



Making More with Less

Handout A
Activity P.q
Grades K - 3

Because our world has a limited supply of natural resources, including land for landfills, it is important to use them wisely. One of the ways we can save natural resources is to reuse products. This means using them over again instead of throwing them away. This way we do not have to use new natural resources to make these products. People do this when they buy products like cloth napkins and towels, sponges, dishes, silverware, and rechargeable batteries. Each of these things can be used more than one time.

People also save natural resources when they recycle. Recycling means taking items that have already been used and making them into something new. Instead of throwing them away, they are used a second time. Materials like aluminum cans, newspapers, lawn clippings, plastic soft drink bottles, and glass jars can all be used again to make a lot of different products. This means that we do not have to use more natural resources: like bauxite to make a new aluminum can, more oil to make the new plastic or more sand to make new glass. By recycling, our natural resources will not be used up as quickly.

For example, it is believed that if everyone in America recycled even one-tenth of their newspapers, we would save about 25 million trees each year. It takes more than 8,000 pounds of bauxite and 1,000 pounds of petroleum coke to make a ton of new aluminum. But according to the Aluminum Association, this amount is reduced by 95% if recycled aluminum is used.

Reuse and recycling also mean that we can use less energy. For example, making new paper from “old” paper used between 30 – 60% less energy than making paper from trees. It takes 32% less energy to make glass if recycled glass is used. The energy saved from recycling one glass bottle will light a 100-watt light bulb for 4 hours! Making aluminum from recycled aluminum uses 90 – 95% less energy than making aluminum from scratch. The energy saved from on recycled aluminum can will operate a television for 3 hours! All of these energy savings mean that we use less oil, natural gas, coal, water, and other natural resources to make energy.

Scientists have been studying landfills. They have dug them up and found many different things. Many of the things in the landfills could have been recycled and used again. This would have left more room in the landfills for things that could not be recycled or burned.