



Create a Recycling Center

Overview

Recycling is an easy first step in positively influencing the environment. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,

- Recycling protects and expands U.S. manufacturing jobs and increases U.S. competitiveness.
- Recycling reduces the need for landfilling and incineration.
- Recycling prevents pollution caused by the manufacturing of products from virgin materials.
- Recycling saves energy.
- Recycling decreases emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change.
- Recycling conserves natural resources such as timber, water, and minerals.
- Recycling helps sustain the environment for future generations.

A collaborative effort to establish a recycling program can get family members, students, coworkers and community members educated and involved in protecting the environment.

Suggested Age Group

- Adults, teens, children

Suggested Skill Level

- Moderate

Supply List

- Containers large enough to hold recyclables
- Paper or poster board
- Pens, markers, paint, brushes

Project Instructions

1. **Verify your City or County has a Recycling Program**
 - Contact your local county or city government's waste management or public works department and ask about recycling programs. If they do not currently have a program, advocate for one. Organize the community's voice through a petition process. If your city or county does have a program, learn more about how your household, workplace, place of worship, or school can participate.



2. Set the Location

- Decide on an appropriate location for the recycling center. Choose convenient areas where trash is usually generated and where hauling away the items for disposal is easy (kitchen, cafeteria, classrooms, hallways, common areas, etc.).

3. Identify Recycling Advocates

- Recruit ambassadors/advocates for your recycling efforts and have them promote recycling and recruit volunteers to help support the process. These individuals can also serve in leadership roles in helping to plan and execute the project.

4. Identify Containers and Place in Designated Areas

- Select containers for each type of product that will be recycled (e.g. paper, plastic, aluminum, glass). Make sure to check the requirements of the recycling program in your community. Some programs may allow products to be collected together and often they provide you with bins in order to collect the materials. In addition to normal items to be recycled, you can also add a space to recycle batteries, cell phones, clothes etc. Many companies and organizations accept these types of materials. For example: Goodwill Industries and Salvation Army accept clothing, household items, furniture, books, electronics, etc. Contact your local Goodwill or Salvation Army to get a list of items that can be donated. Another example is Best Buy stores where recycling kiosks are set up to drop off inkjet cartridges, rechargeable batteries, cell phones, CDs/DVDs, PDAs, smartphones and Best Buy gift cards. Find a store near you.

5. Label Containers and Post Signage

- Create signs or labels to communicate clearly what should be recycled in each container. Post signs throughout the house and or building to remind folks to recycle. Remember that the process for changing behavior sometimes takes a while. You need to remind folks every chance possible why they should recycle, the benefits of recycling, and how to recycle. If you are involving children or youth in this project, you can ask them to decorate the recycling bins using art supplies.

6. Remember to Reuse

- Often we forget that reusing materials is in fact a part of recycling. Make sure that reusing items are a part of your messaging, as well as your strategy for collecting materials. For example, is it better to use a ceramic coffee mug and wash it for reuse or use a Styrofoam cup? Of course, it is better to use the ceramic mug and reuse. While this does not affect the recyclables process, this type of behavior should be encouraged. It decreases waste and helps people think about how their actions affect the broader community and world. Remember to communicate about reusing items on your posters, flyers, and other communication channels.



7. Decide What Data to Collect

- It is important to collect data about this project to continue to help sell the recycling program and change behavior over time. Here are some ways to track your progress:
 - Track number of recycling bins that have been filled and taken to be recycled – you can even place items into a bag and get the average weight of one full recycling bin and translate your collection of bins into pounds.
 - Track testimonials from participants of the recycling/reuse program.

8. Identify How Recyclables will be Picked Up

- If a city or county recycling program exists, there will likely be a designated process for picking up recyclables. If there is not a process for picking up the items, there will at least be a designated drop-off area(s). In this case, it is necessary to set up a drop-off schedule. Schedule the drop-off for a common area and allow people to sign up for this duty on a weekly basis. Make sure you recognize those individuals every chance you get! To set up a schedule online use VolunteerSpot, a wonderful free resource where you can manage your projects and have volunteers sign up for specific duties. This resource is listed in the resources section of this guide.

9. Promote!

- Set up a messaging and communications plan so that every chance possible you remind folks about the benefits of recycling, and let them know how to recycle. Use your ambassadors/advocates in this process.

10. Reflect and Recognize

- Throughout your project, take a few minutes to reflect on the impact it has on your household, school, place of business, and your community. Contemplate ways to continue what works and fix what does not work. Last but not least, don't forget to thank your volunteers and participants. Celebrate success and remember to report out those numbers. This keeps people progressing forward!

Additional Resources

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conservation/rrr/recycle.htm>
- Learn more tips for how to reuse, reuse and recycle by visiting:
<http://planetgreen.discovery.com/go-green/recycling/top-recycling-tips.html>
- Learn more about how to protect the environment with service learning activities:
<http://tools.ysa.org/downloads/modules/environment.pdf>
- Access free environmental service learning curricula:
<http://servicelearning.org/topic/environment>
- VolunteerSpot - A free resource to help schedule and organize volunteer activities
<http://www.volunteerspot.com/>