

# Waste Reduction



The chasing arrows “recycle” symbol that most people are familiar with seeing on an array of products was designed with three arrows to signify the three tenets to reducing waste; Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

**Reduce** is the first arrow because buying less products is the best way to reduce waste and your impact on the planet. Below are just a few examples of way to reduce, but there are MANY more!

- Reduce the amount of single use packaging you buy and throw away. Buying in bulk and avoiding single serving products are just two examples.
- Buy durable products that are built to last instead of disposable options.
- Bring reusable bags to store instead of using new plastic or paper bags. Investing in a few bags that fold up tiny and keeping one in your purse, backpack or briefcase is great if you like to spontaneously shop.
- Stop junk mail. When you receive unwanted mail or catalogs check for a customer service number or email and request to be removed from their mailing list.
- Switch to digital, electronic or paperless subscriptions, newsletters, notifications and bills.
- Rent before you buy, especially for appliances that you only need to use occasionally such as carpet cleaners, leaf blowers, tillers and power tools. Other options are to find a neighbor willing to share their tools or hire a local small business to assist you with your project.
- Plan meals for the week before you head to the grocery store. Make a list of ingredients needed and stick to it. An estimated 40% of all food in America is wasted, so reducing food waste is impactful!



**Reuse** is the next best option and can refer to reusing something for the same purpose repeatedly or creating a new purpose for something you already have.

- Use reusable water bottles, travel mugs, lunch boxes, food storage containers, etc.
- Write, draw or doodle on both sides of a piece of paper before recycling.
- Pass down or trade clothes, books, and toys with family members, friends and neighbors. Another option is donating these items to a local thrift store for resale.
- DIY outdated items into something new! Turn your old ripped jeans into a new tote bag, or your holey sweater into a tablet case. A simple internet search brings up endless ideas for turning t-shirts into new clothing, housewares or even jewelry. Check out this braided rug made from old sheets!
- Repair instead of replacing. If you cannot fix it, you still might be able to donate it to someone who can.
- Upcycle materials into art.



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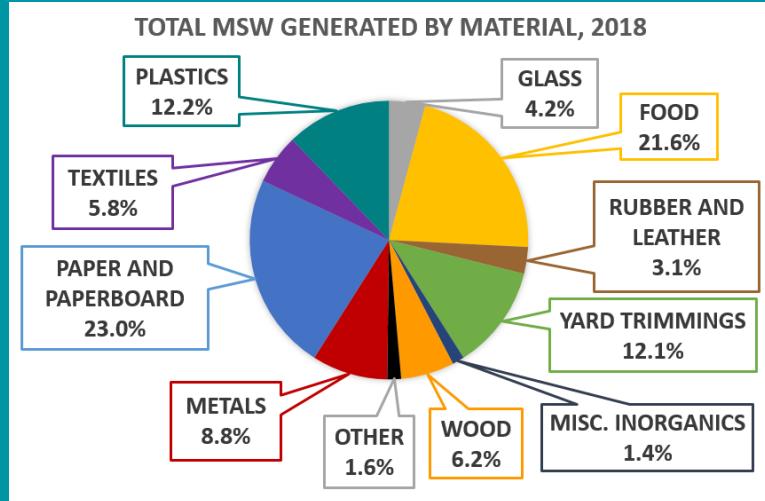
**Recycle** means to produce new products from used material. Recycling is beneficial because it extends the life of materials and saves energy from transport and extraction of new natural resources. Recycling is last on the list because remanufacturing is generally required and is the most energy intensive processes when compared to reducing and reusing products.

- “Recycling Right” is extremely important because different communities have specific requirements on what is accepted in your curbside program or drop-off locations. For a list of items accepted curbside in the City of Monroe, visit our Recycling website at [monroenc.org/Departments/Garbage-Recycling/Recycling](http://monroenc.org/Departments/Garbage-Recycling/Recycling)
- Learn about wishcycling. Recycling guidelines set by each municipality or private hauling company for accepted recyclables are based on what can be sorted by the Materials Recovery Facility (or MRF) where all the recyclables go to be processed into single commodities to be sold to manufacturers. Contamination rates in the United States are about 16-17%, so be a recycling hero and spread the word!
- Look for collection bins at your local retailers so you know the most convenient places to bring items such as plastic bags & film, batteries, light bulbs, ink cartridges, etc. that aren’t collected curbside, but can still be recycled.
- Buy products made from recycled materials. This promotes the recycling economy as more manufacturers will choose to use recycled materials and bolster the market for recycled materials.
- Research how to recycle electronics when you get new gadgets. Some companies even have trade-in programs that could also save you money! E-waste can be reused, refurbished or recycled. Electronics have lots of valuable materials as well as heavy metals that can be harmful to human health and the environment if improperly disposed of. The City of Monroe collects e-waste from residents for free, just call to schedule a pick-up.



## Additional Information & Resources

- FoodKeeper App: Developed by US Department of Agriculture and US Environmental Protection Agency to reduce food waste and provide food safety information.
- Carolina Recycling Podcast: Recorded by the Carolina Recycling Association to discuss the state of recycling both locally and nationwide.
- Earth911’s website has a “Where to Recycle” search that can be used to find collection locations for items that are not collected curbside.



A breakdown of the **292.4 million tons** of municipal solid waste, or residential trash, by category in the United States according to EPA data from 2018.