



Beyond the Trashcan

What did you throw away today?

If you are like most people, you will have to think for a moment before you answer that question. — leftover, past date or spoiled food, packaging, plastic, broken items... Over the years, our tendency to buy and ultimately *throw away* has increased. Though Americans represent a small portion of the world's population, we produce over half its waste.

Forty percent of the food in the United States is never eaten. But at the same time, one in eight Americans struggles to put enough food on the table. ([Food Waste.](#))

The idea of being wasteful makes most of us uncomfortable. Yet, we continue to *waste* because we cannot think of anything better to do with leftover *stuff*.

The throw-away society is a human society strongly influenced by consumerism. The term describes a critical view of overconsumption and excessive production of short-lived or disposable items. [Click here to read more.](#)

We need to be cognizant of wastefulness and become educated to the potential of recycling. The basic principle of recycling is for people to take responsibility for the waste they create. Used material is a resource not a nuisance. Recycling benefits everyone. It save time, money and energy.

- Most of us have things tucked away in the back of a closet, in the attic or garage—forgotten. These items could be put to use. Hoarding is wastefulness. As long as something is in storage (out of sight, out of mind), it is doing no one any good. When you have a need, start searching your stash. Better yet, start clearing the clutter. Then you know what you have that is useful

and what can be recycled or reused.

- On a larger scale, we can help communities save by recycling paper, magazines, cardboard, cans, bottles, plastic and electronics. Set up a recycling system that works for you. Many consumer products would cost less if our nation as a whole recycled. Paper makes up about 25% of our garbage, much of which could be diverted through recycling programs. [Click here](#) to learn more about paper recycling.
- Recycling conserves resources. Statistics show that 64% less energy is required to produce paper from waste rather than using virgin wood pulp. In the case of office paper, the equivalent of almost three barrels of oil is saved for every ton of paper recycled. The manufacturing process from used paper, rather than from trees, requires half the amount of water with 60% less air and water pollution.
- Finally, creating what you want from what you have is a form of self-reliance. Discarded materials are free. Much as we need to initiate large-scale efforts to recover wasted resources, each of us can do our part by developing a reuse reflex.

When you begin to examine your home, closets, desk, garage, inside your car and all the corners where treasures have accumulated, you need to have a discerning eye. Every possession has the capacity of bringing pleasure as well as the potential of becoming joyless clutter. Be mindful of recycling, reusing, regifting. It works for all of us.

America Recycles Day **November 15**



One day to educate.

One day to motivate.

One day to make recycling bigger
and better 365 days a year.

Get Involved!

Think Recycling!

→ During spring and fall cleanup look for opportunities to make someone else happy. Pass on special items to family or friends or donate to the library, church, school, hospitals, nursing homes or prisons.

→ Have a garage sale to reap a small payback. Do not worry about keeping track of the receipts. Generally the IRS is not interested in personal sale items. Chances are you won't be making a profit on anything you are selling.

→ Eyeglasses and cases are collected by the Lions Club. Research where drop boxes are located in your community.

→ Food - Be careful not to over purchase and use produce before they spoil. Donate extras to a local food pantry.

→ Packaging peanuts, bubble wrap and shipping boxes can be recycled at local shipping location.

→ Clothing - How can someone who is struggling to get on their feet in the competitive job market go on interviews without the appropriate clothing? [Dress for Success](#) can help with your donations.