

Should recycling be mandatory

[Environment](#), [Pollution](#)



Recycling in America: It's not that hard In America, the choice to recycle is in the hands of each individual, but many choose the easy choice over the right choice. Recycling is important to us in so many ways but the lack of education and recycling resources available can make it a difficult process. Recycling improves many areas in our lives, even if we haven't caught on yet. It is a constant effort, but one that could have endless benefits and it is never too late to start. Most people know items that we use daily such as newspapers, aluminum cans, and glass and plastic bottles can all be recycled, but it doesn't end there. The list is actually far more extensive, tennis shoes and old tires can be recycled to make playground equipment and safety ground cover. Electric items like cell phones, mp3 players, televisions, and old computers can be recycled and reused, some stores even offer an in store credit for recycling electronics. Trading in items like an old car battery, propane tank, or ink-jet cartridge will probably get you money back, or at least credit towards a new item of the same kind. The new phone book that no one uses, the junk mail and advertisement papers, cardboard boxes and packaging materials, and shredded paperwork can all be recycled as well. We don't have unlimited space for landfills to continue throwing things away that could be recycled and reused. Landfills emit toxic waste, and can contaminate both the air and local ground water supplies. Landfills can also be a breeding ground for disease due to the population of pests and rodents that make their homes there. Where will we send our trash when we have no place left to put it, will it be dumped in the ocean, or sent to some unpopulated area? Waste management companies pay huge amounts of money for landfill space, but when that space runs out that

money and trash have to go somewhere, it will most likely go overseas to some country that can't afford to say no. Where does trash go when it doesn't go to a landfill? When areas don't have the resources or space for a landfill an incinerator is used. An incinerator burns trash, releasing toxic fumes and hazardous ash into the air which then creates smog, poor air quality, and only adds to our already severe global warming problem. Another downfall of using incinerators are the byproducts of burning, even though the trash is burned it leaves hazardous ash that must be disposed of properly. The ash must be stored or carefully buried in a landfill. While this may sound safe, it still poses a huge threat, things like rain or flood can reach the ash and carry the hazardous materials into the soil and local water supplies. Recycling allows us to save our natural resources, which are also not an endless commodity. We only have so many trees, minerals, and clean water supplies and when we use them all we have no place else to go. We cut down acres of forests each day in order to manufacture the paper and lumber products we carelessly consume, but we need these trees to clean our air and produce the oxygen we need to live. We complain about the cost of gas, but do little to nothing to reduce our demand and dependence on oil and oil based products. How many Americans drive to work alone when they could carpool, bike or take public transportation, or simply drive a vehicle that gets a reasonable gas mileage? The creation of community recycling programs could create a huge number of jobs that we need in a time when unemployment is at such a high number. People would be needed to collect and sort the recyclables, transport the recyclables, and work in the plants that would break down and reuse the recyclables. Even if each state only

had one or two of these types of plants think of how many jobs that could create. Recycling and reusing products saves money, both to the consumer and the manufacturer. If the manufacturer can save money in the production process by using recycled goods, then those savings can be passed on to the consumer. Here in California we have something called the California Redemption Value, or CRV, we pay extra for the goods associated with this in a CRV tax at the register, why not recycle and get that money back. Of course it's not a lot but if you don't recycle you might as well be throwing money in the trash. Aluminum cans and containers are probably the most popular recyclable as well it should be, aluminum can be cleaned, melted and reused an unlimited amount of times. Plastic grocery bags can also be reused, but even better most stores now offer reusable bags made from recycled materials. Sometimes these reusable bags cost some change but they're great alternative to the endless mountain of plastic bags. In some states, like Washington, recycling is expected. These are states that really care about their natural habitats and are pushing their residents to be more eco-friendly. Waste management companies provide separate recycle bins for aluminum, paper/cardboard, plastic and glass and sometimes conduct inspections to ensure residents are using them, residents can even be fined for throwing recyclables in the trash. Yes, it can be a little messy having to separate your trash but it doesn't take a lot of time, and it doesn't cost anything, if anything you might get a few bucks back. In some countries recycling is absolutely the law. These countries place a premium on space and room for landfills is at a minimum. A good example is South Korea, this tiny peninsula is roughly the size of Indiana with a population of almost 50

million, so what do they do with their trash! Instead of the large garbage bins we have picked up every week, residents have to purchase trash bags. Not trash bags like we buy, they have to actually purchase the bags they put on the curb, each bag has a different use and a different price. Of course if they wanted to be lazy they could just purchase the largest bag and put all of their trash in it, but it would be rather expensive. The available bags are recyclable trash, food waste, and regular trash, and each comes in a few different sizes. Food waste goes to a compost type facility instead of taking up valuable space, recyclables are of course recycled and the small amount of leftover trash, which isn't much, is then taken to a landfill after being once more sorted to make sure all recyclables have been removed. It's the same at restaurants and fast food places, instead of just throwing all your trash into the can it has to be separated. Any leftover liquids are poured into one receptacle, food trash into another and paper/plastic trash into another. There are many ways to recycle, and with the help of the internet now there is no good excuse not to. Searching for recycling locations couldn't be easier, and if you're not sure if something can be recycled it's just an internet search away from finding out. You may be surprised at what you find.