

Think Recycling



FACT SHEET-2

Why Recycle?

First let's think about waste: Waste is created when people throw things away because they no longer need or want them. This could be anything – an empty food container, a mobile phone or an old sofa.

When we throw things away we are losing the natural resources and the energy that was used to manufacture them. Most of these natural resources cannot be replaced – for example the rocks from which metals are mined.

So if we keep on using and throwing away resources in this way eventually they will run out.

When we throw things away we are also making an impact on the environment – the waste, or rubbish, has to go somewhere. In the UK most waste is either buried in landfill sites or burned.

It is important for everyone, not just in this country but around the world, to live 'sustainably' – in other words make the best use of our natural resources so that we preserve them for future generations. This means using fewer resources, making products that last longer and making sure that everything we do doesn't have a negative impact on the environment.

So, rather than just throwing things away we need to be a bit smarter about what we do with our unwanted things!



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Why Recycle?

Recycling is one way in which we can contribute towards sustainability.

Recycling means turning waste products into raw materials to make new products.

Many of the materials used to make our food packaging, mobile phones and furniture can be reused, or recycled into new products.

For example mobile phones can be taken apart and some of the components used in new phones or other electronic equipment. There are some companies that will send 'old' mobile phones from this country to other parts of the world where they can be reused as they are.

Using our example of the unwanted sofa: the fabric, the wooden frame and the metal springs are all made of materials that can be recycled into new products.

Aluminium is good example of why recycling makes sense:

The metal doesn't occur naturally in the earth's crust, like many other metals it has to be extracted from rocks – in the case of aluminium the rock, or ore, is called bauxite.

To extract aluminium from the bauxite uses a great deal of energy, in a process called 'electrolysis'. This takes place in a factory, or smelter. The energy used for smelting has to be generated from other natural resources, and, the smelting process produces side products, such as gases, which can be harmful to the environment.

Aluminium can be recycled over and over again without losing any of its properties. It is impossible to tell the difference between recycled or 'primary' aluminium.

One of the properties of aluminium is that it melts at a much lower temperature than other metals. So melting down 'old' aluminium uses much less energy than the smelting process. It also produces fewer gas emissions, so is much better for the environment.

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We call the cycle of recycling a 'loop'. For aluminium cans it is a 'closed loop' because the cans are melted down into metal which is used to make more drink cans – over and over again.

Summary:

Recycling makes sense because:

- It saves natural resources
- It saves energy
- It reduces waste
- It reduces the need for landfill