

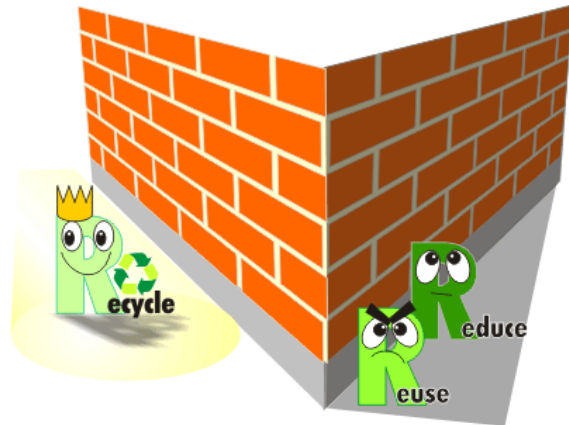


Why everyone loves recycling

You see it every day - recycle - Recycle - RECYCLE. The government is pushing it, the media is pushing it, the do-gooders are pushing it and the chattering classes are, well, chattering about it.

But Why?

Why? Because it's a good thing to do - we are saving the world. It is probably the best thing since sliced bread. It gives everyone a chance to do their bit.



Although the Financial Times (8/7/2006) discussed whether “recycling is utter rubbish” and listed all manners of reasons why recycling does not make sense (mostly it was because it requires a lot of energy to recycle many things and also it reckoned that domestic recycling makes little difference to the size of the overall national landfill). But that's not the point.

The point is that people love recycling!

People love recycling because they don't have to stop their consumption!

Imagine you are going to “do something for the environment”, perhaps because you are being shamed into it by friends, neighbours, enemies, the Environment Agency or other moral high-grounders.

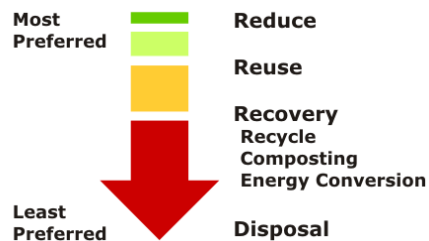
It is not easy because you invariably have to give up something - some comfort, some habit. It's not easy, let's face it, if you really care that much about the environment you would've done it already. So what do you do? Do you cramp your lifestyle? No - just do some recycling and you have instant social credibility.

This is the best of both worlds. You support the economy by maintaining your level of consumption and deal with the guilt by doing recycling. Hey, someone can actually sell the recycled rubbish and make a living as well, isn't life great! Even better, you jet off somewhere and pay the green guilt by paying someone to plant trees somewhere in the world as an “off-set”.

By the way, the people who run the waste industry love it because it's their income! No waste, no recycling, no waste industry - no jobs.

Let's think of the alternatives. Let's use the UK Government's Waste Hierarchy to help us with our thinking. (We're using the waste hierarchy because we paid for it out of our taxes, so we may as well use it!) - shown in its technicolour glory here.

Reduce - yes. This will cramp our lifestyle. No more fresh vegetables flown in from Africa, or



jetting off to the sunny and sandy beaches. Hey - No more cars either! How are we going to carry home our bottles of designer water from Fiji? No, reducing is not on. It's more than hard work. More like hard labour!

Reuse - Oh yes, we did use those AOL CDs (remember them?) as coasters, and well, eh, we save our plastic carrier bags and probably use them again. But that's about it unless you include last year's fashion which we give to the charity shops - that's real reuse!

Well, that just leaves recycling, doesn't it?

In our sister article on the Waste Hierarchy in the Periscope Files, we showed that essentially "reduce" and "reuse" are in-house activities whereas "recycling" is someone else's work.

So we do not want to change our lifestyle but still want to look good, there are no real options to recycling because:

- "Reducing" is hard to do, we have to think seriously about how we are living, what we are doing with our lives and make some real changes to the way we live to reduce our consumption - and as everyone knows, change is hard!
- "Reusing" is even harder because we need to think of something to do with all the stuff we no longer want or use. (Or rubbish we bought on impulse and are now embarrassing reminders)

Quick! Get a recycle bin and put them all in.

No! Get several recycle bins and we can then score maximum karma points by segregating our rubbish first.