

HOW TO PRACTICE THE 6 R'S

We've all heard the term 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' to help keep the planet healthy, but have you ever thought about what those terms really mean? And did you know that there are actually three more R's that we can practice to help make the planet healthier? We use these terms when we talk about what to do with stuff we no longer want or need or even stuff we want to purchase. It could refer to the plastic bottle or straw you just used to drink your water. It could refer to the clothes you wear every day. If we think about these terms in relation to the things we use in our daily lives, we can practice the 6 R's every day, making the planet healthier day by day!!

Step 1 – REFUSE – Ask yourself, “Is this something I NEED?” If it's not, refuse it. One of the very best ways you can practice this is by refusing plastic straws at a restaurant. In America, we use 500 MILLION DRINKING STRAWS EVERY DAY!!! That's enough straws to fill 125 school buses. If you can refuse it, do it! If you can't, you can move on to Step 2.

Step 2 – REDUCE – If the item you want to use is not something you can refuse, ask yourself, “Is this something I can reduce the use of?” If you prefer bottled water over tap, try purchasing your water in 1 gallon jugs instead of individual water bottles. Worldwide, we use nearly 1 MILLION PLASTIC BOTTLES EVERY MINUTE!!! That is a lot of plastic! If you can reduce it, do it! If you can't, move on to Step 3.

Step 3 – REPLACE – If the item you want to use is plastic, ask yourself, “Can I replace this with something more sustainable that's better for the planet?” Instead of using a plastic water bottle every day, try a reusable one! Buy a few, fill them with water and put them in the fridge so they are cold when you need them. Instead of using a plastic sandwich bag (which can't be recycled), try a reusable one! They're easy to clean and last for months (which saves you money in the end as well). They sell them on Amazon and other retailers, so they're easy to find. If those aren't an option for you, try BPA-free plastic containers, they protect your food and can be reused! Instead of using plastic grocery bags at the store, try reusable ones. They're cheap, durable and much better for the planet. ONE TRILLION PLASTIC BAGS ARE USED WORLDWIDE EVERY YEAR!! If you can replace it, do it! If you can't, move on to Step 4.

Step 4 – REUSE – If you've already used the item you're considering, ask yourself, “Is this something that can be reused?” Shipping boxes, giant plastic milkshake straws from PDQ and plastic packing pillows can all be reused, as can gift bags and plastic grocery bags. In addition, when you are done with clothes you've grown out of, pass them on to someone else. If you can reuse it, do it! If you can't, move on to Step 5.

Step 5 – REPURPOSE – If you can't do any of the above steps, ask yourself, “Can this item be made into something new?” This one is the hardest to do and doesn't work for many things but is good to consider anyway. If you can repurpose it, do it! If you can't, move on to Step 6.

Step 6 – RECYCLE – Although this is the first thing we think of when we use something plastic, it should be the very last thing we try. While recycling is a good option if you can, it is estimated that roughly 90% of the worldwide plastics in use DO NOT get recycled. Much of that unrecycled plastic ends up in our oceans. Recycling should be used as a last resort, when you have no other options!

Starting something new can sometimes be overwhelming, so start slowly with Steps 1 and 2 and practice them as much as you can. When you get comfortable with them, move on to Steps 3 and 4, and then to 5 and 6. By making small changes every day, we can work together to make a huge impact, creating a healthy planet that we can all enjoy!

