

Recycle Ann Arbor 2007 Earth Day Essay Contest – Grand Prize Winner

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Dear American Citizens,

Why is recycling important to the United States' future? Recycling will help the environment by saving raw materials. Raw materials are the natural things earth gives us, like fossil fuels and trees. Raw materials don't renew, or if they did, it would take thousands of years. There are many raw materials that humans use too much of, like oil for manufacturing things, and trees for paper.

Our recycling will save animal habitats. It will also save coal for electricity, gasoline for shipment, and landfill space for the materials we can't recycle, like Styrofoam. Styrofoam can never decompose in a land fill, no matter how long it lays there.

So, how can you help recycle? One simple thing to do is to recycle your plastic water bottles. First, look for the number inside the recycling symbol on the bottom of your bottle. If it shows a one or a two, you can recycle it. Remember to take the cap off (you can't recycle that), crush the bottle, and put it in your yellow recycle bin. You could also buy from companies who use recycled parts in their products.

How about starting a compost pile? A compost pile is where you put your raw material waste to decompose. You can mix your compost into your garden and have in healthy, rich soil for your plants. All you have to do is churn the compost pile every week and let nature do the rest.

What happens when you throw things away? Your trash company picks up your garbage and might dump it in a land fill. A land fill is a huge hole in the ground where trash is piled in. Once the hole is full, they put soil on top and they turn it into a recreational park or parking lot. Hopefully the trash will decompose. But some things, like plastic milk cartons, take over one century to decompose.

Your trash company could take your garbage to a factory and burn it instead of filling up land fills. But the fire's smoke is harmful to our planet's atmosphere, and could cause acid rain. Acid rain is created when pollution condenses with water in the atmosphere and falls down as rain.

But recycling your trash is better than these two trash disposal choices. After your recyclable trash is picked up, they put it on an assembly line, and make sure it is all recyclable. Then, they heat up the recyclables so hot that they melt, and the wrappers fall off. Very quickly, the melted recyclable goop is dumped into freezing liquid and frozen. The hardened goop is packed into gargantuan cubes called P.E.T. cubes. The P.E.T. cubes are shipped to different companies around in the area to be reused.

The three "R's" of conservation are "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." Reducing and reusing are better than recycling because recycling needs energy, but reducing or reusing doesn't. You can take shorter showers to reduce water usage, which also saves electricity

by not using the water heater as much. With a regular shower head, a five minute shower uses up to thirty-five gallons of water. Also, turning down the heat inside your home reduces electricity.

If you receive a box full of packaging peanuts, don't throw them away! Instead, take them to your local U.P.S. store and they will reuse them. When you bring your lunch with you, you could put your lunch in Tupperware boxes, put the Tupperware in a thermal lunch bag, wash them when you get home, and reuse them tomorrow. Instead of throwing out pair after pair of socks with holes in them, you could sew them back up, and wear them again.

So, why is recycling important to the United States' future? A friend in my class said that Native Americans left behind arrow-heads, ancient cities, and tools. Our generation will leave behind plastic, Styrofoam, and other non-decomposing materials. We should make a change, because it will help the world last longer, and be cleaner for future generations to enjoy.