

Practicing the Three R's

By Austin Choi

Why worry about what we use and throw away? Because it hurts the earth! That's why you should practice the three R's: reduce, reuse, and recycle. Reduce to create less waste, reuse to use our resources again, and recycle waste so new resources don't have to be used. Many bad things can happen if we don't practice our three R's, such as global warming, too much waste in landfills, pollution, damaging animals' environments, and water poisoning. We need to reduce our impact on the earth and slow down the amount of waste we create.

Reduce: I reduce water waste by using one water cup all day at home, instead of getting a new one every time I want a drink. That way, I don't have to waste water by washing cups. I also turn off the water while brushing my teeth and take short showers.

I reduce carbon dioxide emission by walking or biking instead of asking my parents for a ride. If my parents need to use the car, they use the car that is the most fuel efficient, especially for longer trips. I also carpool to some of my activities with friends. When I get older, I will buy an electric or hybrid car.

I reduce energy used by turning off the lights when I leave a room. My family uses energy efficient light bulbs and open curtains when it is bright outside.

Instead of buying packaged foods at the grocery store, I encourage my parents to save the gas and packaging by growing foods in our garden. Michigan is a great place to grow apples, cherries, and tomatoes!

Reuse: Instead of throwing away old or small clothes, my mom gives them to my younger friend. I can use non-recyclable things as tools instead of putting them in the landfill. For example, instead of throwing away a Styrofoam cup, I made it into a

toothbrush holder. I also remember to use both sides of paper instead of only one. When I was on vacation, I saw a funny idea that I wanted to try: an old boot with holes that couldn't be mended was used as a flower pot.

I am trying to reuse water by collecting the cold water in the shower while it warms up and watering the plants with the water collected. And when I finish a water bottle, instead of buying a new one, I use the tap water to fill it up again. I also asked my parents if we could compost our fruit and vegetable waste for healthier soil in our gardens.

Recycle: Instead of throwing away paper and bottles, I recycle them (if I can't think of ways to reuse them.) Throwing them away would be a waste. When I recycle, machines make the item into a new item so it doesn't waste natural resources, or the energy necessary to create new resources.

There are many things I recycle, such as paper, cardboard, glass, tinfoil, juice boxes, milk jugs, and newspapers. I can recycle plastic bottles if they are #1 and #2 type plastic. There should always be at least one recycling bin in each classroom at every school!

People should reduce, reuse, and recycle, but why in this order? Think about it this way: When you want to buy something, first ask yourself this question: "Do I really need to use this item or do I already have one?" If you don't buy it, you are reducing. Then ask yourself this question before you throw something away: "Can I get more use out of this item?" If you can, you are reusing. If you can't reuse something anymore, ask this question: "What are my options besides throwing it away?" The answer is to recycle. You can see that your first option is to reduce, then to reuse, and then to recycle. The order can make a difference!

Writing this essay has given me new ideas for practicing the three R's!