

What is precycling?

By [Green Living Tips](#) | Published 12/16/2009

Precycle vs. Recycle

Recycling is a wonderful activity as it allows for all sorts of [energy savings](#) - but it's not a get out of jail free card for our waste. Resources are used, energy is consumed and a degree of pollution follows.

The 3R's of going green - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - are in that order for a reason.

The greenest product is the one you don't buy, but as we can't live on air alone then we need to make more informed purchase choices and precycling is related to "Reduce" - the most important of the 3R's, and also to "Reuse" which is sometimes referred to as "Repurposing".

Precycling is about reducing waste by avoiding items that will generate it, or selecting certain items that will generate less, or acquiring items that can be reused for something else. It's just another way to lighten our environmental footprint that covers a myriad of possibilities, but being an avid precycler can also save you money too.

Here are a few examples:

Concentrated products

We're brainwashed to think more is good, but sometimes less is better. Products such as washing detergents are widely available in concentrated forms, packing as much punch as their water heavy counterparts. [Concentrated products](#) reduce packaging, weight and as a bonus - less transport related emissions.

Electronic vs. paper

So many magazines and newspapers are now online. While it takes electricity to view them, the amount of energy involved is less than the paper based product, plus there's nothing to throw out once you're done reading. Make the Internet part of your [paper reduction diet!](#)

Wrappings

Plastic wrap is a great invention, but one that haunts us once we're done with it. Some forms can be recycled, but others wind up in landfill where they'll slowly decompose for decades if not hundreds of years. A sturdy container with an airtight lid can take the place of plastic wrap in some cases.



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Bags, cans and jars

Bags are everywhere - and not just disposable shopping bags. Many of the products we buy come in some sort of bag. While we can easily obtain [reusable bags](#), bagged products can be hard to avoid, but the bags can be used for other purposes - particularly [bread bags](#). This also applies to jars and other containers which can be very useful for holding buttons, screws or any other small loose items where you may usually buy a container dedicated to the task.

Stopping junk email

Our mailboxes tend to become the graveyard of many trees. The average adult in the USA receives a whopping 41 pounds of junk mail a year. It's such a waste. While it's not your fault you're bombarded with the stuff, there are some ways to [stop junk mail](#). Personally, I've found the most effective way is to get a post office box and rip the house mailbox out of the ground; but give it away or recycle it of course!

Forward thinking

Related to the above points, when considering purchasing a product, think ahead to what it could be used for once it's no longer suitable for the original purpose. For example, instead of buying paper towel or paper napkins, cloth napkins can be purchased then can then be used for general cleanups once they get a little grotty, then as they become even grottier, can be used for jobs such as wiping grease off car engines before they are finally disposed of.

Just a few examples, but I'm sure you get the idea :). Even [sharing](#) can be considered a precycling activity!

When you think about it, between the concepts of precycle and recycle, there no longer needs to be the 3R's of going green as it can all be summarized with two letters instead of three - PR.

Michael Bloch

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