and "bubble wrap" to ship packages. Brown paper bags are excellent for wrapping parcels.

🌻 Wash and reuse empty glass and plastic jars, milk jugs, coffee cans, dairy tubs, and other similar containers that otherwise get thrown out. These containers can be used to store leftovers as well as buttons, nails, and thumbtacks. An empty coffee can make a fine flower pot.

🌻 Turn used lumber into birdhouses, mailboxes, compost bins, or other woodworking projects.

CAUTION: Do not reuse containers that originally held products such as motor oil or pesticides. These containers and their potentially harmful residues should be discarded (following manufacturers' instructions on the label) as soon as they are empty. When you no longer have a use for a full or partially full container, take it to a community household hazardous waste collection center. Also, never store anything potentially harmful in containers designed for food or beverages. Always label containers and store them out of the reach of children and pets.