

How much do Americans throw away?

- Americans represent 5% of the world's population, but generate 30% of the world's garbage.
- In the U.S. industry moves, mines, extracts, shovels, burns, wastes, pumps and disposes of 4 million pounds of material in order to provide one average middle-class American family's needs for one year.
- In sum, Americans waste or cause to be wasted nearly 1 million pounds of materials per person every year. This figure includes 3.5 billion pounds of carpet landfilled, 3.3 trillion pounds of CO₂ gas emitted into the atmosphere, 19 billion pounds of polystyrene peanuts, 28 billion pounds of food discarded, 360 billion pounds of organic and inorganic chemicals used for manufacturing, 710 billion pounds of hazardous waste and 3.7 trillion pounds of construction debris.
- If wastewater is factored in, the total annual flow of waste in the American Industrial system is 250 trillion pounds.
- Less than 2% of the total waste stream in the United States is recycled.
- For all the world to live as an American we would need two more Earths; three more if the population should double and twelve Earth's altogether if worldwide standards of living doubled in the next forty years.

To put it another way...

- Americans throw away enough garbage everyday to fill 63,000 garbage trucks, which if lined up end to end for an entire year would stretch half way to the moon.
- In a lifetime, the average American will personally throw away 600 times his or her body weight, which for an average adult would leave a legacy of 90,000 pounds of trash at the end of their lifetime.
- Of the garbage Americans throw out, half could be recycled, which is enough to fill a football stadium from top to bottom everyday.
- Of these recyclables, Americans throw away enough aluminum to rebuild the entire commercial air fleet every three months, enough steel to reconstruct Manhattan, and enough wood to heat 5 million homes for 200 years.
- U.S. waste disposal costs exceed \$100 billion annually.

Why recycle?

There are many reasons to recycle, but the short list includes:

- It saves money.
- It improves efficiency.
- It reduces energy use.
- It reduces fuel use.
- It saves landfill space.
- It improves air quality.
- It improves water quality.
- It reduces the rate of global warming.

Facts about Recycling...

Aluminum

One ton of recycled Aluminum saves:

- 14,000 kWh of electricity.
- 1,663 gallons of oil.
- 237.6 million Btu's of energy.
- 10 cubic yards of landfill space.

Aluminum takes 200-500 years to fully degrade in a landfill.

Recycling aluminum takes 95% less energy than making aluminum from raw materials.

Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a TV for three hours.

There is no limit to the number of times aluminum cans be recycled.

Recycled aluminum can be returned to store shelves in as little as 60 days.

About 120,000 aluminum cans are recycled every minute nationwide.

Glass

One ton of recycled glass saves:

- 42 kWh of electricity.
- 5 gallons of oil.
- 714.3 Btu's of energy.
- 2 cubic yards of landfill space.
- 7.5 pounds of air pollutants from being released.
- 1,330 pounds of sand.
- 433 pounds of soda ash.
- 433 pounds of limestone.
- 151 pounds of feldspar.

Glass takes 1,000,000 years to fully degrade in a landfill.

Recycling glass takes 30% of the energy required to produce glass from raw materials.

The United States throws away enough glass every week to fill a 1,350-foot building.

Recycling one glass bottle saves enough energy to light a 100-watt lightbulb for four hours.

Glass never wears out and can be recycled forever.

Plastic

One ton of recycled plastic saves:

- 5,774 kWh of electricity.
- 685 gallons of oil.
- 98 million Btu's of energy.
- 30 cubic yards of landfill space.

Plastic takes up to 1,000 years to degrade in a landfill.

Recycling plastic takes 88% less energy than making plastic from raw materials.

Enough plastic is thrown away each year to circle the Earth four times.

Americans throw away 35 billion plastic bottles every year.

Only about 25% of the plastic produced in the U.S. is recycled.

If we recycled the other 75% we could save 1 billion gallons of oil and 44 million cubic yards of landfill space annually.

Using aluminum or glass containers is always preferable over plastic.

A plastic bottle of drinking water contains on average 4 cents worth of water.

By using reusable drink containers an average person can eliminate the need for 100 disposable bottles per year.

Paper

One ton of recycled paper saves:

- 4,100 kWh of electricity.
- 380 gallons of oil.
- 54 million Btu's of energy.
- 4.6 cubic yards of landfill space.
- 7,000 gallons of water.
- 17 trees

Recycling paper takes 60% less energy than making paper from raw materials.

It also creates 74% less air pollution and 35% less water pollution.

Americans throw away 4.5 million tons of office paper each year.

That's enough to build a wall of paper 12 feet high from New York to Los Angeles.

Every Sunday, 500,000 trees are used to produce the 88% of newspapers that are never recycled.

Cardboard

One ton of recycled cardboard saves:

- 390 kWh hours of electricity.
- 46 gallons of oil.
- 6.6 million Btu's of energy.
- 9 cubic yards of landfill space.

Cardboard and paper waste make up 41% of the municipal solid waste stream.

Recycling cardboard takes 24% less energy and produces 50% less sulfur dioxide than making cardboard from raw materials.

Steel

One ton of recycled steel saves:

- 642 kWh of electricity.
- 76 gallons of oil.
- 10.9 million Btu's of energy.
- 4 cubic yards of landfill space.
- 2,500 pounds of iron ore.

Steel takes up to 100 years to fully degrade in a landfill.

Recycling steel takes 25% less energy and creates only 25% the water and air pollution required to produce steel from raw materials.

About 70% of all metal is used just once, then discarded. The remaining 30% is recycled, but after 5-cycles only 0.25% remains in circulation.

The United States throws away enough iron and steel to continuously supply all of the nation's automakers.

Tin cans are made up mostly of steel, containing only about 0.15% tin and are 100% recyclable.

630 steel cans are recycled every second in the U.S.