

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT...

# Waste



**Friends of  
the Earth**

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CLEANER WORLD

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# We call it treasure

Yes, that's another big bag for the dustman. Friends of the Earth wants to fast-forward towards the day when waste gets a new name – raw resources. Use this booklet to get a head start recycling, repairing and re-using unwanted stuff.

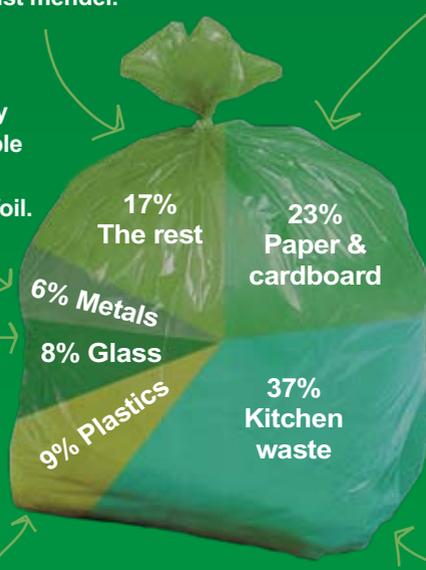
**Unwanted** shoes, clothes, toys, paint and electrical goods that turn up when you are having a clear-out could find new homes via the charity shop, clothing banks or [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org). Lots of items may be as good as new with minor repairs using glue, needle and thread or a specialist mender.

**Cardboard** can be re-used or recycled. Envelopes and boxes can be used again if you have cellulose tape, string and imagination.

**Metals** such as steel and aluminium are easily recycled. Try compostable greaseproof paper, and baking trays instead of foil.

**Glass** bottles and jars can be reused for homemade jams, leftovers or even storage.

**Plastic** takes hundreds of years to degrade in rubbish heaps (known as landfills). If plastic is burnt in an incinerator it produces toxic smoke. It's not easy to recycle either. One answer is to use cloth bags for shopping, choose loose veg and get in the habit of picking items which aren't over packaged.



**Kitchen waste** and non-meat fed animal bedding is mostly compostable. See tips on how to make perfect compost on page 14 and also at [www.recyclenow.com/home\\_composting/composting](http://www.recyclenow.com/home_composting/composting)

## TRUE OR FALSE?

### Stuff and nonsense

Every year the average dustbin contains enough discarded energy (used for its manufacture) for 500 baths, 3,500 showers or 5,000 hours of television. **TRUE**

ref EU advisers ASSURRE

# A story for you and the bin

“It’s fantastic to walk down the street every Wednesday morning and see all the recycling crates and food waste bins put out on the pavement. In the past most of this would have ended up being burnt in the local incinerator. The number of materials my council collect is growing all the time, and I always feel proud to think of the role Friends of the Earth has played in getting us to this stage.”

Becky Slater, 29, Resources Campaigner



**Our glossy steel cover star may dream of a new life where it comes back as a vital bike part (see back cover). But it is still touch and go whether it will be sent to landfill rather than recycled or re-used.**

Thanks to a law, drafted by Friends of the Earth, recycling is getting easier. And it's going to get better... by 2010 all local authorities in England must collect at least two types of recyclable waste from every home, such as aluminium, glass, cardboard, kitchen scraps, garden waste, steel and plastic.

If you're not getting that service then your unwanted things are being put into landfills whether they can be recycled or not. Dumping stuff in landfills isn't just a waste of resources, it's adding to climate change.

Landfills are full of rotting things (eg, food not eaten at tea, nappies, etc). These places create 40 per cent of the UK's methane emissions, one of the gases changing the world's climate. Burning rubbish also releases pollutants. The best known of these climate-changing greenhouse gases is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).

## TRUE OR FALSE?

### Not rocket science

Recycling a material usually uses far less energy than manufacturing from virgin materials. **TRUE**

ref Waste & Resources Action Programme, 2006  
www.wrap.org.uk

Here are some ideas to give your stuff a longer life:

- **Car boot sales and eBay** are a way to clear out, get some cash for unwanted stuff or pick up a bargain. There are also charity shops and jumble sales.
- **Join [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)** to find new homes for things you don't want (eg, fridges, desks) or pick up an absolute treasure for free.
- **Eat differently:** try to buy fruit, veg and bread with no or minimal packaging. You could also organise a delivery of seasonal food direct to your door, see [www.alotoforganics.co.uk](http://www.alotoforganics.co.uk).
- **Make friends with a sewing whizz:** repairing tears and refixing buttons gets easier with practice.
- **Fashion fun:** if you have wardrobes of clothes but still enjoy a new outfit for special occasions you could try swapping pieces with friends or organise a clothes swap party.
- **You can sell unwanted items** on eBay's charity site, which enables you to give some of the final sale price to Friends of the Earth. See how at [www.missionfish.org.uk](http://www.missionfish.org.uk)

**SPREAD THE WORD** 

# It's a team thing



Credit: Getty images

“ Inspired by Modbury (the first town in the UK to go plastic bag free), Llangollen Friends of the Earth’s first campaign was to make the town plastic bag free. We got a grant to have a town jute bag printed for all 1,600 households and run a trial plastic bag-free week. As a mother of two young children, the most valuable message for me has been that change is possible. ”

Catherine Veasey, 39

## TRUE OR FALSE?

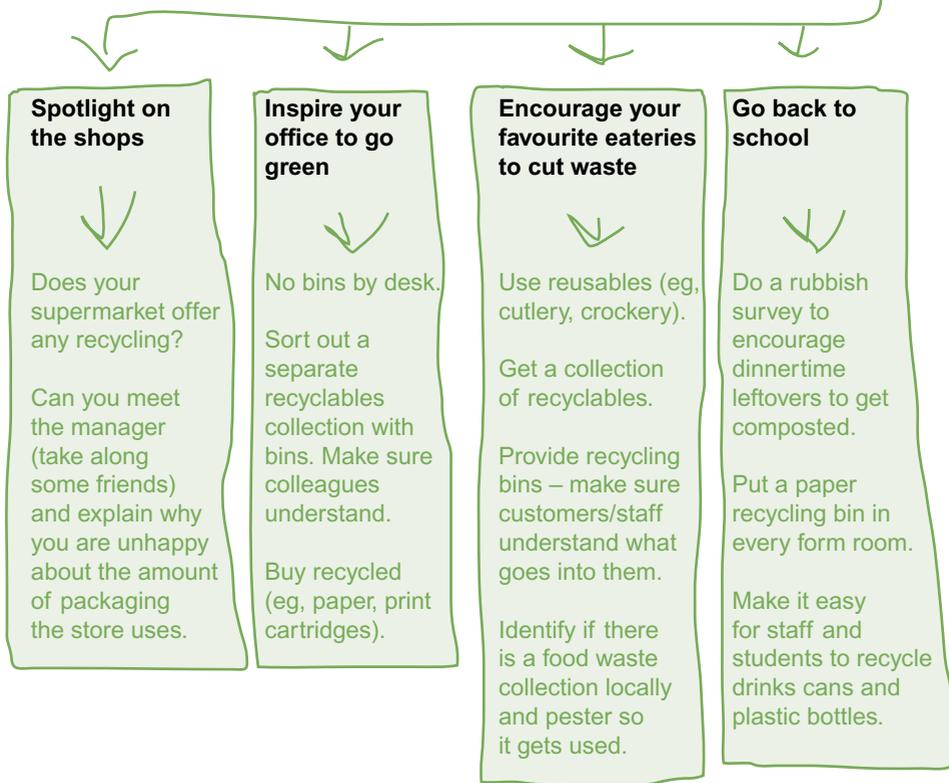
### Half-full bins

Some UK councils recycle and compost more than half the rubbish they collect. TRUE

Sometimes all it takes is a small group of people asking questions about why things that can be recycled – such as food leftovers which can be transformed into compost – are still being binned. Or why toys need to be wrapped up in plastic that no child could break through?

If it's the local authority that is lagging behind, make sure that they know what you and your neighbours want. You don't have to go it alone if you team up with one of the 220 Friends of the Earth local groups. Find your nearest at <http://community.foe.co.uk>.

Your local group is also a good source of information if you aren't sure where to recycle aluminium foil, energy-efficient lightbulbs, Tetra Pak cartons or garden waste. Here are some ideas to help you sort out your neighbourhood:



RAISING YOUR GAME

# Second nature

“When I visit my family in Germany people there seem to be having different conversations about the environment. They’re not worrying about recycling because it’s normal. They’re talking more about climate change and how to fit renewable energies into our homes.”

Karen Liebenguth, 40, loves walking in Cornwall and the Lake District



# REGION

How do we get British people to recycle like Karen's friends and other Europeans? One way is to make it easier to reuse or recycle items. Another is to join up with Friends of the Earth which is expert at convincing law makers to make changes.

MPs and business leaders are easier to convince if people like you let them know that you want stuff that creates less waste. But that doesn't resolve the problem that dumping reusable materials in landfill is legal. Nor that there are so few discouragements about using virgin materials from anywhere in the world.

**Friends of the Earth is campaigning for change. During the Government's 2007 Waste Strategy we suggested:**

- Tougher recycling targets
- A ban on sending waste that can be reused, recycled or composted to landfill or incineration

## TRUE OR FALSE?

**Are we the dirty man of Europe?**

It would be easy for the UK to get a medal for most improved waste watchers because we are so rubbish now. We only recycle around a quarter of our rubbish compared to Switzerland, the Netherlands and Germany which recycle around 60 per cent of their household waste. Flanders in Belgium manages more than 70 per cent. **TRUE**

**Use your purse power.** If you are more into shopping than campaigning then show your support for Friends of the Earth's work by making a regular donation.

**Buy items made from recycled materials** such as toilet roll, paper, print ribbons and even fleecy jackets (made from recycled plastic bottles).

As the shops found in the little town of Modbury, Devon – which became the first town to go plastic bag free – packing purchases into a reusable bag is not just a fashion fad, it's helping set new standards for shoppers, shops and even the Government.

**Friends of the Earth is currently pushing for a European law to ensure that by 2020 every country recycles at least:**

- Half its municipal waste
- 70 per cent of construction, demolition, industrial and manufacturing waste.

TAKE IT GLOBAL

# Everyone's doing it

“The more you re-use the more you think about the impact of your consumption. Re-using isn't just the way for communities to develop sustainably, it also inspires creativity.”

Michael Warhurst, 40, Resources Campaigner

**Even if we rarely think about where our everyday items are made, we are just one small part of the global jigsaw puzzle. That's why when we use our own resources more efficiently we may also be helping people in other countries.**

You might be surprised how companies act in underhand ways in the countries where they think they can get away with it. Some of the worst offenders are the companies producing materials that we could be reusing.

Mining or forest clearance for timber and new agricultural crops (like palm oil, soya or biofuels) spoil ecosystems and damage local livelihoods. Many of these industries also require vast amounts of water.

Better recycling doesn't just reduce demand for new things. It also helps reduce the gases that are causing climate change too. One study for the Government's Waste and Resources Action Programme concluded that the amount of materials the UK recycled was equivalent to taking 3.5 million cars off our road (about 10 per cent of the annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions).

## TRUE OR FALSE?

### Chequered footprint

It would take the food and mineral resources of eight planets to support our lifestyles if the developing world lived as wastefully as we do. **TRUE**

*Save Cash & Save the Planet*

# BY COUNTRY

If the average person in the UK throws out their body weight in rubbish every three months then we are stuck with a cycle of over-production. A constant demand for new things uses up the world's natural resources, destroying wildlife and their habitats. It's not great for people on the sharp end either.

Here are two ways to resolve this.

- 1 Recycle more.
- 2 Only buy what you need, and only if you've been unable to find it in a charity shop, on freecycle or eBay or car boot sale.

Buying stuff from companies that put profit before good practice feeds unsustainable business behaviour, and it adds to the problems all of us will face as our climate changes.

Choose suppliers you trust or find them on sites such as [www.ethicalconsumer.org](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org). You can join up with organisations (like Friends of the Earth) that put pressure on Government to crack down on irresponsible companies.



# How far are you along the recycling journey?

Just how heavy is your dustbin these days – light as the plastic wrapping it contains or weighty enough to give anyone who lifts it a serious injury?

## 1 Does your choice of shopping bag shout waste watcher?

- A Maybe, because I go everywhere with a big cloth bag packed with cloth bags, just in case.
- B The back of my car is stuffed with plastic bags that I reuse all the time.
- C I can't see the point of a shopping bag if you can get Tesco to deliver.

## 2 I'm house proud because...

- A Each week there's a rubbish and recycling collection on the same day.
- B My council makes recycling super simple by telling us to put unwanted newspapers, plastic drinks bottles and cans in one lidded container.
- C I've got a really swanky bin in the kitchen.

## 3 Are you the sort of person who chats to their neighbours?

- A You look forward to weekends when your neighbours are in so you can borrow the hedgecutter, return that power drill and plan the street party.
- B If that woman with the little dog lets it poo on the pavement again I'll give her a piece of my mind.
- C It's hard to hear anyone when I'm wearing my headphones.

## 4 What's the most important issue in your town or county?

- A Turning around the council's desire for a waste incinerator.
- B We're setting up a "say no to plastic bags" campaign and getting rid of the plastic bags.
- C Will Kate Moss move here or is that bloke from *The Bill* going to run for Mayor?

**Almost half of the clothes in Britain's wardrobes go unworn, around 2.4 billion items.**

YouGov survey Jan 2008

**It takes 95 per cent less energy to make a recycled aluminium can than it does to make one from virgin materials.**

Alupro, [www.alupro.org.uk/recycling%20habit.htm](http://www.alupro.org.uk/recycling%20habit.htm)

**Recycling newspapers creates three times as many jobs as incinerating them**

British Newsprint Manufacturers Association, 1996.

**Each tonne of glass remelted in the UK saves 314kg CO<sub>2</sub>**

Berryman Glass (March 2007)

**5 You're in a charity shop looking at a shirt that says "Made In China". What are you thinking?**

- A Why am I buying anything? Surely there's something in the back of my wardrobe that could be vamped up?
- B This place is a treasure trove, I'm coming here again.
- C Cheap tat. I'm out of here.

**6 I'm a keen recycler because I know it is:**

- A Easy, saves energy, reduces climate emissions and reduces my impact on the environment.
- B One way to stop a landfill being opened near my home.
- C Better to have a bulging recycling box than a dustbin.

**7 What would make the biggest difference to your carbon footprint?**

- A Choosing drinks that are on draft in cafes and pubs.
- B Always recycling aluminium cans.
- C Finding some killer heels.

**Nearly there or still got a long way to go?**

**Mostly As** makes you a super hero. You're lucky where you live, but you're an asset to the area too. Big hugs for your community spirit and keep on recycling.

**Mostly Bs** suggests that you are on the way to being a champion – but you may need to think about how to win over your neighbourhood. It's better to lead by example than browbeat next door. You'd probably enjoy joining up with your nearest Friends of the Earth local group. Find them at <http://community.foe.co.uk>

**Lots of Cs** ranks you as a bit of a shopaholic. If you love shopping try to make sure that you find new homes for the old stuff so less gets binned. We've got lots of free things that could tempt you towards a greener life at [www.foe.co.uk/shop](http://www.foe.co.uk/shop)

**Waste incineration is not green energy. Incinerators can generate electricity, but they produce more climate emissions than a gas-fired power station and undermine attempts to tackle climate change.**

Friends of the Earth press release, 3 May 2006

# Can do attitude

Waste is still the term people think of when they talk about rubbish and recycling. But Friends of the Earth felt this focused too little attention on how we use resources.

## COMPOST TIPS

**You need:** a bin with no base



**What to do:**



Mix up materials (some greens/some browns), chopping up bigger items (eg, eggshells and corn cobs). Keep adding and occasionally mix over **12 months**.

**The easy bit:**

The contents of your bin are ready to use when it's gone dark and the ingredients are mostly unrecognisable. Don't worry if it looks crumbly or feels sticky – it is still compost.

So we changed the waste campaign's name. It's now known as our **Resource Use campaign**. It:

- **Supports people working for local sustainable waste management.** We help people work with their local councils to prevent waste and to achieve high rates of re-use, recycling and composting. We support those opposing unsustainable facilities such as incinerators.
- **Works to make the UK more resource efficient,** including pressurising the Government to ensure that everyone – including businesses – recycles as much as possible, and we want laws to prevent the dumping and burning of valuable resources.
- **Engages at European Union (EU) level** – where most environmental laws are made – to get the EU to measure and set reduction targets for its resource use, and to bring in new laws to make us use our resources more efficiently. We want to get the EU to set an example to the rest of the world.

More at [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns)

## Find like-minded locals

[www.carbootjunction.com](http://www.carbootjunction.com) and [www.gumtree.com](http://www.gumtree.com) for car boot sales  
[www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) for offers and wants  
Friends of the Earth local groups can be found at <http://community.foe.co.uk>

If you have suggestions about things people can do with their junk or just want to browse some creative ideas (greenhouse made out of plastic bottles anyone?) then visit [www.junkk.com](http://www.junkk.com)

## Say bye to plastic bags

[www.plasticbagfree.com](http://www.plasticbagfree.com)

## Best recycling sites

Useful info at [www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com)  
(type in your postcode and find out about local recycling)

Database info of Recycled Products at [www.recycledproducts.org.uk](http://www.recycledproducts.org.uk)

Ways to increase recycling rates in your home, school or business at [www.recycle-more.co.uk](http://www.recycle-more.co.uk)

## Useful for local authorities

Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) is a Government funded agency which provides support for local authorities on recycling, including funding and training. See [www.wrap.org.uk/local\\_authorities/index.html](http://www.wrap.org.uk/local_authorities/index.html). WRAP aims to increase public participation in recycling with its Recycle Now campaign, see [www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com)

## Finding a home for electrical stuff

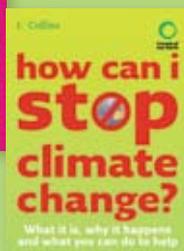
[www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com) and [www.recycle-more.co.uk](http://www.recycle-more.co.uk)

## Girls aloud

Try a nappuccino, swap stuff at the Nappy Exchange and learn more about enviromenstrual products with the Women's Environmental Network, [www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk)

## Save Cash & Save the Planet How Can I Stop Climate Change?

These are Friends of the Earth's favourite books – use them to get yourself up to speed on all the issues or to help your friends and family explore all the ways to live a greener life. Find them at any bookshop or better still buy from us at [www.foe.co.uk/shop](http://www.foe.co.uk/shop). You'll find you can also order lots of free material from Friends of the Earth for your school, family or workplace.





**Friends of the Earth – the most influential environmental organisation in the UK – makes the world a better place. We inspire solutions to environmental problems which make life better for you, your family, friends and your community. It doesn't stop there. We're helping to bring about changes that benefit the whole planet. Find out more at [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)**

[www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)

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